

Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	100524
Inspection date	21 September 2007
Inspector	Christine Coram
Setting Address	St Luke's Church Hall, St Luke Road, Winton, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH3 7LT
Telephone number	01202 533420
E-mail	
Registered person	Beverley Kearley
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

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns preschool at St Luke's (previously known as St Luke's playgroup) opened in 1997 and is privately owned. It operates from two rooms in a church hall in Winton, Bournemouth. It is situated close to the main shopping street. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open each weekday from 09.15 to 12.00 during school term time. There is an optional lunch club which runs on some of the days, depending on demand. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from three to under five years on roll. All of these receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide area. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs six members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, and participates in Bournemouth Accredited Assurance scheme, and "Investors in People".

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children have excellent opportunities for physical play and fresh air. They play outside at each session if the weather permits and benefit hugely from the varied, carefully planned activities that help them develop a wide range of physical skills. If they are unable to go outside, organised physical play is arranged, such as music and movement, or the use of equipment and games specially designed for young children.

Children's hygiene is promoted particularly effectively and with extreme care and attention to detail. For example, their personal independence and knowledge of why it is important to wash their hands, is developed through specific sessions at the beginning of the academic year about hand washing and germs. Adults continue to talk about how to their wash hands in groups sessions, including washing between their fingers. Children learn as staff carefully monitor and support them at this early stage in the year.

Children's health is protected as they use clean equipment. A member of staff has a specific role for indoor checks and this includes the cleanliness of toys and equipment. Items are thoroughly cleaned in a dishwasher on a regular basis or disinfected in the kitchen sink after use. The premises are also thoroughly checked by staff, who frequently clean surfaces and wipe tables with anti-bacterial spray, such as before snacks. They choose to provide all their own clothes and tea towels, cups, plates and cutlery, so that they can be sure that they are properly cleaned each day.

Should children have an accident or need medication, they are protected through very detailed and confidential recording. For example, a summary is written to track accidents and to assess if there is any way to make a particular area safer. Few accidents happen, but when they do, immediate and appropriate action is taken. All staff attend first aid training. Parents complete emergency medical advice or treatment consent forms that are very detailed and give specific opportunity for parents to make exceptions or instructions. This means that children are always treated according to the parents' wishes.

Children's nutritional health is also promoted thoughtfully and successfully. Snacks and drinks are healthy and nutritious. They are offered crackers with butter, cheese spread or marmite, and fruit, for example. Staff effectively and carefully organise snack time. Children sit in sociable and consistent groups. They learn a variety of skills as they spread the toppings of their choice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children's safety is a very high priority and promoted through clear and effective procedures. The building is extremely secure and efficiently maintained systems are in place to record visitors so that staff know who is in the building at all times. The areas of the building used by the children are particularly safe because staff undertake risk assessments that are completed in very full detail. A building maintenance record is kept for any issues that arise. Electrical, fire equipment and gas safety checks certificates are kept on file and these are followed up with the owners of the building to ensure that they are renewed as necessary. All staff have their own responsibility for an area such as the garden or kitchen. They all complete a daily checklist and any important information is transferred to the appropriate record, such as the

record of testing for fire alarms. Any hazards are noted and the appropriate action taken. This is monitored by the registered person who periodically checks that the jobs are completed.

Children are also kept safe because members of staff have an excellent understanding of safety. They are extremely vigilant and the registered person has an overview of the room. The safety precautions taken also provide evidence of clear understanding. For example, piles of chairs are stored behind screens so that children cannot access them and a screen is also used to provide safe access to the toilets. Children do not have access to potential hazards in the rest of the room and so they can independently access the toilets at any time.

Children's knowledge of keeping themselves safe is growing through the careful, simple explanations of staff. They also learn through projects about safety, such as water and road safety. The Local Authority road safety equipment is hired, and the crossing attendant visits the children. Children play with equipment that is of excellent quality and is maintained in a good condition. It is checked as part of daily staff responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children relish their time at the setting. A extensive range of activities is offered. Members of staff change the activities during the session so that children have varied experiences. At times the activities are specifically tailored to developmental needs of a small group of children. Planned activities are extremely appropriate to the range of children across the group. Children have instant access to a wide range that is set out on the tables and around the room in advance of their arrival. They also have access to further resources for their free choice such as technology items from low shelving units. Children are happy and well occupied throughout the session. Staff are able to ensure that they are fully occupied and supported so that they fill their morning with challenging and enjoyable activities. Interaction and input from staff is excellent. All the adults are highly knowledgeable and enhance the children's activities throughout the session. They join in with the activities and help the children to extend them. Staff offer vocabulary and suggest new ways to use the equipment available but are sensitive to the needs of each child so that they know when a child needs to repeat an activity or stage. They are relaxed and approachable, cheerful and encouraging at all times.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have a comprehensive and clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and encourage learning through excellent open questioning. They give extensive and effective support to the children. They know the children well and understand development so that they tailor their support very knowledgeably to help the individual children progress. Supported free play is particularly successful and group sessions are very effective. Staff hold children's attention remarkably well and pitch their teaching at a level to meet the needs of the children.

Planning is detailed and the setting plans for progression through the year in each of the areas of learning. Long-term plans demonstrate how the stepping stones are included. Activity plans give considerable detail about the learning aims. They also include what the children will achieve, how they will achieve this, and key words and concepts to be included. Staff complete very full evaluations, assessing the success of these.

Staff complete comprehensive children's observations using a diary for each child. Dated observations are added under the six areas of learning. These are mainly completed by the child's key worker but can be added to by any member of staff. The next steps for children's development are discussed with colleagues at weekly meetings. Staff are highly skilled and adept at ensuring that the activities provided during the key worker session are tailored to their individual children. This means that children make rapid progress in their learning.

The organisation of staff is excellent and extremely effective. All staff have a clear understanding of their roles and are given responsibility for their group planning. Children with specific requirements make excellent progress. Very clear Individual Learning Plans and assessments contribute to this. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator works diligently to liaise with all the adults involved in the care of each child. She has developed a particularly helpful relationship with the staff at a local specialist unit. Home books are completed by all the parents and other settings attended by the children. This helps each setting to know how the children have been responding. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator is very aware of the strengths and areas for progress for the children.

Children are making excellent progress. They are very confident and beginning to wave and say good morning at registration with beaming smiles. Most children engage very well in activities and persist at them to their conclusion. They greatly enjoy showing the items they have brought from home and some will speak to the group about them. They develop a good sense of community through a number of visitors to the setting, such as the police and the crossing warden. They develop excellent language skills. They chatter animatedly across the snack table with gestures and facial expressions and are able to express feelings and imagination. They are beginning to understand the concept of sounds and letters. They are fascinated by books and very keen to identify items in the pictures. Children demonstrate rapidly growing skills in numbers for counting. Three-year-olds know that 25 comes after 24. Skills in calculation and problem solving are growing. Children count the number at the table and know that they need six plates and three-year-olds are beginning to understand the concept of more and less.

Children take great delight in exploring and investigating. For example, the shaving foam fascinates them and they enthusiastically rub to in their hands, pat and smear on table, carefully observing the effect. They are delighted at changing in colour when paint is added. They demonstrate rapidly developing skills with technology, playing with a programmable toys, for example. Some can understand that the direction of the arrows relate to the destination. Others have yet to grasp this, but progress through experience and the excellent support of staff. Children are very creative and give expression to this in varied activities. They are very enthusiastic about activities such as paint spinning and are surprised and delighted by the results. They spontaneously suggest what the pattern resembles. A three-year-old states 'it looks like a flower'. They quickly develop imitative role play. For example, in the home play area they very naturally set out cups and plates and 'eat a meal' together.

Children enjoy a wide range of movements such as wriggling their shoulders, fingers and wrists. They attempt to jump with both feet together, bounce on the 'space hopper', and walk on cup stilts. They demonstrate increasing skill and persist at movement until they perfect them. They are becoming very aware of their bodies. For example, they enter into conversations about hard work and aching arms when spinning the paint spinner. They warm up before exercise, learning excellent healthy habits. They feel their hearts beating faster and discuss the changes in their bodies.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children thrive and flourish in an inclusive and child-orientated environment. They are welcomed into the setting, where staff succeed in creating a colourful and stimulating area for play. For example, they use innovative screening to display children's work and other illustrations at their eye level. Children who attended in the previous term have a very clear sense of belonging and new children show a remarkable degree of this. Their key worker groups enhance their sense of belonging to their own group, for example. There is an excellent settling-in procedure that ensures that, children are fully familiar with the setting and staff before they are left. One member of staff is allocated to take care of new children as they gradually come in and settle so that there is very helpful communication and continuity for parents and children. Staff members' knowledge of individual children is excellent. Information about the children is shared on a weekly basis so that all members of staff are aware of the stage of development, personalities and preferences of all the children. The needs of children with specific requirements are met extremely well through meticulous preparation and liaison with parents, carers, and others involved with the child. They are fully included in the session and very well supported. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered effectively.

Children behave extremely well due to the range of stimulating activities that engage and challenge them and the knowledgeable support from staff. The adults are excellent role models and are polite, cheerful, caring and giving. They listen to the children and to each other very attentively. 'Happy Rules' are displayed and discussed to encourage desirable behaviour and are extremely positive. Staff relate to the children with clear understanding of their maturity and entirely appropriately at all times. This includes the occasions when they manage minor incidents.

Partnership with parents and carers with regard to nursery education is outstanding. The registered person meets individually with parents prior to the child receiving funding, to ensure that they are clear about the curriculum and to ensure effective partnership. As a result, the children's learning is enhanced because parents have very detailed information. This means that parents can fully support their child's learning. A newsletter is produced each term that includes details of the Early Learning Goals and the themes and topics for each week. Brief descriptions are given of the festivals to be included such as 'Yom Kipper (Jewish day of repentance / atonement)' or 'Harvest Festival (Christians thanking God for the harvest and the crops)' so that parents have a very clear understanding of what their children are learning. Parents are proactive and involved in the setting. They have chosen to form a support group and undertake fund raising and organise other support for staff. Evaluation forms are completed following the parents' consultation meetings and all the responses are very positive. Parents report that they are very happy with the information given about their children. They are confident to give input into the assessment process and feel that they have plenty of information about what the children are learning and can continue the learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide. Clear and robust systems are in place to check new staff so that suitable and highly motivated adults care for the children. Comprehensive staff induction procedures ensure that adults understand the important information with regard to safety. Very effective procedures ensure that children are protected and they are never left alone with an adult who is not vetted. Staff are managed

well and excellent arrangements are made for their progress and training. Space is used efficiently to provide an environment where movement is safe and easy but where the maximum stimulation and learning opportunities are offered. The setting is highly organised and the session runs very smoothly. The routine benefits children with short sessions and many changes of activity to ensure a range of experiences. Policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive and all the required documentation is in place.

The leadership and management of Nursery Education are outstanding. There is an extremely clear vision, and the Registered Person is highly motivated and experienced. She influences staff through excellent role modelling and motivates them through her own enthusiasm. She offers them opportunities to take responsibility for particular areas and challenges and supports them effectively. She identifies the staff team as one of the strengths of the setting. The provision for nursery education is monitored through constant reviewing and evaluation. The Registered Person assesses the provision and the planning each day and makes change as needed. She identified good communication with staff as another means of assessing the provision. Staff are very committed and fully involved at all stages of this process. They are confident to give their input. There is a very evident commitment to improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the setting agreed to ensure that the complaint's policy includes details of the regulator. In Nursery Education, they were also asked to consider ways to encourage the less able and less confident children to access information and communication technology.

The details of the regulator now appear clearly in the policy so that parents have this information from the outset. All the children are introduced to the full range of equipment, including items that promote their interest and understanding of technology, at an early stage in the academic year. This means that less able and less confident children have the opportunity to develop interest in and skills with it through experience.

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.

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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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