

Acorn Child Care Headlands Centre Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	220111
Inspection date	06 February 2008
Inspector	Melanie Eastwell
Setting Address	Headlands Primary School, Bushland Road, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN3 2NS
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Registered person	Acorn Childcare (UK)
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acorn Childcare is a registered charitable trust which was established in 1992. The Headlands Centre Day Nursery is situated on the campus of Headlands School in Northampton. It provides a variety of full and sessional day care and out of school care for children attending the school. A maximum of 130 children may attend the setting at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 109 children under eight years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. 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 30 members of staff. Of these, 23 hold appropriate early years qualifications and seven are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's continued good health is promoted because staff follow generally effective procedures for maintaining a healthy environment. For example, they clean tables with antibacterial spray before children sit down to eat, gloves are worn by the staff to serve meals and during a food tasting activity and a 'no outdoor shoe' policy is in place in the baby room. The changing areas and toilets in the baby and toddler rooms are well maintained to a high standard of hygiene. Staff have access to gloves and aprons, the changing mats are clean and dry and there are effective methods for the disposal of nappies. However, the pre school children's bathroom is not always checked to ensure that children are managing hygiene effectively which has an impact on safety and raises the risk of cross-infection. Babies' feeds are clearly labelled and are stored appropriately, procedures for making up babies' feeds are clearly displayed for the staff and children who have specific dietary requirements are managed well. Children who have accidents are managed effectively because most of the staff hold current first aid certificates and well-stocked first aid kits are available in each of the nursery rooms. Accident and medication records are kept, signed by parents and daily environmental health checks are completed throughout the building at the beginning and end of the day. This contributes to a healthy environment for all children.

Children's physical skills are developing well. They enjoy daily opportunities to play outside in the garden and enjoy using a wide variety of equipment that promotes skills such as pedalling, climbing, steering and balancing. Children benefit from the ongoing development of the garden to make a complete sensory experience. They enjoy watching the mobiles and sparkly items that glitter and spin in the sun, the items they can spin and bang to make different noises and the digging and growing area. Children enjoy the involvement from the staff during their outside play. For example, they talk to them about items they find, they suggest a throwing and catching game and act as 'traffic lights' for the children on bikes. Inside, children have access to a wide range of play materials that develop their hand and eye co-ordination and fine skills. Regular music and movement sessions are held in the school hall. Children learn to listen to music and co-ordinate their movements according to how they hear the music. Staff become fully involved in order to promote children's confidence and to demonstrate how to move in different ways. Their hand and eye coordination and balancing skills are encouraged by using bean bags to hold on their head and shoulder and throwing them into the air and trying to catch them. They use scissors and threading items and manipulate construction materials and puzzle pieces. Babies and toddlers use appropriate equipment for their ages to be able to climb over and under. They are encouraged to explore their environment and are provided with a good range of resources that promote curiosity and sensory experiences. These include musical instruments, sealed bottles with coloured water and glitter and treasure baskets. Babies benefit from the thoughtful way the room is set out. They explore monochrome and brightly coloured areas and participate in music and signing sessions. Children who sleep are carefully monitored. The sleep areas are incorporated into the main room and regular checks are made and recorded. Each child has a suitable cot or bed with individual bed linen that is changed and laundered regularly. They benefit from the staff's very gentle and sensitive manner when they wake up. For example, they are given a cuddle and reintroduced to the toys and play area in a gentle, calm way.

Children are well nourished. They enjoy freshly prepared, nutritious meals and snacks. The setting employs a cook who is fully briefed on children's individual dietary requirements and these are managed effectively. Babies' feeds are thoroughly discussed with their parents to

ensure that weaning and introducing new tastes and textures work consistently alongside current guidelines. Children sit together to eat and can have more if they wish. Mealtimes are social occasions where everyone is encouraged to talk together. The staff sit with the children and encourage good manners and the use of cutlery. Older children develop an awareness of healthy eating through activities such as tasting a variety of fruit and vegetables. Children do not become thirsty because they have access to drinks throughout the session. Babies' feeds and drinks are given according to individual patterns, toddlers have access to individual sports bottles and pre school children can help themselves to a drink from a covered jug whenever they wish.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given high priority by the staff who take active steps to maintain a safe environment. The premises are secure and a door entry system is in place that has an intercom and door release system. All parents and visitors are greeted and visitors sign the record book. Parents sign their own children in and out and an attendance register is kept in each group room. Children stay safe inside the setting because each area has a gate to prevent children moving out of the area for their age range which the staff are vigilant in closing behind them when moving around the building. Children can therefore explore the area and toddlers grow in confidence to find out about the activities taking place in the corridor such as art and craft, sand and water play. Children benefit from the staff's good understanding of risks and staff are proactive to minimise hazards. For example, any sand or water spilt from the trays is promptly cleaned up to prevent accidents. Regular emergency evacuation drills are carried out and the older children are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a fire. Children's learning and development is promoted through the good range of play materials, resources and equipment available which is safe and suitable. Children enjoy using a variety of play materials that cover all areas of development and that they can choose themselves. They begin to learn to respect and care for toys and to maintain a safe environment for everyone because they enthusiastically help to tidy away when they have finished their activity.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because all staff understand the written procedure for safeguarding children and their responsibility to record and report any child protection concerns and to maintain confidentiality. All staff undergo some training in safeguarding children when they commence employment at the setting and the required documentation is in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children enjoy attending and thoroughly enjoy the excellent range of activities and highly positive interaction from the staff who effectively take account of their individual needs and interests. Babies have a bright and spacious area to explore and the staff provide them with experiences that promote social skills and curiosity. For example, they play a range of musical instruments. The babies enthusiastically bash the drum, bounce up and down and laugh at the noise it makes. During a music and signing session babies show wonder at the music that is played and the chiffon scarves that are used to gently cover their faces during a rainbow song. Toddlers also enjoy a bright and spacious environment. They are encouraged to leave the room and explore the art and craft and messy activities set up in the corridor which develops their confidence skills. In this area the children are able to select from a variety of papers, glitter, collage and glue to create pictures. Children benefit from the support of the staff who carefully

supervise this area. The highly positive interaction ensures that learning experiences are maximised and children's self-esteem and confidence is promoted.

Staff are skilled at engaging children all the time and involve a small group in looking at pictures on the wall while waiting for the others to join them by asking questions such as 'Who can show me a green crocodile?' to which the children respond enthusiastically. Children show curiosity. They use a wide tube attached to a small fence, roll cars down and wait for them to appear at the other end. They jump and giggle when the cars come out. Children decide to position a box to let the cars fall into. Two children work together to ensure the box is positioned correctly and clap when the cars land in the box. The staff fully understand the 'Birth to three matters' framework and successfully implement this with younger children. Detailed plans of activities are in place and these plans are directly linked to and led by the children's interests. Key workers record regular observations for each child that are referred to when the planning is being completed. Displays of photographs are in place showing children engaged in activities with a caption detailing what they are doing and how this links with the 'Birth to three matters' framework. All the staff in the baby and toddler rooms are involved in the planning and they often take responsibility for one area each week. The planning is evaluated and reviewed to ensure that all children are considered and that their interests are promoted and extended in the future plans. Staff use their skills to ensure the activities are meaningful to children. For example, real experiences such as visiting the shops or the doctors surgery are planned into the children's day using appropriate props and resources to allow children to act out their experience. Children relish the outdoor play opportunities. They use the space imaginatively, ride bikes and splash in puddles. They are able to access spades to dig in compost trays and use magnifying glasses to look closely at items they find such as leaves and stones. Older children who attend the out of school facility at the setting are provided with a good range of activities from which they select themselves. They can choose to take part in art and craft or baking activities which are provided each day.

Nursery Education

Children are very keen to learn and enjoy their chosen activities immensely. They are interested in their activities because they choose them themselves and they receive positive interaction from the staff who ask them questions about what they are doing and extend their vocabulary. Their confidence is promoted because the staff support them to try new experiences through discussion and demonstration. Children's concentration is developing. For example, a child persists with a jigsaw puzzle, manipulates the pieces and turns them around. The child shows pride in their achievement and receives praise from a member of staff. Children are confident to express their views and feelings. They ask questions of visitors about what they are doing and what their name is. Children are building good relationships with their peers. They choose to work together on certain activities and play co-operatively with the large wooden bricks which ensures a more impressive structure is able to be completed. Children's independence is promoted. They know where their pegs are and hang up their coats, they manage to fasten their coats and some change into Wellington boots before playing outside. They choose their own activities and are able to pour their own drinks. Children are becoming aware of the local community because they visit senior citizens at Christmas time to sing songs and talk to the older people.

Children are very confident speakers. They approach the staff and ask for reassurance or for items they want. Some ask visitors questions about what they are doing. The staff support and extend children's vocabulary. For example, descriptive words are used during a fruit tasting activity. The member of staff asks them about the taste and texture of the fruit. Children enjoy

access to books throughout the session. They select books and are able to re-tell familiar stories from the pictures. Children become aware of text through the wide range of labels and posters around the room and in the outside play area. Children have lots of opportunities to practise their mark making skills, they hold the pencil correctly and attempt to write their names. They enjoy writing in old diaries during an 'office' activity. Children's awareness of numbers is developing rapidly. They enjoy counting with the staff during a variety of activities, such as counting the bricks in a tower they have built, how many puzzle pieces they have left and they count each other. Water and sand play is used to develop children's concepts of space and measure. They fill up and empty a range of different containers and use mathematical language including 'half full' and 'overflowing' during these activities. During a music and movement activity the staff introduce positional language including 'can everyone line up behind me' and 'stretch high, crouch low'. children's vocabulary and understanding of positional language is extended.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. They taste fruits and vegetables, describing the textures and smells they experience. They are able to cut up the bananas and look at the differences between the inside and outside of the fruit and talk about the seeds and how they grow. Children are able to construct and a group of children create stepping stones and imagine that they are crossing shark infested waters. They help each other step across safely. Children also design a range of shelters and fences for the farm animals using these bricks which promotes discussion about how high the walls need to be and how much space the animals require. Staff ensure that children are fully supported in their use of the information and communication technology equipment. They sit with them and describe or demonstrate how to navigate around the programme with the mouse. Children are able to create pictures and print them out and enjoy working on the activities to receive the reward of an amusing noise that makes them laugh and therefore encourages another try. Children are actively encouraged to express themselves in a variety of creative ways. They use paint and collage to create pictures and listen to a wide range of interesting music. They play musical instruments and move around in different ways in a movement session. They indulge in complicated role play games using props such as dressing up clothes. Children take on roles and organise themselves which clearly shows the emergence of leaders and followers in the group.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children benefit greatly because of the skilled staff who successfully engage them in their chosen activities. Staff sit with the activities and children gravitate towards them. This engagement actively promotes and encourages children's learning and self-confidence. The staff have a highly positive approach with the children and ensure that they are praised and encouraged for their efforts. For example, a child who proudly shows his printed picture from the computer to a member of staff receives a big smile and praise for his efforts. Children who persist and complete a puzzle without assistance are also praised verbally and through facial expression which encourages them to try again. The staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and receive support from a dedicated member of staff who works as the curriculum and development officer for their planning and assessment of children's achievements. The planning is linked to the six areas of learning and is directly led by the children's current interests. The staff team know their key children very well and work closely together to ensure that they provide activities to allow all children to succeed and gain access to each of the areas of learning. Plans are reviewed and evaluated each day to ensure the key workers adapt or extend activities as required. Each child has ongoing snippet observations recorded which are referred to directly, often each day, to inform the planning of activities. A more detailed, focused and narrative observation is also recorded for each child every three months. These snippet and focused observations are

displayed in individual files that clearly show children's progression. The key workers use the child's interests to record the next steps for learning and ensure that activities are adapted to cover all the areas of learning. Children are successfully managed in their learning and development as individuals. Their current interests are valued and used directly to inform the planning which has a very positive impact on their enjoyment of the activities. The skills and involvement of the staff ensure that they are appropriately challenged through a carefully thought out and stimulating range of activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are highly valued as individuals and the setting effectively manages the specific needs for the various ages and abilities. The key workers know the children very well and close partnership with parents and carers ensures a consistent approach. Children show a clear sense of belonging in the nursery. They are confident to move around, to explore and to ask for items they want. The staff ensure they get to know all the children and say a cheery 'hello' when they go into other rooms. Children benefit from the daily routines because they feel secure in knowing what comes next as the day progresses. Babies' individual routines for feeding and sleeping are carefully discussed with parents and adhered to. Children have access to lots of positive images of diversity throughout the setting which helps them become aware of the local community and wider world. The resources include books, dolls, dressing up clothes, musical instruments and posters. The staff ensure that children's confidence and individuality are nurtured through activities and positive re-enforcement throughout the whole ethos of the nursery. The setting supports a number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Close liaison with the parents and other agencies involved with the child ensures a consistent approach that is beneficial to the child. Key workers regularly work alongside other professionals and parents to create specific targets for the children and ensure that activities can be adapted to enable them to succeed.

Children behave very well. They are secure in understanding the boundaries because the staff have a consistent, gentle approach and use appropriate explanation to inform children why certain behaviour is unacceptable. Staff show a good example to children through being polite, respectful and using positive language when talking to them. They are encouraged to select their own activities and all the planning is led by the children's interests which ensure they are keen and actively engaged which contributes to positive behaviour. Children think about others and show care and concern for each other. For example, they show friends where to find items in the room, pass a pot of pencils for their friend and help each other with their coats and shoes. Children become aware of other people's feelings through discussion and understand the importance of valuing different views and ideas and allowing everyone to contribute to group activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's feelings of belonging and security in the setting are enhanced through the excellent relationship between their parents and the nursery. Parents are greeted warmly by the staff when they arrive and most say hello in the office as they pass on their way to collect their child. The nursery ensures that parents' wishes are managed wherever possible and are flexible to meet the individual needs of families. A suggestion box and regular newsletters are provided for parents to invite their thoughts and ideas and to keep them informed about nursery life. Before children start attending, parents are asked to provide information from home according to the child's age. Written information is provided each day for parents of babies to ensure they are informed about feeds, sleep and nappy changes as well as the activities they have enjoyed. Displays are available for parents about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and

the planning of activities and parents make highly complimentary comments about their experiences at the nursery. The setting's policies and procedures are available for parents as well as a wealth of information on notice boards including the nursery's aims and objectives, curriculum and the learning opportunities that are available to children through different activities, forthcoming events and general childhood information. The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is outstanding. They are provided with information about the Foundation Stage through discussion when their child commences in the pre school room, displays and printed booklets. Parents are encouraged to use the library service and take books home to read with their child. They are actively encouraged to be involved in their child's learning by coming to visit the nursery and talking to children about their work as 'people who help us' or by collecting items for activities such as junk modelling. Key workers support parents to celebrate their child's learning and development at home by adding a slip to the 'achievements board'. This helps parents feel valued as the main educators of their child and to recognise their child's achievements and progression. Children's records are shared with parents on request and at the regular parents evenings that are organised by the staff. Parents are invited to contribute to their child's records and to their next steps for learning. When children leave, their record of achievement file is sent home for parents to keep.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are successfully managed in this welcoming, friendly setting. They are nurtured and supported in their care, development and learning by clearly dedicated, professional staff who work very efficiently as a team. Effective communication takes place throughout the nursery rooms to ensure that children are ready and prepared to move to the next room by organising visits, passing on information through good communication and that all the staff make sure they get to know all the children. Staff are deployed well to ensure that staffing ratios are maintained and there are effective registration systems for the staff, children and visitors. The nursery is keen to be involved in projects organised by the local authority and are currently involved in the 'Baby Room Project'. Staff report that this has a positive impact on the baby room particularly with regard to routines and activities for the children.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The strong and highly professional management team work very well together. They ensure that staff feel supported and valued. Regular meetings are held between the management team, room co-ordinators and the whole staff group during which everyone is able to contribute. Each nursery room completes a weekly evaluation sheet to identify areas of work done well and any areas to change or discuss. Staff members receive a performance review every six months to identify areas of strength and any training needs. Robust systems are in place to ensure the suitability of staff. A detailed induction procedure is in place and the committee oversees any recruitment and some of the performance reviews. All the required documentation is in place, confidentiality is maintained and the team are efficient in keeping everything up to date. This professional, organised approach contributes to the smooth running and calm, harmonious atmosphere within the setting. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to demonstrate the effective deployment of staff in order to meet the required ratios to promote children's safety, welfare and development. Changes have been made to ensure the effective deployment of staff by reorganising breaks, the manager and deputy ensure they are available to cover when necessary and staff are aware

of maintaining a balance when children have free flow between the garden and inside play areas. Regarding nursery education, the provider agreed to ensure that children's individual needs are managed effectively through assessment which is used to guide the planning. Key workers record children's achievements very effectively through individual observations which are directly linked to the future planning. Parents are encouraged to record their children's achievements at home on a specific display board in the room. Parents have access to information about the Foundation Stage which is included in the parents handbook. This helps them understand the six areas of learning and the learning opportunities that will be available to their children at the setting. The action taken by the setting contributes to children's safety and development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been two complaints made to Ofsted. In April 2005 concerns were raised relating to security at the setting. Two actions were raised following an unannounced visit under Standard 6 and Standard 14 for managing access to the premises and recording the children's attendance. In March 2007 concerns were raised about staffing levels and health and safety and hygiene at the setting. Two actions were raised under Standard 8 relating to compliance with Environmental Health requirements and that staff who prepare and handle food receive appropriate training that includes storage, preparation, cooking and serving food. Ofsted was satisfied that the setting took appropriate action and remains qualified for registration.

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 outstanding.

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 good hygiene practice is maintained in the children's bathroom in order to prevent the spread of infection.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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