

Felsted Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	404877
Inspection date	17 January 2008
Inspector	Sarah Johnson

Setting Address	Felsted Primary School, Watch House Green, FELSTED, CM6 3EB
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Registered person	Felsted Little Acorns
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?

Felsted Little Acorns opened in 2001. It is a registered charity and is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents of children at the pre-school. It operates from a single room in a demountable building within the grounds of Felsted Primary School in Felsted, Essex. A maximum of 23 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 08:45 to 12:15 and 12:45 to 15:30 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor area.

There are currently 56 children from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 42 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area and attend for a variety of sessions. The staff at the pre-school have effective strategies in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications and three members of staff are currently working towards additional qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a clean and well maintained environment where staff follow very good health and hygiene procedures. Children are learning how to stay healthy as they are encouraged to help themselves to tissues to blow their noses and to cover their mouths when coughing. The spread of infection is prevented further as children are encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet and before sitting down to have a snack. Older children manage these routines independently, helping themselves to pumps of foamy soap and wiping their hands dry on paper towels. Children are well cared for if they become unwell or have an accident. There is an effective policy in place for supporting children who are unwell, which refers to clear exclusion periods for common childhood illnesses and is shared with parents. All staff hold a current first aid qualification and children experience continuity of care because accidents are clearly recorded and confidentially shared with parents. Children's health is promoted further as a member of staff has completed training in general medicines management and all staff implement good procedures if they need to administer medicine to children.

Children's health is enhanced through the effective food handling procedures followed by staff. Food is prepared in a small clean kitchen area. Staff consistently wash their hands before preparing food and ensure surfaces used for serving food are covered with wipe clean table clothes which are cleaned with antibacterial spray. Children benefit from a nutritional range of snacks. For example, they sit together at the table to enjoy freshly prepared pieces of carrot, whole satsumas, apples and mini pitta breads with cheese. They independently pour their own drinks from a choice of water or milk from a jug. The children access additional drinks of water from a dispenser throughout the session, ensuring they do not become dehydrated. Children's dietary needs are effectively met as the staff gather information about individual dietary requirements before children attend the setting. This information is displayed in the kitchen area and updated regularly to ensure all staff are fully aware of each child's needs.

Children have ample energy and enjoy playing in the outdoor playground area on a daily basis. They busy themselves with activities that develop their physical strength and co-ordination, contributing to a healthy lifestyle. For example, they carefully climb the large climbing apparatus, use ride-on toys and throw and catch balls. Their spatial awareness is good as they run around freely, swerving to avoid each other and following the interesting markings on the ground. In addition, they enjoy regular dance and movement sessions where they balance as they pretend to walk the tightrope, juggle balls and master different ways of rolling.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an inviting environment that is safe and well maintained. The setting operates from a room within a demountable building which is decorated with colourful examples of the children's creative work and meaningful photographs. The layout of the room is well organised to maximise the space available, with comfortable bean bags and soft seating areas for children to relax and read books quietly and plenty of appropriately sized tables and chairs for table-top activities. As a result, children move around independently and can access activities freely. Easily accessible and clean toilets are provided, as staff check these for cleanliness throughout sessions. Children are interested in playing with the good range of quality toys and resources available. Many resources are set out on the tables or floor and others are stored in

storage boxes which are labelled to promote children's ability to self-select. The staff are vigilant in ensuring that resources are rotated regularly and happily provide additional resources to meet the children's interests and extend their play.

Staff are motivated in providing a safe environment for children through ongoing daily risk assessments and taking positive steps to minimise risks. Children's safety is promoted as they are well supervised when they flow freely between indoor and outdoor play. Children play safely in secure premises. For example, staff ensure the main door is locked during sessions and the identities of any visitors are ascertained and recorded in the visitor book. Children develop understanding of how to keep themselves safe as they are fully involved in practising fire drills on a regular basis. This procedure is successful in protecting children in an emergency as staff make a note on the notice board of how many children are in the setting, enabling them to quickly establish if any children are missing at any given time.

Children are safeguarded as all staff have attended safeguarding children training and they fully understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. There are clear child protection procedures in place and these are supported by appropriate guidance documents which detail the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children are welcomed by highly enthusiastic and warm staff when they arrive at the setting, helping them to feel confident when separated from their parents and to settle very quickly. They are evidently very reassured by the familiar routine and caring atmosphere, as they happily greet the staff and join their friends to choose an activity. Staff have an excellent rapport with the children and spent most of their time interacting with them and getting actively involved in their play. For example, children are frequently praised by the staff for their achievements which gives them the high levels of confidence and inclination to try new things. All children delight in sharing books and singing songs and rhymes with staff, eagerly joining in with familiar actions and words. As they become increasingly articulate and confident they actively contribute at story time, predicting what will come next as the familiar 'Little Red Riding Hood' story is read.

Staff skilfully adapt activities to incorporate the needs of younger children as they use the excellent knowledge they gained from attending training in the 'Birth to three matters' framework and effective planning for children under three. Younger children experience excellent levels of support in the form of praise for their achievements and encouragement to explore and communicate their ideas. When younger children are learning to deal with separation from their parents, their key person patiently offers them cuddles and constant direct attention. This helps them to form strong bonds and in time they feel reassured that there is always someone close by to offer support.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children benefit as staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and frequently source relevant training to build on their knowledge. For example, they have completed courses relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage and planning and assessment. Children benefit from a well-planned environment that provides them with a broad range of learning opportunities and a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated play. Activities are based around meaningful themes

such as 'winter', 'shapes' and 'primary colours'. These themes are followed loosely to ensure activities can be adapted to incorporate children's changing interests and incidental learning opportunities. Although children enjoy regular opportunities for outdoor play, the use of the outdoor environment is not fully maximised to provide a consistent balance of activities covering all six areas of learning.

Staff use a wide range of methods to support children's learning. They make good use of open-ended questioning to extend and consolidate children's thinking. For example, staff skilfully encourage children to practise their counting skills when counting the number of pens which do not have a lid and counting how many girls and boys are sitting at the snack table. Staff support children's behaviour extremely well to ensure an effective environment for learning. For example, they learn clear boundaries when they are reminded to use quiet voices during group activities and to listen carefully whenever a member of staff waves their hand in the air. Children's progress is facilitated further by effective planning documentation which clearly shows the learning intentions identified for each activity. There are assessment files for each child which include examples of their work, photographs of their learning and a checklist of the stepping stones, which is highlighted and dated to map children's progress. Children benefit from staff who are intuitive of their needs as they accurately record ongoing observations of children's achievements and development needs. These assessments are used to inform future planning for individual children, ensuring they continually move on to the next stage in their learning.

Children are learning about connections and relationships in numbers, shapes and measures. They frequently respond to the numbers they encounter in the pre-school environment such as pointing out numbers they can see on the clock and in a computer programme. Children begin to explore the concept of time as they talk about the routines they follow at different times in their day. They can identify different shapes. For example, they point out the square and circles shapes on the hopscotch in the playground. Children enjoy being creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance and imaginative play. They use realistic resources to support their role play, which is often based on their first hand experiences. For example, they play alongside others as they pretend to complete household tasks such as assembling the ironing board to iron clothes and filling the sink to wash the dishes. Children work creatively both on a large and small scale as they print with vegetables on large sheets of paper and spend time drawing kites with paint pens on smaller pieces of paper. Children enjoy regular large group singing sessions with a visitor from the school. During these sessions, they develop a good repertoire of familiar songs, repeat different rhythms and learn to clap their hands to a beat.

Children kindly ask for help when putting on dressing up clothes, which demonstrates their growing confidence when linking up with others for support and guidance. They are developing skills in self-care as they persevere with pulling the zip on their coats and pour their own drinks. They deal with new situations and meet new people as they join the older children at the school for assemblies. Children are developing their competencies in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Most children recognise their own names in print when finding their name card at the snack table and children occasionally attempt to write their name onto their creative work when encouraged by the staff. Children enjoy an increasing range of books in the comfortable and inviting book area. They demonstrate good ability to manipulate objects with increasing control as they practise their emergent writing during free play.

Children are making sense of the world around them by investigating and exploring through first hand experiences in an interesting environment. They investigate aspects of the living

world with all of their senses. For example, they observe chicks as they hatch from eggs in an incubator and enjoy noting changes over time as they grow. Children experience good opportunities to use everyday technology to support their learning. They see a microwave in use during a cooking activity and most children competently use a mouse and keyboard to control a simple programme on the computer. They become aware of languages which are spoken around the world and some children can be heard muttering common words in French. Children enjoy a range of physical activities that help them to develop their skills when using small apparatus, tools and equipment. They safely use scissors during craft activities and show good control when using a knife to spread butter and jam when making sandwiches. They begin to develop an awareness of the effect of exercise on their bodies as they talk about feeling hot after running around outside.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children play in an inclusive environment where staff value individuality and the contribution each child makes. The written policy for equal opportunities is implemented well in practice to ensure children are treated with equal concern. Children feel valued as staff have a gentle manner and treat children with respect. For example, children gladly take responsibility when they are given a specific task during tidy up time. Staff help children to develop a strong sense of belonging as they recognise the importance of comforters from home when settling children and provide children with their own drawer for keeping their belongings safe. Staff provide good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, placing emphasis on working in partnership with their parents. Effective intervention strategies ensure individual plans for children with additional needs are monitored by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator and include clear targets to ensure children are supported to progress. Children benefit further as staff have completed relevant ongoing training including workshops relating to implementing the code of practice and supporting children with Autism.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They are learning to value diversity and are developing an understanding of the wider community. For example, they learn about festivals such as Chinese New Year when they dress up in traditional clothes and talk about the story behind the celebration. Children's behaviour is very good as they remain engaged in the activities offered and learn how to play well together. A number of positive strategies are used consistently by the staff team to ensure children are learning clear boundaries. For instance, they skilfully distract children by offering them alternative activities when they are struggling to share resources and help them to learn the importance of being kind and helpful as they are good role models themselves.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Every parent receives an informative prospectus when they first join the setting, detailing the main policies and procedures and the daily routine. Copies of policies are reissued to parents whenever they are updated to ensure they are made aware of any changes. However the policy on complaints does not reflect current requirements that include the correct address and telephone number for Ofsted, as the regulator. Strong relationships are fostered with parents to enhance children's care from the beginning. For example, parents are welcome to attend initial sessions with their children, enabling staff to gather information about children's likes, dislikes and their individual routines. Parents are well informed regarding the Foundation Stage and how their children are progressing. This is achieved successfully through daily discussion with parents, termly newsletters and a display board which highlights the main themes being covered. This ensures that parents have the opportunity to become involved in their children's learning and consequently, children's learning is enhanced.

Children benefit further as their parents feel comfortable when approaching staff for advice. For example, staff happily offer suggestions to parents who ask about resources to promote their child's learning at home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The management and organisation of the setting is effective in ensuring that children receive very good quality care. Children benefit from being cared for by staff who are suitable and hold good qualifications, experience and knowledge for their role. This is because effective vetting and recruitment procedures are implemented including checks through the Criminal Record Bureau and following up of references. Parents are keen to take on the roles and responsibilities involved in participating in the management committee, ensuring a sound support system for the staff team.

Children benefit from the effective organisation of time, space and resources. For example, they spend a majority of their time actively engaging with the children and leave ancillary tasks for when children are not being cared for. As a result, children receive good levels of direct attention and support. The daily hours of attendance are accurately recorded for children and staff. These records show that the setting complies with the conditions of registration, which contributes positively to children's safety and ability to actively take part in all activities. All other required documentation is in place and maintained to a good standard. For example, a good selection of written policies and procedures are in place and are regularly reviewed by the staff and committee to ensure they continue to reflect current practice.

The leadership and management is good. Children make good progress because staff are motivated and work effectively as a very strong team. They have a clear vision of what the setting aims to achieve and place emphasis on ensuring all staff can be involved in all aspects of the setting. For example, children experience consistency in teaching as all staff are given responsibility for completing planning and are provided with a good selection of good practice guidance in electronic form on a memory stick. Staff are reflective and outcomes for children are built upon as they have identified areas for improvement during the self-evaluation process. Staff aim for continual improvement. For example, staff welcome the opportunity to visit different settings to observe good practice. Consequently, children's experiences are enhanced because staff use the knowledge they gain to incorporate new ideas, activities and resources into the provision.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to include a statement on bullying in the written behaviour management policy and to organise outside play activities to ensure that accidents are minimised. The staff have since drawn together a clear policy outlining the positive strategies they would use when dealing with bullying, ensuring children's behaviour is further supported. Children's safety when playing outdoors is no longer compromised as the staff have considered and minimised risks associated with outdoor activities. For example, children use ride-on toys safely as they follow clear markings on the ground and learn to park the toys in safe places.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider was asked to: develop children's experiences in art and craft to provide more balance between adult led and child initiated activities; provide more opportunities for children to write for a purpose and hold pencils correctly and provide more information for parents on the Foundation Stage curriculum and opportunities contribute to their child's ongoing assessment records. The children are now offered increased opportunities to initiate their own activities which often promote their experiences in art and craft and allow them to fully explore their own creativity and ideas. They are provided with opportunities to practise their emergent writing such as writing their names on their completed work and tracing over patterns. With sensitive support from staff they begin to learn how to hold a pencil correctly when drawing around their hands. Children's learning is now further promoted as staff offer good written and verbal information to parents about the Foundation Stage. For example, information is included in the prospectus and newsletters and parents are invited to attend a meeting at the end of each term to share their children's assessment records.

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.

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 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):

- update the written procedure for handling complaints to reflect current requirements including the correct address and telephone number for Ofsted as the regulator.

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 outdoor environment to ensure learning opportunities across all six areas of learning are maximised.

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