

Little Acorns Nursery (Blackburn) Limited

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 301659 |
| Inspection date | 11 October 2007 |
| Inspector | Susan Elaine Heap |
| Setting Address | Lower Whitehalgh Barn, Stockclough Lane, Feniscowles, Blackburn, BB2 5JR |
| Telephone number | 01254 207 261 |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Little Acorns Nursery (Blackburn) LTD |
| 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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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 Nursery is run by Little Acorns Nursery (Blackburn) Limited. It opened in 2000 and operates from four rooms in a converted building. It is situated in the Feniscowles area of Blackburn. A maximum of 42 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00 except for bank holidays. All children have access to an enclosed play area.

There are currently 48 children aged from eight months to under five years on roll. Of these, 10 children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 13 members of staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy due to the satisfactory hygiene procedures which are followed throughout the nursery. The staff wear disposable aprons when serving food and floors are mopped at regular intervals throughout the day, which effectively minimises the risk of the spread of infection. Children are developing good health and hygiene practices, such as independently washing their hands after going to the toilet or after completing a painting activity. Even the toddlers are developing an awareness of the importance of cleanliness, for example, they wash the bricks in a small bowl as part of a planned activity. They talk about how the water is smooth and soft and that they are making the toys clean. Good hygiene practices are supported by topic work and planned activities, such as visits from the dental health team. Children learn how to brush their teeth and discuss the importance of this as they practise on a large pair of teeth.

Younger children sleep according to their individual needs and are made comfortable on sleep mats. The caring and sensitive staff stay with them as they fall asleep, removing their shoes so that they are able to stretch their toes.

Recent changes to the menu ensure that children are provided with a healthy and nutritious diet. During the day, children are offered at least five portions of fruit and vegetables to eat. They enthusiastically eat a roast dinner with broccoli and cabbage followed by slices of fresh fruit for dessert. In the afternoon, they eat sandwiches made with brown bread and a side salad of lettuce, tomato and cucumber. The staff ensure that all children are regularly offered drinks throughout the day, however, fresh drinking water is not readily available in each of the nursery rooms. As a result, children are unable to develop their independence skills or recognise when they need refreshment.

Children have access to fresh air daily which contributes to their good health. They participate in a range of physical play activities, both indoors and outdoors. They regularly play in the nursery garden, go for walks in the local community and join in music and movement sessions. Older children confidently climb the steps on the climbing frame and move around the outside area with increasing speed on bikes and scooters. Extra curricular activities include dancing lessons. These are all enjoyable and contribute to children adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a friendly environment which is generally safe. They are greeted warmly by name when they arrive each morning. Displays and examples of the children's creative work are displayed on the walls which helps to give children a sense of belonging within the setting. There is a wide range of resources, toys and equipment for the children to use which are suitable to their ages and stages of development. Toys are mainly stored in low-level storage units or in boxes which means that children can access these independently. The use of large soft cushions and play mats generate a comfortable environment for very young children. However, there is no domestic style seating to enable children to pull themselves up or for the staff to bottle feed babies comfortably.

Visual checks of the areas used by children are completed daily to ensure that these are safe. Staff are well deployed and supervise the children at all times, especially when playing outside. However, fire doors are not maintained in good working order which compromise children's safety and the fire evacuation procedures for the first floor are not sufficiently robust in order to protect children. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe through their stories, play activities and discussions with the staff. For example, during topic work about 'People who help us' the fire service and road safety unit visit the setting. Staff consistently give reminders to children, such as not climbing on furniture and give an explanation of the consequences which reinforces their learning and understanding of safety.

Children are protected satisfactorily because most staff are trained in and have a good understanding of child protection procedures. A written child protection policy is in place which follows the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures but this does not include the procedure to follow if there is an allegation against a member of staff. The manager demonstrates a good understanding of being able to follow the procedures when necessary which ensures children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and enjoy the time they spend in the nursery. Relationships between staff and children are very good and many have formed a close bond with each other, for example, children often run back to give their key worker a hug before they leave the setting with their parents. Children enter confidently and quickly settle in their chosen activity. They make good use of a broad range of planned activities which support their overall care, learning and development. The staff working with the younger children spend time talking and playing with them at their level, echoing babies' sounds and encouraging their early communication skills. Children have opportunities to snuggle in when they are being bottle fed or when they seek reassurance from a member of staff. This helps them to settle and feel secure.

Staff working with the under threes have a good understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They plan a variety of enjoyable and interesting activities to help children make progress in all areas of their development. In the toddler room children have many sensory experiences, such as playing with the sand, water, or cooked spaghetti. They enjoy mixing ingredients together and watch how things change, for example, as they mix spaghetti, water, cornflour and glitter in a bowl.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. The activities and experiences provided for the children sufficiently cover the areas of learning over a period of time and written plans identify what the learning intentions are. Planned activities are evaluated to monitor how well the activity went and assessments of children's learning are undertaken. However, due to recent staff changes, some of the children's individual development files are not up to date which means that children's progress is not always effectively monitored. Interesting topic work skilfully links all areas of the curriculum to the theme; currently 'All about me', which reinforces and consolidates children's learning.

Children are interested, motivated and are often able to concentrate for long periods of time on a self-chosen activity, such as bathing the dolls or being creative with the paper clay. They

are developing some self-help skills as they put on their own coats ready to play outside. However, they have few opportunities to develop their independence by helping set the table with cups and cutlery or serving themselves at mealtimes. They behave well and help to tidy up before snack time or lunchtime and put the equipment back in the correct box. They have built good relationships with their peers and often give each other praise, for example, one child says to another, 'good boy' when he has helped put the bricks away. Children communicate confidently and clearly with the staff and make their needs known, such as asking for another drink at lunchtime or telling a member of staff that they are going to the bathroom.

Children are beginning to develop a good understanding that print carries meaning and have opportunities to develop early writing skills as mark making resources are easily accessible to them. Four-year-old children often freely write their names on their work when they have completed a drawing. Children's art and topic work decorates the walls of the room and staff have labelled these with key words and underneath children have made their attempts to write the letters. Children listen with interest and enjoyment to stories and are encouraged to recall what happened at the end. They are learning new words, for example, children know and understand the words 'author', 'illustrator' and 'narrator'. Children show an awareness of and take an interest in number. They enjoy singing counting rhymes and songs and use a range of resources, such as threading beads to sequence and follow patterns. They use language to describe position and size in their everyday activities, such as 'I am bigger than you' or 'It is over there'.

Children have many opportunities to explore and investigate using their senses and have practical experiences of living things. They recall the names of the animals they saw when the mobile zoo visited and recall what happened when the owl flew across the room. They are learning about growth and measure as they grow sunflowers from seed. Short walks in the local community, such as down the lane or into the woods enable children to find out about where they live and the natural world and environment. They are learning a good sense of time through the familiar daily routine and children are able to tell an adult what will happen next, for example, playtime or teatime. They use a good selection of tools and materials, such as rolling pins and pastry cutters, and older children can successfully cut with scissors around shapes and patterns they have drawn.

Children enjoy free painting and drawing and express themselves confidently using a variety of media and techniques; such as painting at the easel, printing with a range of tools, painting the flags outside with water and large paintbrushes, or rolling trucks and cars through the paint onto paper. They explore sounds as they play with musical instruments and sing simple songs from memory. They recognise repeated sounds and patterns as they join in a song, clap their hands to the beat and continue to hum in tune as they move into the outdoor play area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are valued and treated with equal concern. There are strong systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities and their parents. This means they are fully included in this setting. All the staff attended a 10 week basic sign language course and, as a result, children know and understand key phrases to sign. Children participate in activities that help them learn about the customs, religions and cultural beliefs of others. For example, through discussions and activities that celebrate various festivals throughout the year.

Good behaviour is actively encouraged by all staff members, who are positive role models, and support children to play fairly, share and wait their turn. Children are responsive to the meaningful praise and encouragement they receive and behave well. They are very good at sharing and taking turns, for example, as they wait to bath the dolls. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents regarding nursery education is satisfactory. Parents receive lots of verbal feedback about their child's development and are able to view their child's progress records at any time. However, there are no regular opportunities for them to contribute to their child's developmental records to enable them to be fully involved in their learning. There are several good systems in place to support effective partnerships with parents. For example, parents are made to feel welcome at the nursery and positive steps are taken to ensure they are kept well informed about all the relevant policies and procedures. Regular newsletters, daily discussions, the use of a daily diary for the very young children keep them well informed about the setting and what their children have done. In addition, their views are sought about any changes through questionnaires, such as revising the children's menu. Parents praise the staff highly for the warmth, care, activities and the friendly environment provided for their children.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Children's well-being is maintained because the setting has effective recruitment and induction procedures in place. They are cared for by a staff team who have a sound understanding of how children learn and the majority have appropriate early years qualifications or are undertaking training. In addition, several staff members are completing a foundation degree in early years. There are systems in place to support the staff team through meetings, supervision sessions and ongoing training. These enable staff to develop their skills and knowledge of good childcare practice. Recent changes to the staff in the pre-school room have led to weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of the nursery education. As a result, the manager has taken appropriate steps to address this through the redeployment of staff.

Policies and procedures are of a satisfactory standard and are used by the staff team to effectively promote the welfare and safety of children. Most of the legally required documentation by the National Standards is in place and is well organised. Space and time is organised well to enable children to have opportunities to eat, rest, or play inside and outside. A key worker system is in place and children are cared for in small groups which enables them to build up secure relationships with staff. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection several recommendations were made regarding documentation. Staff records regarding the vetting of staff are now consistently held; appropriate vetting procedures are followed and staff are re-checked every three years, parents' written consent is obtained for seeking medical advice or treatment, and the complaints policy has been updated to reflect revisions to the National Standards. These have improved children's care, safety and welfare, and partnership with parents. However, the child protection policy does not include the action to be taken in the event of an allegation against a member of staff. This is a breach of the National Standards and a further recommendation has been made following this inspection.

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

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The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- provide some domestic style furniture to provide assistance for babies to develop their mobility and continue normal life experiences
- ensure fresh drinking water is available to children at all times
- extend the child protection policy to include a statement of the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer
- ensure that fire doors are closed and maintained in working order at all times and review the current fire evacuation procedures from the first floor.

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):

- ensure that observation and assessment records of children securely link to children's progress through the stepping stones and are maintained up to date at all times
- develop opportunities for pre-school children to develop their independence at mealtimes
- involve parents in their child's learning by sharing assessment records on a regular basis.

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