

Acorn Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY286501
Inspection date	06 February 2008
Inspector	Kelly Eyre
Setting Address	Ministry of Defence Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HP
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Registered person	Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited
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?

Acorn Nursery is a workplace nursery managed on behalf of a government building and is part of the Bright Horizons Family Solutions company. It opened in 2004 and operates from two main base rooms. It is situated in central London and is for the use of parents employed within the building. A maximum of 38 children may attend the nursery at any one time. It is open each weekday throughout the year and sessions are from 00:80 to 18:00. There is no outdoor play facility and this is therefore accommodated through the daily use of local parks, walks and places of interest.

There are currently 40 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, seven children receive funding for early education. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and is able to support those who have disabilities. It also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 11 members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and five are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted because there are good daily hygiene procedures which help prevent the spread of infection. For example, staff wear appropriate protective clothing when changing nappies and use anti-bacterial hand wash when moving between rooms. Children are gaining a good understanding of the relevance of personal hygiene practices because they discuss these with staff and participate in associated topic work. Children's health in an emergency situation is well promoted because six members of staff hold appropriate first aid qualifications and there is a system for implementing training for the remaining staff members. All records and policies are in place to further support children's health. For example, there are thorough procedures for the safe administration of medication and guidance regarding the exclusion of children who are unwell.

Children's individual requirements with regard to health and diet are clearly documented and observed. Their growth and development are promoted because they are offered healthy and nutritious snacks and meals. These are prepared daily on the premises and are cooked using fresh ingredients. Menus are displayed for parents to see and these demonstrate that children are offered a balanced range of all food types. Older children's independence is promoted as they are supported in serving their own meals. Children are gaining a good understanding of the relevance of a healthy diet as they participate in topic work relating to this.

Children's health and development are promoted because they enjoy a wide range of physical activities. They develop control of their bodies and improve physical skills such as control, balance and co-ordination as they participate in structured activities and action rhymes. The thoughtful planning of daily trips and walks ensures that children are offered regular opportunities for outdoor play. For example, they enjoy visiting local parks and amenities. Their participation in a range of smaller activities ensures that they are able to develop hand-eye co-ordination and finer physical skills. For example, during a craft activity, children select and manipulate small pieces and use scissors, pencils and glue spreaders.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a relaxed, welcoming environment. There are colourful displays of their work and resources are appealingly arranged and easily accessible, helping children to feel valued and comfortable. Their safety is prioritised and staff carry out daily safety checks to identify potential hazards, taking appropriate steps to minimise these. This ensures that children are able to play and move around safely, freely and independently.

The daily implementation of practical policies and procedures ensures that staff are aware of safety practices and are able to promote children's safety. For example, there are clear and comprehensive procedures regarding emergency evacuation and these are practised regularly to enable children to become familiar with the routines. Children are kept safe on outings as there are clear procedures, for example, mobile telephones and first aid kits are taken and each child is assigned to a staff member.

Children are gaining a good understanding of safety issues and how to keep themselves safe. They are given clear explanations by staff to enable them to understand this area. For example,

children are able to explain what the yellow hazard sign means and understand why it is important not to climb on furniture. Children have access to a wide range of toys and resources that are appropriate for their size and developmental stages. These are well organised, accessible and clearly labelled so that children are able to make choices about their play. Children's welfare is well promoted because staff have attended training and have a good understanding of issues regarding safeguarding children. They have ensured that they have up to date information regarding current procedures and are able to identify, report and follow up any concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are settled and secure. They separate well from their parents and carers and are eager to explore the resources and activities provided. They feel valued and welcome because staff are very caring and show the children that they genuinely enjoy their company. For example, they readily join in with children's play and discussions and take time to get to know each child and their individual interests. This promotes a positive, caring environment where children play confidently and are consistently offered appropriate support.

Babies and new children settle well and quickly become secure in their relationships with staff. This is enhanced because staff ensure that they have details of children's normal routines and behaviours. Staff have a good understanding of child development and use this to ensure that children are supported in taking the next developmental step. For example, they ensure that children are confident and secure by offering familiar toys and activities, gradually introducing more difficult and challenging ones. Children's autonomy and independence are promoted because staff are skilled in encouraging them to explore and determine their own play but offering appropriate support and encouragement when needed. For example, a small group of young children explore pots of glitter, sprinkling this across the table and feeling the texture. A staff member then shows them how to make the glitter adhere to their pictures and they enjoy creating various patterns.

Children's individual development is promoted and they are consistently offered appropriate activities because staff know them well and make good use of daily observations and assessments to inform activity planning. This area is further supported because weekly planning is very flexible and is continuously adjusted to include additional activities to promote children's current individual needs and development. Their development is further promoted because staff are skilled in extending their play and learning. For example, a group of children playing with water are encouraged to name the fish and reptiles as they discover them, going on to talk about the different countries the animals originate from and their natural habitats. Children enjoy group activities and are learning about sharing and turn-taking. However, the deployment of staff during some group story sessions does not consistently promote children's enjoyment of, and their participation in these sessions.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a thorough knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use appropriate teaching methods, ensuring that children are offered opportunities which enable them to make good progress in all areas of learning. This progress is well balanced because staff carry out regular assessments. These are used to track children's development and to plan the next steps for each child. They are also carried forward into the weekly activity planning to ensure that individual needs are met.

Children's confidence is promoted because they are offered a wide range of familiar activities and play resources. These include imaginative play, construction and sand and water play. They are then offered further challenge and their knowledge is extended as they participate in a range of themed topics and structured activities. This enables them to look more closely at subjects such as 'Holidays', 'Favourite Things' and 'Healthy Lifestyles'.

The good planning ensures that children are offered daily opportunities to develop the attitudes and dispositions that enable them to achieve in their future learning. For example, they are gaining a good understanding of right and wrong, which in turn promotes a positive environment in which to concentrate and learn. They are gaining a good awareness of appropriate ways of expressing themselves, through daily discussions and exploring issues such as 'Feelings' through topic work.

Children initiate conversations and are confident to speak in a group, for example, discussing recent holidays and home activities during group time. They show a keen interest in books and are gaining a good understanding of print. They enjoy stories and use reference books to research further information, for example, using the world atlas to find out about other countries and climates. However, the deployment of staff during some group story sessions does not consistently promote children's enjoyment of, and their participation in these sessions.

Children are beginning to use numbers in a meaningful context and to see connections and relationships in numbers. For example, they count the different types of animals illustrated in a book and the number of beakers of water needed to fill a larger container. They also have a good understanding of concepts such as 'under and over', 'full and empty'. However, their understanding of this area is not fully promoted as they are not consistently encouraged to use their mathematical skills on a daily basis. Children have opportunities to observe, explore and question in a broad range of activities that form the foundation of their later learning in subjects such as history, geography and science. For example, they explore and experiment with magnets, magnifying glasses and binoculars. They enjoy finding out about the environment, for example, by looking at different types of maps to find information about roads, countries, weather and land formations.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills. For example, when visiting nearby parks, they climb, swing, balance on beams, use bats and balls, run and jump. They are developing a positive attitude towards physical exercise and a growing awareness of how it can help them to stay healthy. They have participated in topic work where they studied healthy lifestyles and the importance of exercise and the effects of this. Children enjoy numerous opportunities to explore colour, texture, shape and form through activities such as painting, modelling with clay, sand and water play, and making collages. Regular music sessions offer opportunities to explore musical instruments and discover how sounds can be changed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are respected and their individuality is valued, helping them to develop a positive self-image. This is further enhanced because staff offer children appropriate praise and encouragement, therefore promoting their confidence and self-esteem. Children are encouraged to express their views and to listen to others and value their views. For example, during a group discussion, children take turns to talk and discuss events which are important to them and then listen carefully to what their peers are saying.

Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their individual requirements recognised and consistently met. Staff are experienced and knowledgeable in this area and work sensitively with both children and parents. They liaise closely with other professionals to ensure that consistent and appropriate care is offered. Children have individual plans which set realistic targets and are reviewed on a regular basis, helping to ensure the balanced promotion of their development.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Their understanding of other cultures and ways of life is promoted through discussions and themed activities. For example, they participate in activities associated with Chinese New Year, visiting a local display relating to this. Their understanding is further promoted as they have daily access to a range of resources which promote positive images and provide information. They are gaining an awareness of the community in which the nursery is situated through the daily use of local facilities such as parks, walks and places of interest.

Children's behaviour is good and they are gaining a clear understanding of right and wrong. Their participation in relevant activities and discussions means that they are gaining a good understanding of feelings and appropriate ways to express themselves. Staff act as good role models and always offer children explanations so that they can begin to understand the implications of their behaviour and make decisions about this. This consistent approach to behaviour management means that children are able to concentrate on their activities, creating a busy yet calm environment.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are given detailed information about the setting's policies and procedures, ensuring that they are aware of daily practice and routines. Good use is made of monthly newsletters and notice boards around the setting to ensure that parents receive information about current activities and events. They are given clear information about the methods used for activity planning and the subsequent links with children's play and learning, enabling them to understand and be involved in this. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and activities through daily discussions with staff, regular meetings with key workers and the use of daily diary sheets for younger children. Parents views are valued and are actively sought through the use of parental questionnaires.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their daily care and play experiences are enhanced by the attention they receive from well-supervised staff and from the attention paid to detail in the organisation of the setting. Their ongoing welfare and safety are promoted because there are robust procedures in place for checking that all staff are suitable to work with children. This is further supported by a comprehensive staff induction process, regular supervision and annual appraisals. The daily monitoring of all areas of the setting ensures that policies and procedures are understood by all and are consistently applied. All paperwork and records are in place to ensure that children's needs are clearly documented and staff can work appropriately to promote their ongoing safety and development.

Children's activities and play opportunities are enhanced by the thoughtful organisation of space. Separate base rooms for older and younger children ensure that they are able to move freely and safely and are offered appropriate care and activities. Designated areas for different types of play mean that children are able to concentrate on their chosen activity and can move safely between the activities. The good forward-planning and organisation of time ensures

that children are able to go out on daily trips and are offered a balanced range of opportunities. For example, there is time for free play and for structured activities, for independent play and group play.

Leadership and management is good. Children's overall development and welfare are promoted by the clear understanding that the manager has of her roles and responsibilities. She works in partnership with staff to evaluate the daily practice of the setting and implement action plans which lead to improvements in outcomes for children. For example, a recent review of their practice with regard to outdoor play has led to improvements in the resources provided for this area. The manager and senior staff act as good role models for staff and children, attending training and showing that they genuinely enjoy their daily work with children. Staff are well supervised and receive support in all areas of their work and for all training needs. This creates a positive atmosphere within the setting, in which children can play, learn and develop.

Improvements since the last inspection

At their last inspection, the setting was asked to ensure that meals provided for children are healthy and nutritious. The kitchen facilities have now been improved and children are offered a wide range of nutritious snacks and meals, therefore promoting their growth and development.

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):

- review the group story times so that these are meaningful and all children are able to participate (also applies to nursery education).

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):

- continue to develop opportunities for children to use their mathematical and problem-solving skills 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