



## **Little Acorns (North East) Ltd.,**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY103722
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 February 2006
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns (North East) Limited, Stanley, is one of a group of five settings, that are privately-owned. The setting opened in 2001 and operates from two storey premises, approximately one mile from Stanley town centre. The group mainly serves the needs of families from the local geographical area.

The facility is registered for 99 children aged from birth to under 8 years. There are presently 63 children on-roll, including 18 funded 3-year-olds and 8 funded

4-year-olds. Most children attend regular sessions. The setting presently supports children who have special educational needs.

The group opens from Monday to Friday, throughout the year, excluding public holidays. It provides full day-care sessions between 07.30 and 18.00 from Monday to Thursday, and from 07.30 to 17.30 on Fridays. Sessional day-care is provided from 08.45 until 11.15 and from 12.30 until 15.00; out-of-school sessions run from 07.30 until 09.00 and from 15.00 until 18.00.

Six full-time and three part-time members of staff are employed to work with the children. All staff hold recognised, level two or three, childcare or play-work qualifications. Some staff are working towards further qualifications.

The setting receives advice and support from a link-teacher from Sure Start, County Durham.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is well protected as a result of effective day-to-day practices within the nursery. Their individual health needs are thoroughly discussed with parents and competently addressed by staff. If children become ill, whilst at the nursery, they are sensitively cared for. There are good procedures in place for handling and recording accidents, contacting parents and accessing emergency treatment, or for excluding children who have contagious diseases. Children are learning to wash their hands before they eat, after messy play, or after using the bathroom. They are also encouraged to use tissues or wipes, as necessary. As a result, children are beginning to understand their own role in keeping themselves healthy.

Children are learning the importance of physical activity in keeping themselves healthy. They enjoy well balanced routines that provide good opportunities, regarding physical health. All children enjoy occasional walks and outings as a good means of getting fresh air. They benefit from enjoyable activities that help them to develop large motor skills. Babies and young children are encouraged to crawl, walk or develop good manipulative skills. Toddlers and older children also enjoy physical play activities in the deep-sea den. Pre-school children have also enjoyed a Tai Chi lesson. All children have good opportunities for quiet activities or to rest according to their individual needs.

Children enjoy a broad range of appetising meals and healthy snacks, which are suitably prepared by staff who hold basic food hygiene certificates. Babies' feeding bottles and foodstuffs are clearly labelled and appropriately stored. Babies are fed on demand and their intakes are well recorded, so parents are kept fully informed. Staff recognise the importance of holding babies when they are being fed. Toddlers are learning to feed themselves, although staff provide good advice, support and positive interaction, during feeding times. Toddlers and older children enjoy a rolling snack-time, whereby fresh fruit and drinks are readily available and within children's

reach. Children are able to help themselves, as they wish. If older children bring packed lunches, perishable items are appropriately refrigerated, to ensure children's health. Pre-school children and older children, who attend the out-of-school club, sit in small groups for meals or snacks. They chat happily with each other, enjoying mealtimes as good social occasions.

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

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in a safe, secure, child-friendly environment. Premises are warm and welcoming, although room temperatures are not always closely monitored to ensure that children are comfortably warm. Children's safety is given high priority; both indoors and on outings. For example, management ensure that there are sufficient staff on duty, to ensure that children are well supervised at all times. Formal risk assessments are completed; staff ensure non-mobile babies are well protected and all staff are vigilant in minimising potential hazards, throughout the setting. As a result, children are learning good strategies for keeping themselves safe. They walk carefully, throughout the setting; holding the handrail when using the stairs. They help to keep play-areas tidy, thereby minimising potential trip hazards. Children are also learning good safety practices, when they are outdoors. They use effective road safety drills and recognise the need to use appropriate seat-belts and restraints, whilst travelling in a vehicle.

Children have free access to a variety of good quality equipment and play materials, which are regularly checked and well-maintained. Rooms and resources are very well organised, so children can move around safely and freely. They are able to select toys independently, from tables, shelves, stacking boxes and trays, which are stored at child height.

Children's wellbeing is given careful consideration, in matters of child protection. The manager has recently attended relevant training and has cascaded thorough information to all staff, through updated procedures and in-house training. As a result, staff demonstrate a sound understanding of their role and responsibility in keeping children safe.

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

The provision is good.

Children's care arrangements are competently met as a result of staff being aware of each child's individual requirements and ensuring that all children are well supported. Older children arrive confidently and quickly settle into the group. Some babies and toddlers need additional support and encouragement to help them settle in. All children benefit from well planned daily routines, which allow sufficient flexibility to effectively meet children's individual needs. As a result, children are gaining a good sense of routine and know what is expected of them. Many respond quickly when it is 'tidy-up-time' and they line up carefully before going into other rooms or using the stairs. They are learning to share, take turns and to have respect and consideration

for each other because staff use good support strategies, taking time to listen to children and talk about what they are doing together, thereby enhancing children's enjoyment and learning.

Children, under three years of age, receive a broad range of activities that help them make good progress across all areas of their development. Babies have a wide variety of accessible toys and equipment to choose from. They are learning to move around and explore their environment, using all their senses. Toddlers have good opportunities to self-select resources or to take part in adult-led opportunities. Some enjoy construction or play purposefully with small world equipment. Others enjoy creative activities, such as painting, drawing or collage. They are beginning to develop good concentration skills. Many babies and toddlers respond with smiles or join in with songs or action rhymes. Some enjoy looking at books and respond to pictures as they listen to stories. Present activity planning is adequate. Staff are beginning to use the Birth to three matters framework to develop opportunities further for babies and young children; based on their individual abilities, interests and stages of development.

#### Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are well-qualified and experienced. Their knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals is good and they are well aware of how young children learn effectively. Children enjoy interesting topics and themes that clearly link curriculum planning to all six areas of learning. Children have a good balance of adult-led and self-initiated activities to choose from. Staff work proficiently in ensuring that all children are fully involved, well-supported and have good opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning. Adult-led focussed activities take account of children's prior learning and ensure that more able children are consistently challenged or extended. Children are given sufficient time to complete their tasks; they are very well supported by staff who ask or respond to questions and take time listen. Children behave very well as a result of staff providing enthusiasm, encouragement and purposeful praise. As a result, sessions run smoothly and children enjoy their time in the setting. All children are effectively assessed using individual achievement cards and Flying-start assessment files, which are updated regularly by staff.

Children are interested, excited and motivated to learn. They enjoy exploring the wide range of interesting learning opportunities available to them, such as painting, gluing, imaginative play, using the computer, construction or reading books. All children are developing confidence, independence and pride in their achievements. They are well behaved and relate well to staff, adults and peers.

All children are developing good language and communication skills. Some talk freely about their home and community or about things that interest them. Most enjoy stories and listen attentively; more able children recalling narratives or predicting what might happen next, whilst younger children listen and enjoy looking at the illustrations. Children are learning to link sounds to letters and some can spell out names using phonic sounds. All are developing good hand-eye coordination and some write a variety of recognisable letters well.

They are beginning to show an interest in numbers and counting. Some can competently identify a range of numerals and touch-count a series of objects, successfully. They enjoy sorting games and many are able to recognise, name and match a variety of shapes. They recognise and use positional language and language relating to size, particularly when exploring large physical equipment.

Children show a strong interest in the world in which they live. For example, they thoroughly enjoy exploring the Garden-centre role play area, filling plant-pots with soil, planting seeds, or walking around with baskets of flowers. They know that plants need water and sunlight to grow. Children's learning is further enhanced by regular visitors, such as police, firemen and the local lollipop lady, who shared interesting work experiences with the children. Children are learning to operate simple computer programs, and other equipment, successfully. All children benefit from positive images and well-planned activities that teach them about different cultures or beliefs.

Children are learning to move around confidently. Most demonstrate good spatial awareness and control their body movements very well whilst walking, running, climbing and negotiating obstacles. Most carry out a range of healthy practices, such as hand-washing and personal hygiene, competently. Many select and use one-handed tools and equipment well. They enjoy model-making and construction; many use small tools and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.

Children enjoy a broad range of creative materials that promote colour, texture and sensory awareness. For example, they taste different fruits, make patterns in the dough, enjoy creative activities, such as painting or using a range of textured or natural collage materials. They are developing good imagination and make good use of body language, gestures and facial expression to indicate their feelings. They have good opportunities to develop an interest in music, as they sing songs and action rhymes on a daily basis and have regular opportunities to play musical instruments.

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

The provision is good.

Children are well-supported, fully included and effectively valued as individuals. Staff work closely with parents and professionals to ensure children's individual needs, including any special educational needs, are effectively met. Children have good opportunities to contribute to the group and staff take time to listen to what they say. Children benefit from activities that are gender-free, as they have equal access to the entire range of toys, resources and learning opportunities. They are effectively learning about other cultures, religions and the wider world, as they learn about buildings, animals, foods, national dress and celebrations; in a variety of countries. Children also help with fund-raising charity events, such as the Chatterbox appeal. They use a good range of multicultural equipment and they see positive images in books and on posters. As a result, children are learning to make good connections between their own life and that of others, in the wider world. Proficient practices within the group ensure that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively fostered.

Children's behaviour is very good. All children benefit from regular routines and

consistent boundaries, so that they know what is expected of them. Children are given purposeful praise and encouragement, thereby boosting their confidence and self-esteem. They are learning to share, take turns and be kind and helpful to one another. Older children are polite, respectful and well mannered.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Children's personal details, and other relevant information, is thoroughly discussed and agreed. However, staff do not discuss, with parents, what their child can already do, when they start the setting. Comprehensive records and informative displays keep parents well informed about children's routines, play and learning. Children bring in artefacts for the interest table and parents or regular visitors are welcomed into the nursery. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's learning, at home. Children particularly enjoy taking Fred the bear home and they help parents complete his diary, to inform everyone of his daily routines and outings he has enjoyed. Children's progress files are well used to share information about their achievements. Children's day-to-day information is discussed informally with parents or carers, when they bring or collect their child. Comments received from parents indicate that they are very happy with the quality of childcare and education provided, and that children enjoy attending the nursery.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced as a result of space and resources being skilfully organised throughout the nursery. All children are well grouped and have good key-worker support. As a result, staff get to know the children well and children feel secure and confident, whilst in the nursery. They enjoy regular routines and staff make good use of their time to support the children well.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and they effectively underpin the work of the nursery. They form a clear operational plan that enables staff to successfully provide for children's continuity of care. Documentation systems are well-maintained and most records are up-to-date. Relevant records are regularly shared with parents to keep them fully informed about their child's achievements and progress.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Children are well supported, as a result of rigorous recruitment procedures that ensure that staff are well qualified and experienced for their roles. Children's care and education is continually improving because staff demonstrate a strong commitment towards developing their knowledge and skills. For example, some have completed training regarding the Foundation Stage curriculum or the Birth to three matters framework. Others are developing the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), or have completed relevant first aid certificates. Children benefit continually because staff and management work collaboratively and are developing a strong team that proficiently monitors, evaluates and improves the quality of teaching and learning for children.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

As a result of the last inspection, the registered provider agreed to address several recommendations that were identified as areas for improvement.

Children's privacy is appropriately maintained in toilet areas. Babies' nappies are changed safely, using suitable changing mats, on the floor. Room thermometers have been placed in the baby unit, but temperatures are not closely monitored to ensure children's comfort and care, throughout the setting.

Staff have completed inclusion training since the last inspection. As a result, they have improved practices for children to be fully involved in activities and to enjoy their experiences at their own pace. They have rearranged the pre-school room, to make individual areas more interesting and inviting. Children also enjoy new computer equipment and software programs. Staff successfully use 'Flying start 2' assessment records to monitor children's progress across the stepping stones, towards the early learning goals.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection two complaints have been reported to Ofsted.

The first related to Standard 2: Organisation. Ofsted required the registered provider to carry out an internal investigation relating to staffing ratios. The registered provider remained qualified for registration.

The second complaint related to Standard 13: Child Protection. This involved a multi-agency investigation. As a result, key staff have completed child protection training and cascaded relevant information to the rest of the team. Policies and procedures have been reviewed, to ensure that staff act promptly and effectively, should they have concerns about a child. The registered provider remained qualified for registration.

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 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 good.



## 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):

- continue to develop play and learning opportunities for babies and young children; for example, by using the Birth to three matters framework
- continue to monitor temperatures throughout the setting, to ensure comfortable temperatures are maintained, especially for non-mobile children.

### **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):

- continue to work closely with parents, to identify what children can do when they start the setting; use this information towards future planning and formal assessments.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)