

Acorns Club (Cascades)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	126961
Inspection date	10 August 2007
Inspector	Linda Patricia Coccia
Setting Address	Thong Lane, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 4LG
Telephone number	01474 337471
E-mail	
Registered person	Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Out of School 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acorns Club (Cascades) Holiday Playscheme opened in 1984 and operates from a variety of areas in a leisure centre. It is situated in the town of Gravesend, Kent. A maximum of 60 children under eight years may attend the playscheme at any one time. The playscheme is open each weekday from 08.30 to 16.00 for 12 weeks of the year during school holiday periods. All children use a variety of outdoor areas, which can be shared with the public.

On the day of inspection, there were 34 children aged from five years to under 15 years on roll. Children come from a wide catchment area. The playscheme currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a couple of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playscheme employs five staff with appropriate early years qualifications to primarily work with the under eights. There are 11 other staff who work with the over eights and who hold appropriate sport or health qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Provider has good procedures in place to promote children's health. Accident and medication record forms are well maintained and are confidential. They are completed by staff in the duty office where they are shared with and signed by parents. Staff generally recommend a course of action to parents regarding any accidents, such as having the injury checked by a doctor. Centre staff are very well trained in first aid. Children's health is promoted.

Children eat food which is healthy and nutritious. Parents can send in packed lunch boxes or purchase food from the centre, which is freshly cooked on the premises. If they choose the latter option, children receive a snack morning and afternoon and a midday meal. The morning snack is known as the healthy snack time, when children can only eat fruit. Parents who send in lunchboxes are recommended to send in fruit for this snack time.

Children engage in a variety of physical play activities. They swim, play golf, play round games and use trampolines. They report they enjoy all of the activities on offer. The children have regular breaks to ensure they rest between activities. Water and squash accompany the children to each activity and children can then help themselves to them at any time. Children enjoy a variety of physical activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are looked after in a variety of areas that are suitable for them. Each play area is risk assessed before each use. They use the swimming pool, sports halls and a variety of outdoor areas. When they use the pool, life guards are always present at the poolside. The children swim in the mornings before the general public are admitted. The equipment that the children use is safe. When they use large equipment, such as the trampolines, they are always accompanied by appropriate sports coaches.

There are good procedures in place to protect children in emergencies. Fire drills are regularly practised by the children. Drills are recorded and evaluated. Fire alarms are tested weekly and fire equipment is examined regularly by fire officers. Children have the opportunity to keep themselves safe in an emergency.

Good procedures are in place to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. A well written child protection policy includes Social Services contact numbers. Staff know the provider's reporting procedures, as they attend regular training updates and the information in the staff handbook is kept up to date. Information is shared with parents. The children use a variety of play areas where they sometimes have contact with the public, such as on the golf driving range. The staff use good procedures to ensure children remain safe at these times as they accompany them to the toilet, or carry out more regular head counts. Passwords are used by parents when they collect their children. Children's well-being is promoted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are caring and show good concern for children. When moving around the site and between activities, staff offer advice to children about walking sensibly so as not to hurt themselves, particularly when walking across the car park when extra vigilance is needed. Children are reminded of safety issues.

There is lots of laughter, joking and general companionship to be seen between staff and children. This is particularly noticeable on the golf driving range. Children and staff clap and cheer when a team member successfully hits a ball and if it travels any distance, there is much shouting of 'well done' and 'excellent'. Some staff accompany children into the pool where there is much splashing about and general horseplay. Children also use art and craft materials. Photographic evidence shows children displaying their home-made Halloween costumes and making props and equipment for drama productions which they also get involved in. Staff ensure children have a calm down period at the end of the day to reflect on what they have done.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from different racial and cultural backgrounds attend the playscheme. Children see positive images of equality amongst the posters and images displayed around the centre. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities also attend and are integrated into the everyday activities. They are very well supported by the staff who are patient and understanding.

Good behaviour management strategies are in place to help children learn about their behaviour. The children themselves have written the scheme rules and have considered the sanctions to be used if rules do get broken. They are required to sign to adopt the rules sheet before they attend the scheme. Any bad behaviour is dealt with initially by staff. If necessary, children are referred to the manager for a verbal warning. However, children are generally very well behaved and receive lots of praise and encouragement from staff which encourages them in good behaviour. Children build self esteem and play within well defined boundaries.

Children report that they enjoy the playscheme. Children assess the activities and each one of them has a different favourite. Parents report that they feel the scheme is well organised. Some parents feel that the scheme has helped their child's self esteem through the joining in and sense of accomplishment their children feel.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provider has good procedures in place to ensure staff working with children are suitable to do so. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and rigorous. All staff hold current Criminal Record Bureau checks. Staff have other experience of working with children, such as helping at brownies or cubs. Staff handbooks are given to staff as they commence on the scheme. They set parameters of staff conduct and make clear their employer's expectations. Children are looked after by suitable persons.

The provider has all regulatory paperwork in place, which is well maintained. The registration certificate is displayed. The attendance record clearly shows core arrival and departure times.

However, if a child arrives late or leaves early, the individual times are not recorded. The group's operational plan is available to parents on request. All children's records are stored appropriately and remain confidential between staff and parents. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider has followed a couple of recommendations from the last inspection. Firstly, to devise a method to increase confidentiality when recording accidents or the administration of medication. Secondly, to ensure passwords for children's collection are held securely.

Staff now ensure that they complete accident and medication records only in the duty office. Individual records are kept for each child to further maintain their confidentiality. Passwords are now written on the day sheet which is kept in the office. Passwords are no longer available to each staff member.

Reviewed procedures, regarding the final recommendation concerning the recording of children's arrival and departure times, need to be further refined and this remains as a recommendation for this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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):

- ensure children's arrival and departure times are recorded if different from core session times

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education* (HMI ref no 2599) which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk