

# Little Acorns Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	301790
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 September 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jasmin Myles-Wilson
<b>Setting Address</b>	South Charlton Village Hall, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE61 5HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01665 579 429
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Little Acorns Pre-school
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 Pre-school has been registered since 1990 and is based in the village hall in South Charlton, Ellingham, Northumberland. The nearest town is Alnwick. The group is committee led.

All indoor activities are provided in the large hall. There is an adjacent yard and the nearby village garden for supervised outdoor activities. The group opens on Monday and Tuesday from 09.00 to 11.30 and Friday 09.00 to 12.45 during term time only. A maximum of 26 children aged from two to five years can attend at any one time. There are seven children on roll and five of these receive funding for nursery education. There are two permanent members of staff working with the children, both of them are experienced and qualified.

Parents are encouraged to participate in the care of the children. The teaching method used is the Foundation Stage curriculum. The group receives support from an early years consultants, development workers and a special educational consultant.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children's health is generally protected well because staff have good and consistent practices and routines in place. Children develop good personal hygiene skills through the encouragement they receive from staff. They begin to realise the importance of keeping themselves free from the spread of infection. For example, children remind each other that they need to wash their hands after using the toilet so they can wash away all the germs. Good arrangements are in place so that children who are injured or sick receive efficient care from staff. However, staff do not hold written consent to seek emergency treatment or advice for children they care for.

Healthy snacks are provided and children enjoy eating nutritious food, such as carrot sticks, toast or fruit. Children's dietary requirements are taken into consideration and met well as parents and staff work together to provide healthy food. Children can access drinks throughout the session as an accessible covered jug of water and cups are left in a suitable place. Drinks are also given to children at snack times and usually consists of milk or water.

Children have good control over their body movements. They enjoy exercising their whole body by running and rolling around on the grass as they take part in outdoor activities. Children begin to understand what effect exercise has on their bodies, for example, children know that after they have been running around for a while they become tired and need to have a rest to restore their energy. They also show good awareness of space as they manoeuvre well around people and objects. Children use and handle tools confidently and correctly, such as binoculars which help to develop good hand and eye co-ordination as well as their fine motor skills.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff make the environment welcoming so children feel welcome, relaxed and settled. The environment is clean and well lit and provides sufficient space for children to move safely around their surroundings. Staff assess potential risks to children on a regular basis, for example, the room, resources and the outdoor area are checked before children use the area. However, not all staff are certain of the procedure to follow in reporting child abuse concerns. Children are taught to think about their own safety and are reminded by staff of how to keep themselves safe. For example, when children are taken off the premises staff remind them that they must not run and should stay close to an adult, children listen and comply.

Children play with a varied range of toys and equipment which are adequately accessible to them. They confidently select what they wish to play with or do and persist in activities that interest them for periods of time. For example, children choose library books and then sit quietly looking at the story about tractors, looking at every page and taking in all the pictures. There is a suitable procedure in place for checking and ensuring that resources are maintained sufficiently for children to play with.

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

The provision is good.

Children are involved in a varied range of activities that they enjoy, find interesting and are developmentally appropriate. They are stimulated and their interest is maintained as staff

effectively plan practical and purposeful routine tasks into activities. For example, children go on a hunt for vegetables which they then use to make vegetable soup. Children are keen to try new experiences and activities, for example, young children push their way into the activity and begin to dig in the soil with their hands or tools to find potatoes. They take part in a good range of sensory and creative experiences, such as looking at and handling manure or making a scarecrow from straw and other materials. Interaction between staff and children is good, therefore, children are happy and settled.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and implement it creatively. Staff work well together to create a welcoming, stimulating and supporting environment, therefore, children become competent learners and integrate well within the group. Staff effectively observe and assess what children can and can't do so they are clear of children's capabilities and plan a range of activities to meet their needs. Planning is good and covers all areas of learning and provides realistic challenges for children, however, opportunities are missed for children to be independent when using the internal space of the premises. For example, children are given the opportunity to spread butter on their toast but when children wash their hands they are not encouraged to work the soap dispenser for themselves or tear off their own paper towel to dry their hands. Staff listen well to children when they initiate conversations which promotes children's sense of belonging. Staff use simple open-ended questions thoughtfully, for example, staff ask children "why do you think the library van has dirty wheels?" Children respond enthusiastically to the simple questions. Children are competent speakers when conversing with their peers or adults. For example, children tell the group about their family members, such as my daddy was on his tractor in the night. Children are able to correctly identify simple colours.

Children are motivated and interested in what they do. They interact well together and show high levels of concentration whether doing a group or individual activities. For example, children sustain interest for at least 15 minutes when doing a vegetable hunt. Children use their imagination well, for example, they use toy tractors to pretend they are collecting hay from the fields. They also enjoy playing with and using different materials such as water and straw. They are good listeners and respond well to instruction. Children join in singing songs with increasing attention and enthusiasm. For example, while the staff sing a song about a scarecrow children quickly jump up giggling and laughing as they pretend to be scarecrows. Children behave well and they show care towards others and other living things, for example, on seeing a spider crawling around children tell each other not to kill the spider.

Children show interest in numbers and older children can count up to five objects without support. Staff give children opportunities to become familiar with numbers in numeral form. For example, at snack time staff give children a slip of paper with a number on and they have to find the chair with that matching number then sit on it. Children recognise simple shapes, such as a triangle or a circle but have difficulty in recognising more complicated shapes such as a hexagon. Children correctly use size language to give a description of what they have seen, for example, talking about the sizes of potatoes they have seen, they say 'ginormous, big, small and tiny.'

Children construct materials very well. They are curious and investigate natural things such as soil and enjoy exploring with their senses. For example, they use their hands to feel water and potatoes. Children show an interest in operating equipment, such as a camera or a computer. They use simple tools well for a specific purpose, for example, they take pictures with a camera,

then the pictures are loaded onto the computer where they can be viewed by everyone. Children are developing the skill of using one handed tools such as scissors or small garden tools. They also use writing tools confidently and begin make markings with meaning, for example, as children find a vegetable item a mark is placed by that picture.

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

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed, included and treated with equal concern. Staff have sufficient knowledge regarding equality and diversity which enables them to treat children as individuals. For example, children who need a little support to be more vocal are invited to take part in a game where they have to verbally communicate. They join in the game and it is successful. The space available is adapted so that it is more suitable for children's needs. Children are regularly involved in indoor and outdoor activities which helps develop their knowledge and understanding about their world and community. For example, children visit Alnwick Gardens to discover different kinds of plants that grow or they are creative as they celebrate different festivals from around the world.

Staff use positive behaviour management strategies to which children respond well, therefore, children learn what behaviour is acceptable. For example, staff explain to children that garden tools should always be kept below their heads and children respond by keeping their tools down. Children behave positively and play well together or individually. Staff develop good relationships with children and effectively praise them for their positive behaviour or for remembering the rules. For example, when children remember to keep their tools down or they use tools correctly staff reward them with comments that encourage them to continue what they are they are doing. This helps to boost children's confidence which in turn helps them to feel good about themselves. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnerships with parents and carers is good. Staff obtain written information from parents about their children which informs them of children's starting points which they are then able to build on. Due to the good working relationships between parents and staff they are able to keep each other informed regarding their children's care. Parents are included in and asked to share their comments about the activities that their children do. Children's development and educational progress is shared with parents on a regular basis in written and verbal form. Staff know the children and work well with parents so that they provide effective care for children's individual need.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the pre-school is good. Staff are valued and supported to take up the challenge of the group's current vision, which is outdoor education. They meet regularly to discuss planning and any other issues or concerns. Staff work well together as a team to provide children with a happy and caring environment. They have sound knowledge and understanding of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage to help children progress through the stepping stones. The good support and advice they receive from other professional workers, such as an early years consultant and a special educational needs worker, helps them to provide an environment which encourages children to progress in their development. There is a good procedure in place to ensure that activities are evaluated well and children's development is

assessed which informs the planning of activities, which enables children to progress on to their next step.

Good recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that children are cared for by staff who are suitable. The pre-school is organised in a way that enables children to be grouped with peers of a similar age. The group tend to focus on using the outdoor environment which gives children confidence to explore their environment and experience natural resources. The inside space is adapted effectively to meet the needs of children, for example, when children suffer temporary restrictions, due to an operation, staff ensure the room is adapted and ample space is available to them.

Staff have good knowledge of childcare but they commit themselves to further training which enhances their practice and skills. Staff use their time well to provide care that is effective for individual children and work well together so that they meet children's needs effectively. Most relevant documentation, records and consents are kept which contributes to the safety of children and the good service provided. However, the documentation is not organised well so that it is easily accessible and readily available for inspection. Staff have awareness of the group's policies and have knowledge of how to implement the majority of them. They have sound awareness of their responsibility to inform in Ofsted of significant events or changes.

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

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

At the last care inspection it was recommended that fire evacuation procedures be displayed in a prominent position within the setting. It was also recommended that the group look towards developing the existing policies and procedures to include staff recruitment, employment, induction and confidentiality.

Fire procedures are displayed on a cupboard door, which is left open during the session, so anyone using the premises, when the session is on, can see the evacuation procedures. Policies and procedures have been updated and now include procedures for employing staff as well as recruiting and induction procedures. A policy on confidentiality has also been devised. As a result of staff implementing the recommendations, children are kept safe.

### **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 complaint 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):

- obtain written consent to seek emergency treatment or medical advice for all children
- ensure all relevant documentation is readily available for inspection and that staff have knowledge of all policies, for example, child protection procedures.

### **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):

- provide more opportunities for children to be independent within the setting.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)