

Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509573
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Inspector	Tonia Chilcott
Setting Address	St John's Room, 19 St John's Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hampshire, SO30 4AF
Telephone number	01489 795860
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Registered person	Kevin Crowley
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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 Day Nursery opened in 1997. It operates from three rooms on two floors of a converted Parish Hall. The nursery is privately owned and located near to the town centre of Hedge End, Southampton.

A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year, closing only for the week of Christmas. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently there are 68 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for early education. The nursery employs 12 members of staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification. The nursery receive support visits from the Pre-school Learning Alliance development worker and the local authority early years advisory teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a range of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks, all of which are prepared on site on a daily basis. Staff ensure that children's individual dietary requirements are taken into account whilst preparing and presenting meals to children, thus ensuring that the needs of the children are met. Older children learn to identify when they are hungry or thirsty and choose when to have a snack and a drink during the flexible snack time in the mornings.

Children in most areas of the setting are protected from the spread of illness and infection, by the procedures followed by staff. For example, whilst changing nappies staff are vigilant in ensuring that they wear disposable gloves and aprons, that are changed after every nappy. However, although children are provided with individual sheets and linen whilst sleeping, in the toddlers room, space is not organised effectively, consequently not allowing sufficient room to prepare children for sleep. As a result, staff and children walk on bedding and sleep mats, that have been placed on the floor in preparation for sleeping. Babies are not wholly protected from the spread of infection as some staff occasionally work in bare feet in the room, and although staff have identified that nappy bins have no lid fitted, action is not taken promptly to minimise risk. Children gain a good understanding of personal hygiene throughout the daily routines in the setting. Pre-school and toddler children are encouraged to learn to wash their own hands after toileting and before eating for instance.

Children who become ill whilst at the setting are cared for sensitively by staff, who react calmly and kindly throughout, with minimal disruption to the remaining children. Effective liaison with parents ensures that all staff are fully aware of the needs of the individual child and that parents remain fully informed about their child in a medical emergency.

Preschool children enjoy taking part in yoga activities. They eagerly listen and watch staff and one another, following instructions to create the intended shape with their bodies. Children use space well, moving around the setting confidently, respecting one another's space whilst playing alongside each other. Whilst playing together in the garden, children run and jump, adjusting speed and direction to avoid one another and obstacles.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children are cared for within a warm and welcoming environment. Staff display a wide range of posters, written information and examples of children's work, which contributes towards the welcoming environment for both parents and children. Space is used well throughout most of the nursery, to ensure that children are able to play freely within specific areas. For instance, in the preschool area, children have clearly defined areas for play, including areas that allow them to choose to play quietly, imaginatively or be involved in creative play. However, the arrangement of sleep mats in the toddler area does not provide sufficient space for children to move freely or for staff to easily access children.

Children access a wide range of toys and materials, most of which are suitable for children of all ages; however, some, particularly those in the garden and some highchairs, are not sufficiently clean or in good repair and consequently pose a risk to children. Although staff have identified in daily risk assessments that some areas of the garden contain hazards, action has not been

taken to ensure that the risks are minimised. For example, despite risk assessments and written information highlighting the hazard posed by ivy and brambles, no action has been taken to minimise the risk to children. Risk assessments have also failed to identify additional hazards in the garden including a broken fence, slip and trip hazards on emergency escape routes and broken equipment such as tricycles and the sand tray. Procedures to leave the building in an emergency are practised regularly by staff and children to ensure that all are familiar with the system; however, at times, the storage of toys and highchairs in the baby room, means that access to the sleep room is hindered, thus posing a risk to sleeping babies. Staff have a sound understanding of child protection and the procedures to follow should they have concerns relating to a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled within the nursery and benefit from the good relationships that they have developed with staff and one another. Younger children benefit from the staff's understanding of the Birth to three framework, which is used to plan and provide a range of activities to meet the needs of the children. Children of all ages enjoy their time at the nursery, laughing and giggling throughout. Toddlers thoroughly enjoy spending time in the sensory area, looking at the lights and mirrored ball that are displayed within the room.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Staff have an understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children develop, allowing them to provide a range of activities to enable children to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Planning is comprehensive and covers all areas of learning, however, at times this becomes unmanageable as staff try to deliver up to six focused activities, whilst also trying to observe children's progress throughout the day. Consequently, at times, children are not sufficiently challenged as staff are absorbed in the task of observing the children. Staff know the children well and consequently are able to identify the children's next steps in learning. However, at times, written records relating to children's development are not consistently up to date as the amount of information recorded by staff becomes unmanageable. Staff work well together as a team and are aware of their role for the day and the intended learning outcome of the activities.

Children are confident and settled, having built strong relationships with one another and staff. Many work well together in small groups, taking turns and helping one another. For example, whilst using the computer, children use egg timers independently, understanding that when the timer ends, then they need to finish and allow somebody else a turn. Some children confidently use the computer and understand how to complete a simple programme, and many are able to use the mouse correctly; although at times, when they need help, staff are engaged in observing other children or activities, or are deployed elsewhere and consequently are unable to help. Children behave well. They gain an understanding of the expectations for behaviour within the setting.

Children confidently initiate conversations with one another and adults in the setting. Some use language well to relay their feelings to staff, for example, children tell staff how excited they are about taking part in the treasure hunt. Many children confidently speak in a familiar group for instance at circle time. They concentrate well, whilst listening to stories, enjoying

their favourite books. Staff introduce early calculation during snack time, when they talk to children about how many more cups they need when another child chooses to join them. Some children enjoy books and have learned to handle books correctly, gently turning the pages. Children learn to read their names when preparing for snack by finding their name cards; some are able to write their own names with support from staff as needed.

Some children confidently name a range of shapes and colours when taking part in some planned activities. However, children do not consistently access planned activities as staff are engaged in observations or deployed in other areas of the setting, and consequently some activities are not inviting for children. For example, children rarely access planned activities such as cutting shapes and puzzles until staff sit at the tables and engage with the children; children then become fully immersed with the activity and staff are able to extend the children's learning and meet the planned learning outcomes.

Children find out about living things and how to look after them. They help staff to look after the hamster and the fish in the setting, and excitedly watch the hamster when it wakes during the day, talking about how it usually sleeps a lot with staff. Children learn about the life cycles of animals, such as frogs, when looking at the changes that occur with tadpoles that have been brought into the nursery by children and parents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled within the caring environment. They are treated as individuals, with respect and equal concern by staff. They learn about the wider world, when taking part in a range of activities that allow them to look at and learn about the different cultural festivals of others for instance. A good range of toys and materials are freely available to children, which provide positive images of society. Children with identified learning difficulties or disabilities or English as an additional language are supported by staff, who have systems in place to allow them to assess the needs of children and develop individual learning plans that are shared with parents. Children of all ages behave well in response to praise and encouragement from staff. Staff take time to explain to children the expectations regarding children's behaviour, for instance, whilst talking to children about sharing when using the computer. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good

Children benefit from the good relationships that are forged between staff and parents. Parents are provided with information about the nursery's policies and procedures, ensuring that they are fully aware of the nursery's practices. Newsletters are provided to parents on a regular basis, and an information board is in place at the entrance of the setting. This is used to provide information to parents about policies and procedures about the setting, and further information that may prove useful to parents. Parents are involved in their children's learning as they are kept informed about topics and themes and their children's development. Although parents have regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress with staff, children's development records, occasionally, are not up to date, consequently not providing an accurate picture of progress. Parents' opinions about the setting are sought on a regular basis through questionnaires. The comments and ideas provided by parents are evaluated by staff and used to identify areas that the setting can improve.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The staff team are suitably experienced to work with children, with a good level of staff being fully qualified; they are fully committed to updating and furthering their knowledge and skills. Staff eagerly take part in the inspection process, quickly implementing changes where possible, when areas to improve are identified. Effective procedures for the appointment of staff and an induction programme are in place. Whilst the required ratios of adults to children are maintained throughout the day, staff are not deployed effectively to ensure that, at all times, sufficient staff are working directly with children within the preschool area. Space is organised well in some areas of the nursery, however, in the toddler room, the use of space does not allow children sufficient room to sleep freely at times. Staff complete risk assessments on a regular basis, however, although risk assessments have identified areas of the garden that are hazardous to children, no action has been taken to minimise the risks. Risk assessments have also failed to identify further areas that require attention; consequently not meeting the required standards. Appraisals of staff are undertaken on a regular basis. This enables both staff and the managers to identify any training needs and consequently source any appropriate training. Most records are completed accurately, however, occasionally records of children's attendance are not updated and do not provide a clear picture of when children are present.

Overall the setting does not meet the needs of the children for whom it provides care.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

The day to day management team and staff, display a high commitment to improvement, for instance through taking an active part in the inspection process, welcoming the opportunity to identify areas to develop further; however the nursery's continued evaluation of the setting is not wholly effective in identifying areas to improve. For example, although there are systems in place to assess the nursery education, they fail to identify that the current systems for planning and assessment of children become unmanageable at times for staff. As a result they also fail to identify that insufficient staff work directly with children, as staff are engaged in the process of recording observations of children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, staff were asked to ensure good hygiene practices and procedures are put in place for children aged under three so they are fully protected from the spread of germs and infection. Toddlers continue to wash their hands before eating, however, when returning to the toddler room, children now clean their hands again with anti bacterial gel before eating. This ensures that children continue to be protected from the spread of infection should they begin to play again before eating. Babies hand held toys and rattles are now sterilised after use to ensure that babies are also further protected from the spread of infection.

The nursery was also asked to ensure records of children's attendance are updated throughout a session so it is clear to see the areas of the nursery children are being cared for in at any one time. Registers are maintained within each area of the nursery, however, at times records do not provide an accurate picture of attendance and as such a weakness remains.

Additionally, the setting was also asked to ensure the grouping of children for activities in the pre-school department is appropriate for meeting the needs of all children. Whilst the setting have taken no specific action regarding this recommendation, the grouping of children now is suitable.

At the last inspection of nursery education the setting was asked to develop staff's knowledge of the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage so children are provided with a well presented curriculum which meets their learning needs. Staff that are now employed within the preschool area of the setting, have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage. Additional training has been sought and undertaken to ensure that staff's knowledge in this area has been extended.

The setting was also asked to improve the grouping of children and deployment of staff, to ensure the learning needs of all children are met and they are supported to gain the most learning and enjoyment from the activities they engage in. Although for most of the session, staff are deployed effectively to ensure that ratios are met, at times, as staff are absorbed in observing children, insufficient staff work directly with children.

Additionally, the setting was asked to further develop systems for monitoring the nursery education provided, to ensure pre-school staff are supported to improve practice and deliver the curriculum effectively. Whilst systems are now in place to monitor the nursery education, these are not wholly effective in identifying areas to enable staff to improve their practice and as such, has been raised again as a recommendation.

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

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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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- assess the risks to children in relation to the garden area, and take action to minimise these, with particular regard to the ivy, brambles and fenced basement area
- ensure that risk assessments are completed in all areas of the setting, and that an action plan is in place that identifies the timescales and action to be taken to minimise identified risks.
- ensure that all toys and materials are clean and in good repair prior to children accessing them, particularly garden toys, including the sand tray, easels and tricycles

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- further develop systems for monitoring the nursery education to ensure preschool staff are supported to deliver the curriculum effectively
- ensure that the systems to monitor and record details of children's progress are manageable and provide an accurate picture of children's progress, whilst allowing staff sufficient time to work directly with children
- further develop the systems for planning the sessions to ensure that a balanced curriculum is provided that will allow the children to make progress, whilst being manageable for staff to deliver appropriately.

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