

Little Acorns Pre-School - Oakthorpe

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	226232
Inspection date	07 November 2007
Inspector	Dianne Lynn Sadler
Setting Address	Oakthorpe Primary School, School Street, Oakthorpe, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE12 7RE
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Registered person	The Trustees of Little 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

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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Pre-school opened in 1998. It operates from a portacabin in the grounds of Oakthorpe Primary School in the village of Oakthorpe in Derbyshire. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens each weekday from 09:00 to 11:30 during term time. All children share access to an outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local community.

The pre-school employs five members of staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's good health is promoted well within the setting. Staff follow effective procedures which reflect current environmental health and hygiene guidelines that successfully support children's well-being. For example, they wear disposable gloves and aprons when nappy changing and use anti-bacterial spray to clean tables and the nappy changing mat. This helps reduce the risk of infection. Children understand daily routines and are becoming independent in their personal hygiene and receive good support and guidance from adults. For example, children wash their hands before snack-times and after toileting and there is a poster displayed in the bathroom to remind them. Children are well cared for when they have an accident or become ill. All staff have received appropriate first aid training and permission is sought to obtain emergency medical advice and treatment. This ensures children receive prompt first aid attention.

Children enjoy sociable snack-times and are well nourished. Their independence and good self-esteem is fostered well at this time. A monitor is identified each day to help lay the table and give out the drinks and snacks. Children's health and their understanding of healthy eating is promoted well. They enjoy snacks that are varied, nutritious and healthy. For instance, children choose from a selection of fresh fruit every session which includes apples and grapes and they also enjoy a piece of wholemeal toast. Children also benefit from drinks which include milk, water and squash and can request a drink throughout the session. This ensures they are well hydrated. The dietary needs of children are discussed with parents and recorded well, ensuring that children have their dietary needs met appropriately.

Children are learning about the importance of a healthy lifestyle through well-planned activities and experiences. For example, they explore healthy eating and make faces out of fruit at snack-time and decorate pictures of recycling bins. Children also enjoy regular opportunities to be active and benefit the stimulating outdoor play area. For instance, they go on nature walks collecting cones and make bark rubbings. Their physical skills are being developed well by climbing on the large apparatus in the playground and by playing with equipment such as large hoops and bats and balls.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well cared for in a welcoming and safe indoor and outdoor environment, which helps them feel secure and comfortable. They move around with ease from area to area which helps them to settle quickly and feel confident. Children enjoy a stimulating, well-organised environment, in which their craft work is displayed well, successfully developing their self-esteem. There is a written risk assessment which is carried out on the premises every morning, conducted by a named member of staff, to ensure all hazards are identified and minimised. However, it does not include the outdoor play area and it is not always effective in practice, which compromises children's safety and welfare.

Children use mostly good quality, suitable and safe furniture, equipment and play resources, appropriate to meet their different needs. Their independence is actively promoted because resources are easily accessed, enabling them to make good choices and decisions. However, some of the equipment used for toileting and nappy changing is not suitable, compromising children's safety. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe. They practise the emergency

evacuation procedure regularly and benefit from seeing cards displayed on the wall reminding them of good road safety. Staff take time to discuss safe practices with them, such as walking outdoors to keep them from falling over.

Children are sufficiently well protected from harm because staff have a satisfactory understanding of their role in child protection. Staff are aware of what action they are required to take if they have a child protection concern about any of the children. However, the written child protection policy is not sufficient, compromising children's safety and welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the setting and develop positive relationships with both adults and each other. Children are settling well and developing good confidence. Some children arrive keenly and enthusiastically seeking their favourite resources and toys. Those who are unsure and upset are comforted by caring staff who encourage them to join in and play. Children benefit from a stimulating and interesting environment in which they are happy, content and secure. They benefit from seeing their work displayed and all resources are easily accessed. Staff know the children well and the different stages that individual children are at. However, although staff observe the development of younger children, they do not always use the observations to plan the next steps in learning appropriately.

Children are motivated by a wide range of activities and experiences that develop enquiring minds and build on their curiosity. This positively supports their development and learning. They concentrate well whilst making money boxes out of card and develop their imagination well whilst making aliens out of plasticine and dressing up as a fireman. Children particularly enjoy selecting books in the 'Little Acorns Library'. They develop good language and communication skills whilst sitting on bean-bags reading the books with an adult or other children.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a strong knowledge of the Foundation Stage and a clear understanding of how young children learn and progress. As a result all children are included and make good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff use a wide range of teaching methods to maintain children's interest. Staff know that the children learn better when they are happy and relaxed and they ensure children are well settled before they concentrate on their learning. Staff strive to make learning a rewarding and enjoyable experience, related to children's interests, in which children are able to explore, investigate and consolidate their learning. Staff are skilful at asking questions and offer support when needed, creating a constant learning environment. Children are well motivated and keen to learn. The pre-school is organised effectively and children benefit from participating in structured activities as well as being able to initiate their own play and develop their own ideas.

Planning indicates that all areas of learning are covered over a period of time and repeated to enable children to practise what they have learned. This ensures children make good progress. Staff have a clear idea of the learning intentions for children and plan their next steps in learning effectively. The assessment procedure is sufficient. Staff record observations they make on children's development and transfer this information to children's profiles. However, the assessment records do not clearly show the progress made from when children enter the Foundation Stage. Therefore the next steps planned for children may not be appropriate.

All children are well motivated and engaged in their play as they select and carry out the wide range of well-planned activities. Younger children are developing their confidence by trying new activities and all children concentrate well. Children assume responsibility for their personal care and their independence is being successfully developed. For instance, they help lay the table at snack-time, when chosen as the monitor. All children are learning to understand between right and wrong and are developing good self-control. For example, they take it in turns to share their experiences from home when sitting at the 'show and tell' table and they sit and concentrate well at the computer, persevering to control the 'mouse'. Children are learning about different cultures and are developing a good sense of community. They are developing a good sense of themselves as a member of the pre-school when they take photographs on a trip to Ash-End farm, using them later to recollect their experiences. All children communicate well with staff making their needs known through expressive language or by gestures. Most children can speak clearly and confidently, sharing their experiences and use language for thinking very well. For instance, at registration time older children discuss the weather as being windy and dull. They explore sounds and words using rhythm and rhyme when stating 'it's wibble wobble Wednesday'. Children are developing a good interest in the rich array of print in their environment. They thoroughly enjoy selecting books to read and take home from the 'Little Acorns Library' and most are able to select their name cards as they arrive and place them on a board next to their photographs. Children show a good interest in writing for their own purpose. They enjoy taking Harry teddy home and writing and drawing pictures to explain the adventures he has whilst with them.

Children benefit from seeing some numbers displayed in the environment and confidently use numbers for counting in their play. For example, they count 17 children present at registration time. They enjoy tracing the letter in the air with their finger and select the number shape from a box. Children are also developing an understanding of more than and less than. They count five adults present and know that one more makes six. All children explore and investigate how things grow and identify features of living things. For example, at Harvest Festival time they discuss how foods grow and learn how bread is made. They also explore and learn about the different animals found in Africa and discover that elephant tusks are made of ivory. Children use every day technology well as they draw pictures on the computer and then decide to print them off by themselves to display on the wall. A display of the solar system showing all the planets and stars effectively develops children's sense of time and place. They find out about the features in the natural world as they observe the 'special tree' in the playground changing through the seasons.

Effective use of the indoor and outdoor space helps children develop their physical skills. All children move confidently when negotiating their way around the pre-school from activity to activity and accessing the outdoor play area. They successfully develop their physical skills and a sense of space when playing outside with large hoops and by hitting balls with bats. Children competently use one-handed tools such as cutters and rolling pins when playing with the plasticine and they enjoy filling and emptying containers in the water play. All children are exploring different materials, investigating colour, texture, shape and form. They thoroughly enjoy making three dimensional shapes out of card such as money boxes and a hedgehog. They decorate rockets using sequins and glitter and make planets, moons and stars for the solar system collage. Children also use their imagination well and are able to be creative throughout their play. They enjoy talking to 'mommy' on the telephone in the home corner and make a man out of plasticine and dried pasta shapes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Effective relationships with parents ensure the staff meet the individual needs of all children well. Good procedures ensure both parties are well informed. Detailed information is gathered at registration and recorded appropriately. Parents share information about children's routines, care needs and their religious and cultural needs. This ensures children receive good care consistent with home and settle more easily. Parents also receive clear and concise information about the setting and their children. They benefit from informative notice boards and regular newsletters which detail forthcoming activities and themes. They also receive an informative prospectus which details all policies and procedures. However, the complaints policy is not sufficient, potentially compromising children's welfare. Parents feel able to make a positive contribution to their children's care and education. They particularly enjoy staying with their children in the setting for a while when they arrive in the morning, when they can chat to staff and play. They benefit from selecting books from the 'Little Acorns Library' with their children and have time to sit and read the books in a relaxed environment.

Clear, concise policies work effectively in practice to promote equal opportunities for all children. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff and with each other. Children feel a sense of belonging as they are greeted warmly by staff when they arrive. This is further enhanced by the children bring items from home, including their favourite toys, which they place in a box to discuss later at the 'show and tell' table. All children are fully included because staff acknowledge and value children's differences. The pre-school is aware that some children may have disabilities and/or learning difficulties and understand the importance of working in partnership with parents and other professionals to promote the welfare and development of the child.

Children are being made aware of the wider society. Staff ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as the wider world and children are made aware of all celebrations and festivals. For instance, children make 'rangoli' patterns which they decorate with glitter at Diwali time. Children are also learning about Africa and the way of life there. The pre-school has adopted an elephant in Kenya and plan exciting activities which help children understand where Africa is on the world map and what animals are found there.

Children's confidence and self-esteem is being developed well by staff with the use of praise and encouragement and the children's work being displayed or proudly taken home. All children are learning to understand responsible behaviour. They respond well when being reminded by staff to walk and they are learning to take turns, share play resources and show respect for others. Children enjoy receiving stickers rewarding their good behaviour or a task completed well. The behaviour policy is well written, understood by staff and effective in practice. Therefore children's behaviour is managed well, promoting their welfare and development.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive nursery education is good. Parents receive clear, concise information about the educational programme provided and the six areas of learning. The Foundation stage curriculum is discussed with parents at the settling-in stage and the planned themes and activities are included in newsletters sent out at the beginning of each term. In addition, parents receive a planning information sheet detailing how the six areas of learning are delivered. Consequently parents can fully support their children's learning at home. Parents are also actively encouraged to become involved in their child's learning in

meaningful ways. This helps children progress and enables them to make a positive contribution. For example, parents receive a 'home booklet' and song sheet each term so they can continue the planned themes at home. They also attend an end of year presentation day to see their children receive a leaving book. Parents are sufficiently well informed about their children's progress and achievements. They benefit from being given an end of year report and they are able to speak with the staff about their children's progress at any time. However, although they can verbally share information with staff about their children's development observed at home, this information is not valued or acted upon. Therefore the next steps planned for children's learning may not be appropriate.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for well by staff who are experienced, well established and committed to their well-being. Staff work well as a team, providing a stimulating and interesting environment conducive to the care, teaching and learning of all children. The ratio of adults to children is sufficient, enabling staff to work closely with children and establish secure relationships. The recruitment procedures are clear and there is an effective vetting procedure in place. This ensures children are cared for by staff who are suitable. The level of qualified staff working with children is sufficient and there is a commitment to ensure staff develop their skills and knowledge by attending training courses and staff meetings. This has a positive impact upon children's care and experiences. Most records, policies and procedures are clear, concise and effective in practice, although some need reviewing and updating. All documentation in place is available for inspection and shared with staff and parents.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Staff are well motivated and have developed a supportive team approach, aiming for good quality education for all children. There is clear leadership within the setting. The managers are good role models and committed to improving the nursery education. They work closely with the staff and children and are therefore able to positively influence practice. Effective systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the nursery education and teaching is in place which identifies areas for improvement. Staff benefit from participating in planning meetings and evaluate the activities provided well. This significantly improves practice and positively supports children's learning and progress.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Care.

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to ensure the register records the arrival and departure times of children and staff on the premises. They also agreed to update and regularly review the risk assessment on the premises to ensure it is effective and works in practice. Sufficient improvement has been made. Children safety is improved by their attendance being recorded appropriately. However, although there is a risk assessment in place it needs further improvement to ensure hazards outdoors are identified and to ensure it is effective in practice.

Nursery education.

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to develop partnerships with parents, informing them about curriculum and what children are learning; ensure parents are well informed about and can contribute to assessments of their children's progress; ensure the committee is involved in the management of the setting and the Educational provision is evaluated effectively; develop the planning and assessment to ensure targets are reflected in plans and to ensure the stepping stones are regularly covered and there is sufficient challenge for the four-year-olds.

In most areas significant improvement has been made ensuring children make good progress and parents are well informed about the curriculum and their children's development. However, although parents receive an end of year report, further improvement is needed to ensure parents can contribute to the assessment procedure.

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 the parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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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.

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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):

- develop further the risk assessment of the premises to include the outdoor play area and ensure it is effective in practice
- ensure equipment used for toileting and nappy changing is suitable
- review and update the complaints and child protection policies
- observe and record what children under three do and use observations to plan the next steps for their play, learning and development in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

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 further the assessment records to show starting point of children's development as they enter Foundation Stage and value and act upon contribution made by parents.

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