

# Little Acorns Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY296220
<b>Inspection date</b>	31 January 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Ann Marie Cozzi
<b>Setting Address</b>	Purford Green School, Purford Green, Harlow, Essex, CM18 6HP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 813842 after 5pm
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Linda White
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns opened in 1999 and operates from one room attached to Purford Green School. It is situated in Harlow, Essex. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 12.00 during term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 27 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 26 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from both the local and wider catchment area. The nursery does not currently support any children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They have a small number of children who speaks English as an additional language.

The nursery employs five staff. All of the staff, including the provider hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are learning about the importance of personal hygiene through the daily routines. Their understanding is promoted well by staff as they learn about the importance of protecting themselves from germs. For example, by singing the hand washing song and during discussions about why we wash our hands. Staff support less able children in order that they can participate. Children's good health and well-being is further promoted through the effective procedures followed by staff, such as implementation of the sick children policy and the reporting of accidents. All staff have completed paediatric first aid training. This enables them to care for children appropriately in the event of an accident. Parents and carers are always informed of any accident occurring on the premises. This enables them to provide continuity of care when their child returns home.

The importance of eating healthy foods is promoted through planned topics and offering children healthy and nutritious snacks such as bananas, apples and dried fruit. Children's individual needs are met well, for example, particular dietary needs and preferences are recorded and catered for. Snack time is considered to be a sociable time and children are able to eat at their own pace without feeling rushed. There is a drinking fountain in the pre-school which ensures children's access to fresh drinking water this contributes to ensuring that children remain hydrated.

Children's physical development is encouraged well during their time spent at the pre-school. They have access to a wide range of outdoor play resources on a daily basis. The pre-school also have access to a large hall which can sometimes be used for physical play in extreme weather conditions. The planned indoor and outdoor activities incorporate opportunities for children to develop their motor skills such as when climbing the play castle or using bikes and scooters when they can expend their energy as they run, peddle and climb.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a secure and welcoming environment, this is maintained through the good systems in place. These include the door bell entry system, staff vigilance and the bright and colourful displays of children's work and photographs. Children are very well supervised and are always in sight or hearing of the staff team. They are kept safe by the positive steps taken to minimise most hazards, both inside and outside of the premises. However, there is a weakness in the current systems for risk assessment to ensure that they are always effective. The setting further protects children by staff daily checks which ensure that they access toys and equipment that are safe. Fire safety is given appropriate priority and the pre-school conduct fire drills regularly. This ensures that children receive equal chances to develop an effective awareness of how to respond in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Children are beginning to learn about the importance of keeping themselves safe. This is promoted in order to help them learn about the rules and discover they are there to protect them from harm, for example, children are becoming increasingly aware of their boundaries and know that 'you play star wars outside because it is dangerous to play it indoors, someone might get hurt'.

The overall welfare of children is safeguarded because all staff have undertaken appropriate training and are well informed about their role and responsibilities in child protection. There are clear written and verbal procedures for staff to follow if they have concerns about a child this includes a procedure to follow if any allegations are made against a member of staff.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

All visitors to the pre-school are greeted by staff on arrival. The children are happy and confident as they participate enthusiastically in a good range of planned activities, which support individual development, such as outdoor play, craft and 'Small world' play. They move comfortably around the pre-school, investigating what others are doing and making their own choices and selecting activities and games to explore. The storage which is at child-height enables children to develop personal independence and extend their own play and learning.

Children's thinking and learning is further extended by, for example, activities which provide opportunities for them to independently explore and investigate. Staff are consistent in encouraging children's participation and their achievements are valued, for example, they receive lots of positive praise and encouragement when undertaking craft activities. As a result, children develop good attitudes to future learning. Staff demonstrate good practice in relation to supporting children under three years which assists them in making progress across all areas of their development. However, they have yet to formalize this through record keeping systems.

There are lots of good opportunities for children to develop their vocabulary as staff give them time to develop their thinking and listening skills. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories which further promotes their language development.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have an adequate knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and some activities are planned in order to support children's identified individual learning needs. Children are occupied and interested in the activities on offer and are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. Staff are directly involved in children's learning and ensure that independence and decision making skills are promoted. They are listened to and staff respond positively to their ideas and suggestions. Children's dispositions and attitude to learning are developed through the sensitive support and encouragement they receive from staff. There are some systems in place for observing and assessing children's progress, however, they are not effective in accurately identify children's individual next steps in learning. Planning systems are in place, although, they do not consistently reflect a balanced curriculum across all six areas of learning.

Most children show good levels of confidence and know their surrounding well. Their independence is encouraged well by staff, for example, children serve their own snacks and are able to take themselves to the toilet independently. They enjoy painting and sticking and are able to use a range of tools confidently such as glue sticks and paint brushes. Children pour their own drinks at snack time with developing skill. They receive regular opportunities for stories, action rhymes and singing. Trying to predict what happens next in the story and joining in with enthusiasm to actions rhymes and songs. Children have opportunities to mimic the world around them as they access 'Small world' play and join in role play in the home corner. For instance as they enjoy preparing 'dinner' for adults and each other. Some children are able to count up to 10 confidently, however, there are inconsistent opportunities for children to develop

there individual skills in calculation. There are some opportunities for children to write for a purpose, for example, they are encouraged to label their own work. However, there are limited opportunities provided for children to mark-make during play, for example, making a shopping list or taking a message when using the phone in the role play area. There are displays in the pre-school which illustrate that text carries meaning, for example, posters depicting everyday items such as bread, milk, cheese and eggs include text with the corresponding item. There are planned activities which give children the chance to discover, explore and investigate living things such as mini beast hunts and planting strawberries and runner beans. However, this is not always consistently provided. Children have access to a computer and some programmable toys which supports their learning. They benefit from regular access to physical activities as they, for example, learn to handle serving tongs with increasing control and expend their energy during outdoor play, for example, using bikes, scooters and climbing equipment.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to make informed choices such as selecting resources and activities for themselves. This is because the organisation of the free play session is planned to promote this. Their needs and circumstances are well known to the staff as a result, children receive good individual care. Staff promote children's participation in all activities by the use of warm and encouraging language. Children have a developing awareness of the wider community through planned topics and the good use of resources. This contributes to them developing positive images of others and assists in creating a welcoming environment.

Whilst there are currently no children on roll with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is a system in place which ensures that the pre-school work closely with families in the best interests of the child. When appropriate, additional support is sought from the local authority advisor. Staff work closely with parents of children who speak English as an additional language. When required additional support is sought from the local authority advisor.

In the main, children are well behaved and most receive consistent clear age-appropriate explanations in line with their level of understanding and maturity to assist, in enabling them to develop positive attitudes and to distinguish between the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The good use of positive praise and encouragement acknowledges their achievements, enhances self-esteem and as a result boosts confidence. Children receive support from staff at times of conflict with their peers. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

All children benefit from a close working partnership between their parents and staff as a consequence, this contributes towards maintaining their well-being, development and progress. Information from parents regarding their child's likes and dislikes and development stage on entry to the pre-school is a good starting point in identifying individual needs. Parents receive useful information about the setting and the successful key worker system ensures verbal information is continually exchanged and shared. Children's developmental records are always available for parents to view upon request.

Partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is satisfactory. Parents benefit from the pre-schools open-door policy, access to some of their children's records and the displays in the lobby area which provides information about the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. This helps parents to gain some understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The procedures in place for the employment of staff and the monitoring of volunteers is robust. This contributes to ensuring that children are protected. There is a clear operational plan in place which is kept up-to-date and made available to parents. A good range of policies and procedures are in place and implemented in practice. This promotes the safe day-to-day management of the setting and contributes towards providing positive outcomes for children. Systems to record children and staff attendance are in place. Records are stored securely and confidentiality is always respected.

Children are cared for by staff who have a good knowledge and understanding of child development. All staff hold relevant early years qualifications. There are staff induction procedures in place and ongoing appraisals are implemented to support existing members of staff. The organisation of the setting ensures that children are well cared for. Children are well supported by staff to develop positive attitudes towards learning. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. There is a commitment to ongoing training which is facilitated by the provider. She works alongside staff which enables her to monitor and review practice, this in the main, is undertaken through parental feedback, staff meetings, evaluation of activities and the use of observations. As a result, she has some knowledge of the setting's strengths and weaknesses and has identified some areas for improvement, such as planning and the nature table.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the last care inspection the provider has improved outcomes for children. The pre-schools written operational plan has been further developed. As a result this promotes the safe management of the provision.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. The provider is required to keep a record of

complaints made by the parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

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## WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

### **The quality and standards of the care**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop risk assessments of the premises, both inside and outside, to identify potential hazards; ensure this is reviewed if there is significant change or if the registered person suspects it is no longer valid; include an action plan with timescales, which identifies any action to be taken to minimise identified risks
- formalize record keeping systems with an approach in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- increase opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's records of assessment, providing them with opportunities to make comments about their child's development at home, observe their children's progress within the setting and become involved in their child's early education
- develop the current planning system to provide a balanced curriculum across all six areas of learning
- enhance the systems in place for the recording of children observations and assessments in order that they accurately identify children's individual next steps in learning, this also applies to care.

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