

Little Acorns (Herne) Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127322
Inspection date	05 October 2007
Inspector	Cilla Rachel Mullane
Setting Address	Herne Junior School, School Lane, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7AL
Telephone number	01227 749317 or 368202 (admin)
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Registered person	The Trustees of Little Acorns (Herne) Pre-School
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 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 opened in 1998. The group operates from a mobile unit, on the site of Herne Junior School, in Herne. It has its own enclosed garden. The group serves the local and surrounding community.

It operates five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00- 15:30, or children may attend for the morning or afternoon, and choose to stay for lunch.

There are currently 71 children from two-and-a-half years to under five years on roll. This includes 34 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Currently, the setting supports children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. There are currently no children who speak English as an additional language.

There are nine staff who work with the children, and one member is employed solely as administration support. Out of the nine staff, seven hold early years qualifications, and two are currently attending training courses. The setting receives support from a teacher from the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). It is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean environment, where staff employ effective hygiene procedures. Children are protected from the spread of infection as tables are cleaned with antibacterial spray, and a checklist in the toilet area is used to ensure that taps and toilets are cleaned periodically during the day. Effective nappy changing procedures protect staff and children; staff use disposable gloves and aprons, and clean potties and the changing mat between uses. Children are learning about good personal hygiene; they were involved in compiling a photographic display in the toilet area, which shows various stages of hand washing, such as, using soap and drying hands. Children are helped to blow their noses and then led to the bin for hygienic disposal of the tissue. When children have accidents they are cared for sensitively and first aid qualified staff take appropriate action, such as, using cold packs on bumps.

A designated member of staff has responsibility for ensuring that the children receive healthy snacks. They benefit from healthy choices, such as, grapes, cucumber and carrots. Water is available for children to help themselves. Children bring packed lunches, and parents are encouraged to provide a balanced and nutritious meal. At the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) staff prepared a healthy lunchbox as an example, and offered leaflets with ideas and suggestions.

Children benefit from outdoor play, whatever the weather, on a daily basis. They develop spatial awareness and coordination riding on trikes and cars on pretend roads with traffic lights and stop signs. They balance on beams, and climb up to the tree house. Knowledge and understanding of the world is promoted during outdoor activities, such as, planting grass seeds and digging for minibeasts. Children planting grass seeds learn that plants need sun and water to grow, and excitedly tell staff what they've done. Children learn about the effect of exercise on their bodies when staff talk about getting hot and drinking water.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The environment is very bright and welcoming; children enter confidently and quickly choose from the exciting prepared activities on offer. There are designated areas for different types of activity, all of which have resources at low level from which children can independently choose. For example, there is a cosy enclosed reading and television area, with plenty of soft seating where children can read alone, or cuddle up with staff for a story. The well-equipped role play area is enjoyed by children, who pretend to cook, clean, iron, dress and feed babies. Toys and equipment in the pre-school are clean and well maintained, and well organized into low level, labelled containers for self selection.

Children are safe during their time at pre-school. The staff member responsible for health and safety checks inside and outside daily, looking, for example, at fire exits and checking locked cupboards. Children's safety in the event of fire has been carefully considered, with evacuation procedures practised, and clear instructions by the telephone for use in an emergency. Although the outside play area has a relatively low fence (as dictated by the terms of the lease), staff are extremely vigilant when the children are playing outside, and visitors are stopped at the gate. Children are further protected when outside because staff are careful to maintain a good staff:child ratio. Although children are generally safe in the pre school, arrival and collection

times are very busy which has the potential to compromise children's safety. Staff are reviewing procedures in order to improve safety at these times.

Children are effectively safeguarded from harm, because staff update child protection training, and are aware of the safeguarding children procedure. Staff know where to get advice if they are concerned about a child's welfare, and know when it would be appropriate to share concerns with parents. They protect themselves from allegations of abuse by ensuring they are not alone with children, and by keeping careful records.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's needs are met by warm and caring staff. They are made welcome as they arrive, staff greet them warmly and help them find an activity which they know they will enjoy. Children feel secure, they know who to go to if they are unhappy.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Activities are planned thoroughly and linked appropriately to the six areas of learning, so it is clear that activities and play opportunities encompass all areas of the curriculum. Keyworkers regularly observe their children, and use these observations to identify children's interests and plan their intended next steps. These are shared with the staff member responsible for the week's planning, so that she can include activities which will help individual children make progress. Staff supporting focussed activities encourage targeted children to take part, record their progress, and feed the information back to their keyworker. Thus children's progress is recorded and monitored, and their individual learning needs are met.

The layout of the environment is carefully planned to enable children to initiate their own activities and learning, and 'children's choice' activities ensure that children take part in, and learn from, activities which interest them. Children are appropriately challenged, as staff adapt activities for younger, or older and more able children. Staff are led by children's interests, and are skilled at talking to young children, extending play and conversation.

As a result of good teaching, children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

The promotion of children's personal, social, and emotional development is a strength. They are confident to independently select activities, and use the toilet and wash their hands without help. They persevere and concentrate, for example, trying to write their names, or acting out role play scenarios. They are forming friendships with their peers, for example, playing games or using construction resources in twos. Communication, language and literacy are well promoted. There are opportunities throughout the setting for children to practise writing skills; they carefully copy their names from cards, and make marks on paper to represent shopping lists. Adult led activities, such as, drawing zigzags and spirals give children opportunities to practise pre-writing skills. Children relax in the cosy book area, enjoying stories with staff, or reading on their own.

Staff frequently encourage the children to count during everyday activities, such as, counting their sandwiches, so children are making good progress in this area. For example, they count spontaneously during their play; two boys doing a matching puzzle chatted about how many

they'd completed, and children counted how many big and small conkers were hidden in the compost. They recognise numbers; children named the coins in the till during shopping role play. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is increasing, They confidently discuss what plants need to grow, they explore the smells and textures of fruit and vegetables as they cut them up, and use magnifying glasses to examine minibeasts from the garden and interesting objects on the nature table. The well resourced role play areas enable children to use their imaginations and act out real life situations, such as, making shopping lists and buying food from the shop. Then children create their own scenarios, for example, taking the play food to a 'camp' under a table. They have constant access to resources which they can use creatively; meccano is used to make scissors to cut staff's hair, the daily craft activity is often children's free choice.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are cared for as individuals, staff know them well and are therefore able to meet their individual needs. For example, new children who are a little unsure are given individual support, and gently encouraged to communicate using sign language. Boys and girls within the setting are encouraged to take part in all activities; boys enjoy feeding and caring for dolls in the home role play area. Children select from right and left-handed scissors, meeting individual needs. Books and posters, for example, a display on the welcome board, depict people from other countries, helping children to learn about diversity in society.

Children's behaviour is generally good, as a result of clear boundaries, and consistent behaviour management strategies. Staff help children to learn about right and wrong by offering clear explanations, and by rewarding good behaviour, for example, by giving children stickers, building self esteem. Children learn about fairness and turn taking throughout the daily routine and activities, for example, they are encouraged to wait for their turn to visit the snack table. Where children display inappropriate behaviour, staff work consistently to help them, for example, using a helpful 'behaviour can change programme' to identify causes and useful strategies.

Children who have learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported as several staff have specialised training, and the knowledge to help them make progress. There are clear procedures in place to identify special needs, work with parents, liaise with other professionals and compile individual play plans.

Partnership with parents is good.

Parents are made welcome within the pre-school, and enter confidently to chat with staff and settle their children. They report being very happy with their children's progress, and staffs' friendliness and support. They feel well informed about the day's main activities from a white-board display in the entrance, and know about letters of the week and topics from regular newsletters. They therefore feel able to continue their children's learning at home, and bring in relevant items. Parents give their written permission for relevant aspects of their children's care, such as outings, and receive written information about their nappy changes. Parents who have requested contact books have received these. They are very well-informed about the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning from a labelled photographic display in the entrance, notes in children's folders, information given during parents' interviews and at AGMs. Although the long and short term activities are displayed, they are positioned in an area where it is difficult for parents to see them.

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

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care and education.

The pre-school is well organised. Children benefit from being cared for by a well-qualified staff group, who are skilled at interacting with young children. The staff group work together well as a team, providing children with a clear structure for the day, ensuring that activities are set out in readiness for the children, and that the pace and routine are appropriate to their needs. A good staff:child ratio enables children to receive good support from staff.

All required documentation is kept to a good standard. Staff fully understand the importance of confidentiality, keeping records locked on the premises. In addition to the statutory records, clear policies and procedures guide and support the practice, helping staff work consistently and informing parents.

The quality of leadership and management is good.

The manager of the pre-school has a realistic view of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. For example, she knows that they are good at communicating with parents; an extremely well-attended AGM supports this. She has clear plans to develop the use of the garden, and to improve the sensory area. The provision of the Foundation Stage is carefully monitored; the manager ensures that children's folders are maintained by all staff to a high standard, and that planning of activities covers all the areas of learning. Management enables staff to work effectively by allowing them time to plan a week of activities each, to carry out observations of children in order to identify children's next steps and inform the planning, and to reflect on their practice. Appraisals and 'staff development talks' are used by management to support staff, and provide training where needed. Although all staff have been involved in considering the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, the self evaluation folder is not yet being fully used to monitor and evaluate practice, and effect change and improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended that the care of the children be enhanced by ensuring that parents sign to acknowledge that medication has been given. Children are now protected in this respect. It was also recommended that there should be more opportunities for children to self select their own resources. The pre-school is now set out in a way that enables children to act independently and initiate their own activities. It was recommended that the quality of the nursery education be enhanced by improving the promotion of communication, language and literacy. Children are making good progress in this area of learning. Finally, it was recommended that staff continue to develop the use of assessments to inform planning and the next steps of learning. Children's next steps are planned because staff use their observations effectively to inform planning.

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):

- Review procedures for keeping children safe at arrival and collection times.

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):

- further develop the use of the self evaluation folder to monitor, review and enhance the provision of care and education (also applies to care).

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