

The Acorn Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	119925
Inspection date	28 March 2008
Inspector	Ann Moss
Setting Address	Cranleigh Infant School, Church Lane, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 8AR
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Registered person	Pauline Crowder
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?

The Acorn Nursery School opened in 1990. It operates from within the grounds of Cranleigh Infant School, in the village of Cranleigh. Children have access to an external purpose built classroom and the adjacent cookery rooms, music and drama studio and school hall. The nursery serves the local and surrounding area.

There are currently 55 children, from two to five years, on roll. This includes 39 children in receipt of nursery funded education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Provision is made to support children who have special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open five days a week during school term time. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:45 and 12:30 until 15:00 Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 09:00 until 12.59 and 13:30 until 15:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Six part-time staff work with the children. All staff have early years qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years and Childcare Partnership (EYCS).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Effective routines ensure children remain healthy, and staff inform parents of any illness currently prevalent. Children benefit from the hygiene procedures in place. For instance, staff ensure the premises and equipment are clean, and have suitable nappy changing procedures. This prevents the spread of infection.

Children learn how to maintain their health as they develop independence in looking after their own personal care. Older children recognise when they need the toilet. They wipe their own noses but staff offer support, if needed. Children learn to dress appropriately for the weather, and put on their coats and hats to play outside when cold. Children understand that washing their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating and activities such as cooking helps keep them healthy.

Children have their needs met by staff receiving first aid and additional training to support children's individual medical requirements. They record detailed information about children's medical conditions, and ensure all consents are in place prior to administering medication. There are systems in place for the checking of the first aid box, however, this is not effective as some items are out of date.

Children develop positive attitudes towards healthy eating and nutrition. They enjoy regular food tasting activities and actively participate in food preparation and cookery. This enables children to experience different food types, talk about their likes and dislikes and broaden their recognition of different food products. Snack times are social occasions when some staff sit with the children and enjoy animated conversation. Children drink milk or water and help themselves to fresh drinking water throughout the session. This ensures children do not become dehydrated.

Children take part in regular physical play through well planned indoors and outdoors activities. They practise newly acquired skills and become more proficient. For example, children learn to use their bodies in different ways as they co-ordinate their movement during music and dance, balance/walk on stilts or ride tricycles. Children are beginning to understand the effect that exercise has on their body as they talk about feeling 'strong'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily and settle well. Information boards, photographs and colourful displays of children's art work make the nursery welcoming to all and helps children to reflect on their learning. The indoor and outdoor space is organised to create a child friendly environment, which enables children to move freely, explore and investigate with the of minimum supervision.

Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised as staff understand and comply with health and safety requirements. Staff carry out thorough visual risk assessments and routinely document them. There are effective entry security precautions, such as a bell system, in place to prevent children from leaving the premises unsupervised and to control the arrival and departure of visitors. Children access a variety of toys and equipment, set out by staff, that are of good quality and safe. These are well-organised in child height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff skilfully explain safe practices such as why children should sit sensibly on a chair.

Children take responsibility for their own and others' safety as they sweep up sand so that others do not fall and hurt themselves.

Children are protected from possible abuse or neglect. The setting has a designated child protection liaison officer and appropriate induction and training and suitable criminal records checks for staff. This ensures that procedures are kept up to date, staff understand their responsibilities and concerns are dealt with promptly. All procedures clearly show that the safety and welfare of children are paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff give particular attention to supporting younger children's social and emotional development and their needs for close relationships and social interaction are prioritised through an assigned key person, who knows them well. As a result, children arrive happy, feel secure and develop in confidence and independence. Children thoroughly enjoy their time at nursery as staff plan a stimulating environment which engages children's interests and their drive to explore and investigate. Children spend their time in play and having fun, playful experiences. For example, they explore using a range of senses to smell, taste and touch and note changing form as they mix together sugar, butter, flour and egg during activities such as cooking. They explore media and materials and show good dexterity as they squeeze, push, pat and roll play dough and clay to represent objects and use a range of equipment with skills. Children learn from each other as they imitate what others can do.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a very good understanding of how children learn best by having fun. Staff set out activity areas that are based around topics and children's interests, experiences and ideas, creating an environment which supports opportunities for learning in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff observe and record children's progress against the stepping stones, and link this into their daily planning. This ensures children are appropriately stimulated and challenged. Staff are enthusiastic when presenting activities and join in children's play. They are skilled at interacting with the children, helping them to extend and clarify their ideas as they play. This means children enjoy many worthwhile experiences and develop a positive attitude towards learning.

The provision for children's personal social and emotional development is very good. Children are confident, independent and enthusiastic. Children learn that sharing and playing together is fun. They learn to appreciate and take care of their environment. They automatically pick items up from the floor without reminders.

Children are natural speakers and staff help them to speak confidently and ensure every child has the opportunity to express their views. Staff skilfully introduce and explain new language, such as 'erupt', 'extinct', 'carnivore' and 'herbivore'. This helps to develop children's vocabulary, making it easy for them to express themselves clearly. Children listen attentively to well read stories and are beginning to link letters and sounds, supporting early reading. Children absorb what they already know into their experiences as they select their name card and self-register. Children have fun, they explore a wide range of mark making materials such as sand, paint, pasta and writing materials supporting early writing skills. They have opportunity to write during role play, however, older more capable children insufficiently write for purpose, such as labelling their own work, on a daily basis.

Children readily use mathematical language and problem solving skills during free play. They learn about capacity as they fill and empty containers and bottles. They talk about which are the biggest and smallest dinosaurs. Children can count reliably up to 20 and some beyond, for example, when counting the number of children present. Children show good concentration during activities such as threading beans and using a shape rod and talk about 'more' or 'less'. Children readily calculate, for example, they know when two vehicles have the same number '5' they will need to put in another parking space. Children make use of the easily accessible computer and can independently operate a simple programme and use the mouse with control.

Children learn about the features of living things as they use a magnifying glass and spend time observing tadpoles and explore the life cycle of frogs. They learn about past and present events such as the pre-historic life of the dinosaur, how they lived and why they died. Children show great enthusiasm, they recreate a dinosaur skeleton, using good reference material, make fossils and build a model dinosaur museum. They use a range of materials to build, replicating a volcano. Children show wonder as staff mix together baking powder, colouring, washing up liquid and vinegar and watch the volcano erupt.

Children know the words to many songs, such as 'frogs go glug, glug, glug' & '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, once I caught a fish alive', and have access to a range of musical instruments such as shakers and drums. They enjoy the music they make and explore sound and rhythm. The role play area is well resourced to support children's imagination and extend learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children feel valued and respected as staff harness their individuality and promote this within the daily life of the nursery. Children begin to appreciate their own culture and other cultural traditions as staff raise their awareness through planned activities and skilful discussion. This helps children to appreciate and value diversity within society. Equality is reflected in toys and books and all children are encouraged to participate in the full range of curriculum activities, thereby eliminating anti-discriminatory practice. There are clear systems in place to support children with English as an additional language, such as staff discussing requirements with parents. Staff learn key words in the native language to help children settle in and ensure that they are fully included by enabling them to understand the daily communication of staff. There are clear systems in place to support the early identification of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Individual education plans and close liaison with parents and other professionals ensure all children's needs are met. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children behave very well because staff provide a calm, free flow play environment. Younger children are helped to become relaxed and confident in their relationships as staff sensitively involve others in their play. Older children build positive relationships and think of others as they share, take turns and negotiate well in their play. They show empathy for others and warmly invite them into their play. Children are beginning to respect the different ways that others think and feel as staff take time to talk to them about their ideas and feelings. Children play co-operatively and experience enjoyment, sense of achievement and a sense of belonging. Staff are good role models and constantly praise and encourage the children for their efforts, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funded nursery education is good. Staff give a high priority to working in partnership with parents/carers. All parents know

their child's key person and there are formal opportunities to discuss their child's progress and share example of their work, as well as having daily informal discussions at handover. Parents receive mostly clear information about the nursery as policies and procedures are readily available and a resumé is contained within the prospectus. However, details contained with the complaints statement regarding the regulator's contact address are incorrect. Staff display plans and information about the Foundation Stage and how it is implemented. This enables parents to be involved in their child's learning both at nursery and at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff organise space, resources and time to ensure every child feels secure and receives an enjoyable and challenging experience.

The recruitment and induction of staff is robust. This means that suitable, experienced and qualified persons look after children. The owner/manager actively encourages ongoing staff development. Regular appraisals support staff in developing their skills and pursuing their particular area of interest for the benefit of the children. Staff deployment is effective and ensures they are fully involved in supporting children, as needed, to maximise their learning and enjoyment. Staff briefing takes place each morning to ensure staff are aware of issues as they arise and to discuss the care provision and the needs of individual children. The staff team are enthusiastic and dedicated to providing good quality care and learning for all children.

All the required documentation is place, although some lacks essential detail and previous information sharing has led to a misunderstanding over the provider's responsibility to notify the regulator of significant changes.

The leadership and management is good. Children benefit from a well-managed setting. The owner/manager values her staff greatly and encourages their professional development. Her communication skills are very good. This means staff work extremely well together and have a clear understanding of their role. Staff observe and record children's interests and use this in their planning. This allows staff to plan activities that are based on what children know and enjoy as well as meeting their development needs. Continuous evaluation of the educational programme ensures activities provided are stimulating and well-balanced. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider agreed to organise snack time to include staff sitting with children. The provider has made changes in that some staff sit with children to provide an opportunity to develop social skills and improve communication.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to ensure children have regular access to musical instruments to encourage their exploration of sound. Children enjoy and respond enthusiastically during music and movement session. They make and play their own music and musical instruments. They experiment with sound and enjoy clapping out rhythms. This support their exploration of sound.

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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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 first aid equipment is checked frequently and replaced as necessary
- ensure the written complaints procedure includes the contact address of the regulator
- increase awareness of notification of changes, with particular references to the premises

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 the range of activities for older more able children to write for purpose, on a daily basis.

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