



Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	142977
Inspection date	27 June 2005
Inspector	Beverly Anne Self
Setting Address	Paradise Crescent, Evercreech, Somerset, BA4 6EH
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Registered person	Acorns Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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

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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?

Acorns Pre-school opened in 1971. It operates from a purpose built building, which is situated in the grounds of Evercreech primary School in Somerset. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 until 12.00 during term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and regularly use the school gymnasium.

There are currently 32 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 24

children receive funding for nursery education. Children who attend are from the local area and surrounding villages. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with English as an additional language.

The pre-school is run by a committee, who employ six members of staff. Three of whom work full time and three work part time. All of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and continue to attend ongoing training courses.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a stimulating and fun range of activities that help contribute to their healthy growth and development. The children are familiar with the clear hand washing routines, explaining that "you must wash your hands before snack time, so they are clean to eat with". This helps them to learn about good personal care and the spread of infection.

The daily routine allows the children to experience regular outside play or gym sessions in the main school. They take part in physical activities such as, balancing, running, climbing and jumping to help them develop large muscle skills and co-ordination. The children are learning about their bodies and health through planned activities and visits from professionals such as, the dentist and health visitor. They are beginning to show responsibility for their own health needs, knowing that if playing outside in the sun, "you need to wear a hat to keep the sun off, so you won't burn".

Staff have a good knowledge of first aid, ensuring medical emergencies can be dealt with effectively. All necessary records and documentation regarding children's health are in place, this means that their individual health care needs can be consistently met and respected.

The children enjoy a choice of snacks each day and delight in the social occasion of snack time. They interact with each other, discussing what they are eating and what they will do next. Photographs show the children taking part in activities of growing vegetables, making soup and bread and food tasting to distinguish between sweet and sour. These activities help the children to learn about different foods and what they like and dislike, developing their own tastes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and visually stimulating environment. Potential risks to children are minimised because staff use thorough risk assessments to reduce potential hazards, this ensures the children can enjoy a variety of play opportunities in safe surroundings. The children are aware of safety within the group, knowing that they must tidy away the toys, so that they won't trip over. This allows

them to learn some sense of danger and that there are consequences to actions.

The children use a wide range of toys and resources which conform to safety standards. They can self select from toys which are stored at child level, so they can develop independence in choosing and tidying away the toys. The staff are well deployed within the setting and activities are closely supervised, ensuring activities are appropriate to the children's age and stage of development.

Children are very well protected by staff, who have a good understanding of children protection policies and procedures. Staff have attended relevant training courses to support their knowledge of child protection, making sure the children's welfare is always a priority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in pre-school and benefit from a very well resourced environment. The children arrive happily and are eager to participate in the activities set out. They follow the daily routine with ease and familiarity, showing confidence and increasing independence. The children take part in all the activities with enthusiasm and a sense of excitement, they enjoy trying new experiences and are willing to learn.

Staff use good questioning skills, encouraging the children to share what they know and asking questions that make them think. This helps the children to improve their language skills and extend their vocabulary and knowledge. Planned activities and topics help to develop children's learning, and they are currently looking at old, new and growing. The children are enjoying planting vegetables and flowers, and watching them grow and change. They are also talking about old nursery rhymes and enthusiastically recite Humpty Dumpty and Hickory Dickory Dock, using actions to visualise the rhymes.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are interested and excited to take part in a wide range of stimulating activities to help them make good progress towards the early learning goals.

The children sit well at circle time, listening carefully and contributing to group discussions. They move around freely and independently taking part in the activities available to them. They are sensitive to each others needs and help each other to do things, and some of the older children help their younger peers to find toys and join in with the daily routine.

Children talk and communicate confidently in both small and large groups. They enjoy listening to stories joining in with familiar phrases and describing what they see. Several of the children are able to write their own names without help and are proud of this achievement. They have lots of opportunities to see words written on labels on toys and around the room, and they are encouraged to look for their name cards at

snack time.

The children show an interest in counting and numbers, confidently counting objects during play. They spontaneously use mathematical language whilst playing describing beds in the dolls house as bigger and smaller. Children enjoy making patterns with pegs and boards, and one child states "I'm going to copy your pattern, so you'll have to be quiet as I need to concentrate". Some of the older children are learning to tell the time, and clocks around the room show set times for different parts of the day.

Children show they understand the sense of time, talking about future events and going on holiday. They are introduced to the wider world through planned activities about other countries, cultures and celebrations. Children have regular access to a computer and use everyday technology in the home corner such as, cash registers, cooker and microwave oven.

The children enjoy many creative activities such as, play dough, painting, junk modelling and cooking. They have the opportunity to use different materials and resources to develop free expression through art and craft. The children enjoy role play and show that they have good imaginations. They re-create picnics and tea parties, one child enjoyed "wrapping a present for Mummy's birthday", whilst another was "going to the park in a limo".

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage, they plan activities and play opportunities to encourage children's development. However, plans do not show how activities are extended for more able children. Overall, the children are making good progress in all areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to learn about the local community and wider world through planned activities and topics. Photographs show the children taking part in celebrations such as, Chinese New Year, Diwali and Harvest Festival. Local people have also visited the pre-school to talk to the children about 'poppy day', helping them to learn about the community.

The children behave very well, they are aware of the realistic boundaries that have been set and respond effectively to staff direction. Staff use lots of praise and encouragement and are positive role models for the children. The children show respect and kindness for each other and staff, they are caring and sensitive to each others needs and show a good sense of belonging.

Children communicate and socialise with ease, they help each other and work together to build road tracks and make games. They demonstrate good concentration skills, persisting at chosen activities and mostly finish tasks before moving on to a something different. They are familiar with the daily routine and know where toys and resources are kept. The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

A good partnership with parents contributes to consistency in the children's care and well-being in the pre-school. When children begin their placement, parents are asked to complete a registration form to share what they know about their child. Information about the provision is regularly shared with parents through newsletters, a notice board, the prospectus and talking to staff at the end of each session. Individual 'all about me books' devised by the staff, show parents how their children have progressed and what they have achieved. Generally, parents feel well informed about their children's development and care. The children benefit from the involvement of their parents in helping at the pre-school, which contributes to their development and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is very well supported by the efficient organisation and good leadership and management of nursery education. The premises and outdoor areas are well organised and set out allowing children access to a wide variety of different play opportunities, to support development and learning. All necessary documentation which helps contribute to children's health, safety and well being is available. Daily activity plans and an effective operational plan shows how staff are deployed within the setting, ensuring the children receive good support to encourage learning and progress. However, a system to monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education, care and the outcomes for children is not in place.

Staff at the pre-school all hold early years qualifications, they have many years experience and a good understanding of child development. They continue to attend ongoing training courses and workshops to update and improve their knowledge of child care and education. Staff training and progression is informally monitored and at the last inspection it was advised that an appraisal system for staff was introduced. However, this has not yet been fully addressed and no formal staff appraisal systems are in place. Overall, the pre-school meets the needs of the range of children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care and nursery education inspections recommended that the pre-school plan occasions which introduce children to books and encourage independent use, deploy staff more effectively to support children's learning and identify ways in which children's learning can be extended. It was also recommended that the pre-school develop a staff appraisal system and provide opportunities for children to develop free expression during creative activities.

The book corner is easily accessible to the children and story time is part of the daily programme, during this inspection children were observed using the books with and without staff interaction. Daily activity plans show how staff are deployed around the provision, supervising activities to support the children's learning. Some of the pre-school sessions are now evaluated and staff extend play opportunities through questioning and resources, although this is not always recorded to show how more

able children are moved forward to the next stage of development. Children take part in creative activities and staff plan a balance of adult led and 'free style' opportunities, so children can experience free expression and develop their own ideas. The system for staff appraisal is currently being explored, but no formal system is in place at this time. As a result, children now access books freely, they are supported in their play and enjoy a wide variety of creative activities. These improvements have helped encourage the children's learning and development.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- devise a formal appraisal system for staff

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):

- develop a system to monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education, care and the outcomes for children
- improve planning to show how activities can be extended for more able children

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