

Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	502621
Inspection date	24 September 2007
Inspector	Sheila Iwaskow
Setting Address	The Oaks Centre, Stocks Lane, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2QS
Telephone number	01925 790500
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Registered person	Mrs Deborah Jean Byford
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 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 Day Nursery opened in 2000 and is privately owned. It operates from three rooms in the Oaks Community Centre, which is situated in Stocks Lane, Penketh an area of Warrington. The day nursery also has occasional access to the main hall of the centre and the playing field of the adjoining school. The day nursery serves the local area.

There are currently 110 children on roll; of these, 49 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The nursery opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 07.45 until 18.00.

There are 16 staff working with the children and of these 12 hold an appropriate early years qualification. There are two members of staff currently working towards a recognised award. The setting receives support from the Sure Start in Warrington and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a healthy and hygienic environment. Staff employ thorough routines and procedures to ensure that all areas accessible to the children are clean and appropriately maintained at all times. Good nappy changing routines are in place, which further protects children's good health. Children develop their personal hygiene skills. They independently go to the toilet and are keen to wash and dry their hands following pictures displayed above the sinks. Staff talk to the children about germs, helping them to understand the underlying concepts of good hygiene practices. Children are well taken care of if they are ill as staff are suitably qualified in first aid and an appropriate sick child policy is in place.

Children's particular dietary needs are recorded and considered when planning menus. Healthy eating is actively promoted and menus are clearly displayed. Food provided is well balanced and nutritious, effectively promoting children's physical growth and development. Snack times are happy social occasions where children and staff relax and enjoy each other's company. Food is served on attractively coloured plates, which makes eating a more pleasurable experience for children. Staff hold food hygiene certificates and wear gloves and aprons when serving food. This ensures that food preparation meets the guidelines laid down by Environmental Health. Children are offered drinks with their snacks, however, children in the pre-school room do not have independent access to fresh drinking water at other times of the day.

Children enjoy the time they spend outdoors. They have lots of fun as they run around in the fresh air and show a good awareness of space as they ride around on a range of wheeled toys. Children have regular opportunities to engage in dance activities, some of which are multi-cultural. This allows children to explore positioning their bodies in different ways, whilst having lots of fun. A range of small tools, such as paint brushes and glue sticks are used by children with increasing control.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into a bright and stimulating surrounding. Vibrant displays of children's art works, create a purposeful learning environment and give children a sense of belonging within the setting. The premises are well maintained and heated to an appropriate temperature, ensuring children's comfort. Children move around their immediate environment with ease and confidence. Toilet areas are well designed and afford children privacy when required. The nursery is well equipped to promote all areas of development. Children access a good supply of toys and materials, which are safe and in good condition. Resources available are easily accessible allowing children to make informed decisions about their play. The child-sized furniture is of good quality and meets the needs of all the children who attend.

Close attention is paid to safety throughout the setting. Children feel assured because they are well supervised by staff. Detailed risk assessments are in place covering all areas of the nursery. The building is secure, the door is locked and entry is via a bell. A detailed record is kept at all times of this number of children in the nursery. This is displayed and adjusted accordingly by staff as children come and go. Fire drills are clearly displayed and practised with the children each week. This ensures that they are confident of what to do and where to go

should the need arise. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as staff gently remind them not to run in case they fall.

Children are well protected as staff have a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms of abuse and who to make contact if they have concerns. A child protection policy is in place and includes procedures to be followed should an allegation be made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and secure in the friendly nursery where everyone relates well to each other with warm and caring relationships. All young children are purposefully engaged in a range of exciting activities which cover all areas of their learning and which they clearly enjoy. Children are beginning to develop a sense of self as they look at themselves in the mirrors and make prints of their hands. They become engrossed in role play situations as they play with small world toys and engage in household chores in the home corner. Opportunities for children to manipulate play dough and participate in cutting and sticking activities help to develop children's fine motor skills.

Children thrive on the routines that operate within the setting. As part of the daily routine they are encouraged to hang up their coats and put any items from home in their drawers. Such practices teach children to respect the environment in which they play. Staff have a good knowledge of children's needs. They are particularly aware and skilled in meeting their emotional needs, such as settling children into the nursery at the beginning of the academic year and developing confidence and self-esteem.

Staff have successfully implemented the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Activities are planned and children's progress is monitored. However, the planning of focused activities does not clearly identify the next stages of children's learning.

Nursery Education:

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit from being taught by a qualified teacher who works closely with staff in the pre-school room to provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum. As a result, children make good progress towards the early learning goals. Planning takes a thematic approach, covers all six areas of learning and reflects the interests of the children. Children's progress is regularly assessed and clearly linked to the stepping stones, making their progress easy to track. Short term planning identifies clear learning objectives and there is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Children experience a variety of teaching styles, which has a positive effect on their learning. Good use is made of questioning to facilitate and extend children's learning. For example, staff encourage children to look at a picture of a shape and identify it; children name the shape as an oval. Staff then ask children to consider what an oval looks like and children reply 'an egg'. This learning opportunity is extended as staff ask them to think about what creatures lay eggs.

Areas of continuous provision are well defined indoors. Written plans detailing how these areas support children's learning are in place, although at the time of the inspection were not displayed. The nursery is currently developing continuous provision outdoors to enrich and extend children's experiences. However, this is an on going project and not yet fully developed to fully promote all areas of children's development.

Children are confident speakers both in large and small groups. They develop positive relationships with adults and peers and show a willingness to be helpful and considerate towards each other. They children are able to sit for sustained periods of time; they value other children's contributions at circle time, as they listen to news, discuss the weather and decide the day of the week. Self-help skills are generally developing well as children help to tidy away at the end of the session. Signing in at the beginning of the day and finding their name cards at snack time provide children with opportunities to recognise and write their name. Children proudly tell each other the sound that is at the beginning of their name, which raises their awareness of sounds and letters. They have interesting opportunities for learning to write for a purpose as they take a food order, compose a letter and design a book all about their favourite things. Story time is a popular activity and contributes towards children's love of books. Materials, such as crayons, chalks and felt tip pens are available in the writing area to encourage children to make marks and develop their hand writing skills.

Children show a keen interest in number and mathematical concepts are explored as part of the daily routine and as children play. For example, children identify the colour of their plates at snack time, count the number of sides on the square and measure their height. They concentrate when exploring capacity and enjoy pouring water from one container to another. Visits to the local shops provide children with chances to weigh fruit and handle money. Children have many chances to investigate using their senses. For example, they have fun blowing and catching bubbles, making a scarecrow from tissue paper, felt and cloth and exploring the texture of sand. They enjoy finding out about the life cycle of a frog and observing chickens grow as they hatch from their shells. Recalling past events and looking at pictures of themselves as babies, helps children to understand the passing of time. Children are learning about growth as they plant seeds in the outdoor play area and watch them grow. Handling snakes and examining woodlice allow children to gain an appreciation of creatures that live in their environment. Visitors, such as the policeman come into the setting and talk to the children about keeping themselves safe. Children confidently use the computer to support their learning and are able to use the mouse with increasing control.

Children experiment with a wide variety of musical instruments and enjoy making sounds. Imaginative role play situations, such as the cafe or home corner provide new experiences and enables children to develop their own ideas. Their creativity is further developed as they enact the story of The Nativity and express themselves in a wide range of art activities, using a variety of media.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children enjoy each other's company as they play harmoniously in the happy atmosphere of the nursery. Every child is valued as an individual and the ethos of mutual respect and support between staff is reflected in the positive interactions in all areas of the nursery. Birthdays are acknowledged, which makes children feel special. Furthermore, children are presented with a beautiful medal when they leave the setting as a reminder of the time they have spent at the nursery. Children are allowed to bring items from home to help them feel secure within the setting. Opportunities to celebrate festivals, such as Divali, to taste food from other cultures and access resources that reflect equality of opportunity, allow children to appreciate the diversity of the world in which they live. The setting demonstrates a positive attitude towards inclusion. Staff recognise the importance of working closely both with parents and outside agencies to ensure that individual requirements are met. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are well behaved. All children are treated with individual care and respect. Minor disagreements are dealt with in a calm and sensitive manner. Frequent praise and encouragement from staff help children feel good about themselves and develop their self-confidence.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents receive a booklet which contains information about the nursery and policies and procedures are readily available at the setting. Verbal feedback at the end of the day keeps parents informed about how their children have spent their day. A notice board, regular newsletters and invitations to curriculum evenings ensure that parents are kept informed about the nursery. Questionnaires and a committee group, made up of parents from the nursery, allow ideas and opinions to be expressed. Parents also receive written reports about their children's educational progress and they have access to their children's observation records at all times. Plans of activities and information on the early learning goals are displayed. However, parents do not receive detailed written information on the six areas of learning, which prevents them from gaining a greater depth of understanding about the curriculum that is being delivered to their children.

Parents have the highest regard for the service provided. They appreciate the 'friendly' staff and the 'total commitment of the provider, which they believe to be 'remarkable'.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is good. The owner/manager is actively involved in the provision and has a clear vision of how she wants the nursery to develop. She works closely with staff and room leaders who are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the delivery of the curriculum. Systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the nursery education provided. Through continual self-evaluation, areas for improvement are identified and are being addressed, ensuring that the quality of education provided is of a high standard.

Children are grouped according to their age and stage of development and a key worker system is in place. Space indoors is well organised to provide younger children with a range of exciting and worthwhile experiences, which encompass all areas of their learning. High staffing levels and a stable staff team result in a good standard of care. Children benefit immensely from the continuity of care that this brings. Close links are established with Penketh Community Primary School to ensure the smooth transition for those children from the nursery transferring to the reception class. Effective settling in procedures make sure that children are happy and secure in their new environment.

Most records and documentation are in place and of a high standard. However, a minor omission has been identified; parents do not always sign for medication that has been administered to their children. Effective induction, recruitment and selection procedures are in place to ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and their suitability assessed. Annual appraisals are in place, allowing training needs to be identified and met. Contingency arrangements are in place to cover any staff shortages or illness.

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 the provider agreed to ensure that policies and procedures are consistent and contain the required information. The provider was also asked to ensure that children's

privacy and dignity are respected when the changing areas in the classroom are being used. Both of these issues have been fully addressed. All policies examined during this inspection are pertinent to the setting and contain the required detail. A curtain has been put around the nappy changing area to ensure that children's privacy and dignity is requested.

Following the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to increase the sensory opportunities available for children. The setting has purchased resources, which are used successfully to promote this area of children's development. Details of these opportunities are included in the body of this report.

These improvements made enhance the quality of care and nursery education provided.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required Ofsted or the provider 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 may see on request. The complaints procedures may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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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):

- ensure that pre-school children have access to fresh drinking water at all times
- ensure that the next stages of younger children's learning are clearly identified within planning.

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):

- build on current good practice by further enriching the outdoor play area to fully support all areas of children's development
- provide parents with written information on all six areas of learning.

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