

Oaklands Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	103828
Inspection date	04 March 2008
Inspector	Virginia Cooper
Setting Address	Oaklands Infant School, Weeds Wood Road, Chatham, Kent, ME5 0QS
Telephone number	01634 668187
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Registered person	Oaklands 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 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 was first opened in 1999 and is run by a committee. It operates from two linked classrooms in portacabins set in the grounds of Oaklands Infant School in Walderslade on the outskirts of Chatham. There is a large, enclosed outside area and in addition, the pre-school uses some of the school's facilities. The majority of the children attending live nearby. A maximum of 28 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. Sessions are from 09.00 to 11.30 and from 12.45 to 15.15 on week days during school term times.

There are currently 56 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 40 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is able to support a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working toward a qualification. The pre-school receives support from an advisory teacher from Medway council.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a warm, caring environment helping them feel emotionally secure. A settling in procedure is in place ensuring children feel confident and secure about leaving their main carers. They enjoy a close relationship with staff and are confident and able to express how they are feeling, for example, when they want more food or drink.

Children are cared for in an environment where toys, furniture and equipment are clean. Staff do not care for children who are contagious ensuring others are not at risk of cross-infection. Children who become poorly whilst at the pre-school are comforted, and made comfortable, until their parents are able to collect them. Children learn about good hygiene practice through the daily routine. They wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet; they use liquid soap and paper towels to help prevent the spread of infection.

Good procedures are in place about the administration of medication to ensure parents are well informed and children are not given anything that is unsuitable. Staff ensure they obtain appropriate training if this is required to administer some medication.

Children enjoy regular opportunities to play outside; a free-flow system operates for most of the session helping them to acquire a healthy attitude to physical exercise and develop their gross motor skills, for example, running, jumping, hopping, riding bikes and using a climbing frame.

There is always one member of staff present who has a current first aid qualification; there is a first aid kit that is well stocked but some items are out of date. They are able to administer first aid to children in the event of an accident or emergency. Staff record any accidents and any first aid that is administered whilst the children are in their care. This results in parents being well informed about what has happened to their child.

All staff are aware of any children with food allergies and are careful that children are not given any foods that may cause an adverse reaction. Staff provide a good range of healthy snacks; children serve themselves at snack time, encouraging their independence. Children always have access to drinks; they help themselves whenever they want a drink, preventing de-hydration.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and parents are greeted personally when they arrive. The security is good and only staff open the door to parents and visitors. The carefully prepared, well organised and nurturing environment helps children to settle quickly, ready to participate in a broad and varied range of interesting and stimulating activities, designed to promote all areas of development. Staff use the available space well, children understand where to undertake messier activities and where they can relax and undertake quieter activities. Children are reminded how to behave to keep themselves safe and what the consequences may be if they are too boisterous. This is beginning to help them understand about taking personal responsibility for their own safety.

Child sized furniture is provided to enable children to manage tasks more easily. Children choose what they want to play with from a good range of well-maintained toys; staff check these regularly to ensure there are no broken parts that could harm a child.

A risk assessment of the premises and outdoor play area is carried out regularly and staff use a daily check list to visually check the premises each day. The list is very general and therefore, because staff are not looking at specifics the system is not always working effectively. Occasionally safety equipment to protect children from accidents is missing, for example, socket covers. Staff have checked to ensure the first aid kit is well stocked but have not noticed that some of the equipment is out of date.

The manager takes overall responsibility for child protection; she has undertaken child protection training recently and cascades information about safeguarding children to all the staff. All staff are familiar with the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. They are clear about the procedures to follow to safeguard children from harm if they have concerns about any child to ensure the welfare of children. The pre-school have a written policy about safeguarding children from harm. The policy is available to all parents making them aware of the staff's responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are kind and caring in their interactions promoting children's self-esteem. Children receive lots of support from their carers. When they look for reassurance, staff notice quickly and ensure their needs are met promptly; they soon settle with a cuddle or some kind, soothing words.

Staff are aware of the Birth to three matters framework and the assessment records for children who are under three reflect this model. Whilst staff provide entirely appropriate activities for the children under three, the plans are based around the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff know the children well and adjust the activities to suit the children's stage of development naturally. Staff use the school grounds to very good effect. Children love to explore the outdoor environment especially the small wooded area where they collect twigs, leaves and feathers. This outdoor play encourages them to use their imagination as they pretend to find a scary monster. Their description of the monster strongly resembles a creature from a favourite and familiar book that they have clearly enjoyed and digested. Approximately every six weeks the pre-school have a 'Sensory Day' when children can explore and experiment with bubbles, feathers, shaving foam, spaghetti, corn flour and other tactile materials.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children learn in an environment that staff prepare thoughtfully enabling children to independently select resources. Staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage and plans cover all six learning areas. Staff record children's development and progress toward the early learning goals and use these assessment records to feed into the plans in the areas they wish to work on with individuals. Staff operate a key worker system and they discuss when they plan activities what their key children are working on. The plans, however, do not include this information and therefore, staff cannot always remember what the next steps are for the children who are not in their key group. An individual learning plan is written for every child; staff re-visit activities to consolidate children's learning if this is required. Children are motivated to learn and are happily engaged in their activities; both three and four year olds are suitably challenged. Children with learning difficulties take a full and active role. They have an individual education plan that sets them realistic and achievable targets encouraging their development.

Children love to go outside and staff always set up a variety of activities for outdoor play. The interaction between staff and children is a strength. Staff are comfortable about being led by the children and they naturally extend their knowledge with frequent in depth conversations.

Children are interested and involved in their play. They love to share their news and talk about their families. Children understand the concept of sharing and taking turns. Staff encourage them to become independent, for example, they are patient whilst children put on their own hats and coats, they encourage them to pour their own drinks and the resources are arranged so that children can access them easily and make choices. Staff are very good at noticing when children have shown kindness to others; they give them lots of praise, encouraging them to repeat this behaviour. Children demonstrate good levels of concentration at registration time when the staff discuss with them what they are going to do.

There is a good range of books to read, children learn that books are to gain knowledge as well as to be used for pleasure. They learn how to handle books appropriately and take good care of them. Every child takes home a library book encouraging them to develop a love of reading. Children have opportunities to recognise their name every day and some can recognise letters within it. Staff encourage children to link sounds and letters through playing rhyming games, singing and story telling. Writing materials are always available for children to use, although pens and pencils are not always routinely placed in role play areas. Children communicate easily with staff and one another, they are keen to share their news and join in enthusiastically when they review what they have done in the session.

Children spontaneously and confidently count as they play. Staff encourage children to make simple calculations, for example, discussing how many cups they need at snack time. There are puzzles of varying difficulty that promote children's spatial awareness. They love to play with sand, giving them the opportunity to measure and explore volume. Children learn their colours and shapes because staff naturally refer to them throughout the session. There are lots of resources to help children with matching and sequencing skills.

Children celebrate a variety of festivals from around the world helping them to begin to understand other's cultures and beliefs. Children remember a recent project about the Chinese New Year because staff have displayed the large model of a dragon they designed and made using recycled materials. The spacious and interesting school grounds are used to good effect to introduce children to nature. Staff encourage children to look at natural materials closely, examining their similarities and differences. They learn about the passing seasons by watching the changes that occur to the trees and plants throughout the year. Children have opportunities to use everyday technology. They use the computer with competence and show good levels of concentration listening to a cassette recorder when they play a listening game. Children learn about the concept of time when staff talk to them about events that are occurring in the future and explaining to them that this will take place after they have been to sleep so many times.

Children develop good co-ordination and learn how to use tools with increasing control. They mould dough and are able to make recognisable models. They love to make pretend food that they 'cook' in the home corner. Children move confidently, with control and coordination. They negotiate the climbing frame with confidence and develop their sense of balance walking on beams in the garden. Staff regularly discuss with children the elements of a healthy lifestyle. They learn about which foods are healthiest and which should be eaten in moderation, the benefits of physical exercise and fresh air. Children are encouraged to recognise the changes that take place in their bodies when they are hot, cold or exert themselves and learn what they need to do to make themselves comfortable, for example, remove or add clothing layers.

Children explore colour, texture, shape and form as they make collages and models from natural and recycled materials. They love to play musical instruments and sing; they join in with enthusiasm. Dressing up and playing in the home corner is extremely popular. Children play very cooperatively together acting out familiar experiences, for example, shopping and cooking. Children are confident to make pictures in their own way, their art work is individually styled and children express themselves freely when they paint.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The manager and staff are very clear about their purpose in the community and have a 'can do' attitude. Their ethos is that all children are valued and are made to feel good about themselves. Children and their parents develop a sense of belonging encouraged by staff welcoming them warmly and taking an interest in what is important to them. The interaction between parents and staff is positive; parents are very comfortable chatting to the staff about their children and exchanging information with them. This enables staff to provide an appropriate service for the children. The images and resources throughout the pre-school reflect diversity positively. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are welcome and integrated into the pre-school. They have an individual education plan that sets realistic targets to help them develop. Staff understand that a close relationship with parents of children experiencing difficulties is extremely important. This good working relationship paves the way for staff to work cooperatively with outside agencies when appropriate, for the benefit of the children.

Staff manage children's behaviour positively, their age and stage of development and level of understanding are all taken into account. All staff are very kind and patient with the children and nurture their emotional and social development. Children behave well and respond positively to the praise and encouragement from staff. The boundaries are consistently applied, for example, children understand that they take turns when playing games. Staff periodically remind children of the rules and children demonstrate that they know what is expected of them and clearly understand the difference between right and wrong.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good quality information about the setting and its provision. There is a parents' notice board, regular newsletters and information explaining how they can complain. The policies and procedures are always available for parents to read. The pre-school has an open door policy and parents are welcome at any time to come and look at their child's assessment records. Formal appointments are also made to ensure all parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress. Staff write a contact book for every child and parents write their own comments in these about their child's progress at home. They often exchange information verbally at drop off and collection times. Parents are well supported if they are experiencing difficulties and the manager helps them work on issues such as behaviour management together. She will devise a reward system with parents that is used at the group and at home and this consistency provides good results.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The pre-school is well organised; there is an operational plan that works effectively. All staff have their own copy of the policies and procedures and understand their responsibilities. The recruitment procedure is robust and all staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. Nearly

all staff working with children hold a childcare and first aid qualification. All mandatory documentation is in place and stored confidentially. There is a white board in the room, however, that reminds staff of the details of a few children's dietary allergies; this information can be easily read by parents. Staff are aware of the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage. The children's development records reflect these models.

Children are well grouped and the key worker system ensures appropriate support and care throughout the day. The pace and routine of the day is good; children are busy and interested in what they are doing. The children have access to a wide range of resources to keep them amused and aid their development in all areas. The setting meets the needs of the range children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management are good. The group is committee run and the manager takes responsibility for the day to day management of the pre-school. There are effective induction procedures. The staff group has recently undergone some changes, the manager works hard to enable the new staff group to build a good team. This is being achieved by encouraging each member of staff to take responsibility for particular areas of work. They receive support as they learn new skills. There is a staff appraisal system and regular supervision that identifies training needs; all staff are encouraged to update their knowledge as courses become available. The manager and staff are able to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. They regularly evaluate the provision for nursery education and continually strive to improve the effectiveness of the care and education they provide.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection two recommendations were made relating to Standard 14 - Documentation. They were asked to encourage parents to sign for receipt of policies and procedures and ensure confidentiality of record keeping of pre-entry incidents to protect family privacy.

The policies and procedures are always available for parents and staff all have their own copies. The issue of confidentiality related to the fact that existing injuries were recorded with more than one entry to a page. They are now recorded, one to a page to assure confidentiality.

At the last education inspection they were asked to use snack time to extend children's understanding of mathematical ideas. The staff regularly encourage children to count and make simple calculations at snack time, improving their mathematical knowledge.

These improvements have had a positive impact upon the service delivery.

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 complaints record 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):

- consider how the daily check list can be personalised to relate to these particular premises; also ensure the first aid kit is checked regularly and out of date stock is renewed promptly
- consider how staff are informed about children's allergies, at the same time observing confidentiality

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 the planning to show differentiation and include how children's next steps in learning are to be addressed specifically, rather than leaving to chance what staff remember

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