



Little Acorns Childcare

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY294901
Inspection date	16 September 2005
Inspector	Gill Thornton
Setting Address	Christian Resource Centre, Pentecostal Church, Oakes Road, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP32 6PX
Telephone number	01284 761000
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Registered person	Little Acorns Childcare
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 Childcare is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of members of the church and the local community. It opened in 2005 and operates from a large hall within the Christian Resource Centre in Bury St Edmunds. A maximum of 24 children may attend at any one time. The provision is open in term time only, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 08.30 to 16.30.

There are currently 32 children aged from 0 to 5 years on roll. Of these 7 children

receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from the local residential area.

The provision employs four staff. There are two staff, including the manager, who hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are two staff who are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are beginning to learn the importance of simple health and hygiene practices through the regular routines of the session. For example, reminders by staff to wash their hands after using the toilet and using wipes to clean their hands before snack time. Staff follow sound and consistent hygiene procedures, which protect children from infection. Children's health is promoted because staff follow the correct procedures for giving medication and recording accidents and they have all attended first aid training.

Children's dietary needs are met through the provision of a range of healthy snacks such as fruit or toast and because staff are well informed about children's individual dietary needs. Children are beginning to increase their understanding of the importance of healthy living through planned activities such as a visit from the oral health hygienist. They rest and sleep undisturbed according to their individual needs.

Children enjoy a range of physical activities, which contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They freely access an area set up with a range of equipment such as a small trampoline and crawling tunnels throughout the day. Although the group currently have no outside area children have weekly opportunities to walk to the park, where they use a range of larger apparatus to help them develop control of their bodies. They have opportunities to practise hand eye coordination through practising threading or using sewing cards.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean, well-maintained environment where they benefit from a range of safety measures. For example, staff carry out visual daily safety checks and take steps, such as fitting socket covers and using an extra high stair gate to prevent access to the lobby. Staff carefully monitor children's arrival and departure and ensure the main entrance is locked during sessions to keep children safe. Young babies are cared for in a separate safe and secure area within the main hall. Staff practise emergency evacuations with the children, however, these procedures are not clearly displayed to ensure all adults are familiar with them.

Children are kept safe on outings, for example, staff follow clear procedures when walking with the children to the local park. They use a range of suitable toys and equipment which meet safety standards. Staff supervise children's play and children

are learning to take responsibility for themselves, for example, when sweeping up sand they have spilt on the floor.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted because all staff and volunteers have attended child protection training and are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns, although they do not currently record existing injuries.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Most children settle well or are supported by staff to do so in the welcoming child-friendly environment. Staff are patient and understanding, for example, when comforting children if they are distressed. Staff promote children's confidence and self-esteem by showing an interest and understanding of children's home and family life. Most children spend the majority of their time playing purposefully with the resources and equipment available.

Children make positive relationships with each other and staff who are caring and sensitive to their individual needs. Children are confident to come to staff for help when needed, for example, younger children approach staff and hold up their hands to be picked up.

The group are starting to implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework especially with regard to recording children's progress. Most toys and resources are of an appropriate level for this age group, however, staff are not yet using the framework to extend activities and experiences to support children's play and learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

This is the first term in which the group has been providing nursery education on a regular basis. However, children are beginning to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Activities satisfactorily cover the areas of learning, although some aspects within each area are not fully covered. Staff use their knowledge of the Foundation Stage to plan adult focused activities using appropriate stepping stones. However, some more able children's learning is not always extended and challenged during everyday activities and routines. Observations are used to monitor children's progress through the stepping stones in their assessment records. Staff use these to informally plan children's next step in learning.

Children are learning to share and take turns and respond to each others needs. They take pride in their own achievements, such as when showing staff their art work. More confident children initiate conversations with their peers and adults and seek out others to share their experiences. They are beginning to develop independence in their self-care, for example, trying to put on aprons, however, this is not fully promoted at snack time.

All children are given opportunities to recognise their own name and more able

children do so confidently. Staff encourage children to attempt to name their own work, although writing materials are not routinely available in the role play area. Children enjoy sharing books with each other and adults. Some older children can identify some sounds and names of letters in their name.

Children recognise shapes and use mathematical language such as biggest and smallest in their play. They join in with number rhymes and some children can count confidently to seven. Although, they are not encouraged to compare groups of numbers or to develop simple problem solving skills while sharing resources. Children have opportunities to recognise numerals and some children can match and sort according to size and colour, for example, using the linking elephants.

Children are learning about life cycles and living things through topics on mini-beasts and growing beans in a jam jar. They investigate and explore materials and texture, for example, mixing washing-up liquid with paint. Children learn about the local community while walking to the park and have access to some toys promoting diversity. However, there are no planned activities for children to learn about the wider world. Children are developing their knowledge of everyday technology and enjoy operating remote control toys.

Children enjoy joining in with their favourite songs and using instruments. They freely explore colour at the easels and express their creativity at the craft table, however, adult focused activities use mainly pre-cut shapes. Children enjoy exploring the range of dressing-up clothes and they use their imagination during role play in the home corner, however, different role play situations are not included in planning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are supported by staff to understand responsible behaviour. Staff are good role models and use strategies appropriate to children's stages of development to help them learn to share and take turns. Children play happily together and are encouraged by staff to show concern for each other.

Children are learning to make decisions regarding how they wish to spend their time as they freely choose from the large range of good quality toys and equipment set up around the room. The setting has appropriate strategies in place to care for children with special educational needs.

The partnership with parents is good.

Children benefit from a positive partnership with parents who are very supportive of staff and appreciate the care provided. Staff and parents share information informally on arrival and collection. Parents find the children's individual home diaries a valuable source of information on their children's progress. Parents receive detailed information about the provision through the comprehensive parents' guide and regular newsletters. Open days are planned for the future to involve parents more fully in their children's learning. Parents receive some information about the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters'

The setting fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The operational plan includes all the required policies and procedures which are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure they reflect practice and to promote children's well-being. All the required written consents and documents are maintained to ensure staff follow parents' wishes regarding their children's care.

The room is well organised to allow children to move about freely and in safety. The smooth routines of the day particularly help settle the youngest children, who are learning to separate from their parents and carers for the first time. Young babies currently benefit from a high staff:child ratio.

Staff training is promoted with two staff shortly starting NVQ level 2 and 3 childcare qualifications. The provision has a clear vision within the local community to provide wraparound care in conjunction with local schools.

Leadership and Management is satisfactory.

Staff have a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities and they are deployed effectively within the setting. Staff undergo appropriate induction procedures and appraisals are planned to identify areas for professional development. The committee and staff have a sense of direction and are committed to improvement. For example, they are working hard to secure funding for an outside play area. Senior staff are developing strategies to use the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and how to apply this in practice to support children's development. Regular steering group meetings and support from the Early Education Support Team helps the group to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision.

Overall, the needs of the children who attend the provision are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- improve fire safety precautions to ensure all adults are familiar with evacuation procedures
- extend the range of activities for the younger children, for example by using the Birth to three 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):

- extend activities to provide further challenges and learning opportunities balanced across the six areas of learning.

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