

Acorns Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 102993
Inspection date 06 March 2008
Inspector Christine Powlesland

Setting Address Whitstone Community Primary School, Oak Lane, Whitstone, Holsworthy,
Devon, EX22 6TH

Telephone number 01288 341241

E-mail

Registered person Acorns Playgroup

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?

Acorns playgroup was registered in June 2000. The playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the playgroup. It operates from a classroom in the village primary school and serves the village of Whitstone and the surrounding area.

A maximum of 16 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. Children from the age of three years to five years attend. The preschool is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from 12:30 to 15:00, during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 12 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, eight children receive funding for early education. The playgroup employs two members of staff. Of these, one holds appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children thrive because staff give higher priority to children's individual needs. Details of children's allergies are obtained when they register and are displayed to ensure children's dietary needs are met. All children's health needs are closely supported and monitored using clear documentation systems that keep parents fully informed of accidents and any administration of medicines or first aid. Children's health is safeguarded by staff who hold current first aid qualifications. Staff take pride in the playgroup, ensuring it is always clean, to help prevent infection. Children are also learning to protect themselves from infection as they respond to the encouragement staff give to them to wash their hands after toileting and before mealtimes.

Children enjoy a varied range of healthy snack items, such as pieces of apple, banana and orange followed by slices of brown bread, which the children spread with cream cheese. There is a choice of milk or water to drink. Staff sit with the children at snack time and chat with them to make this a social occasion. Children have access to drinks of water throughout the session to keep them hydrated as they have individual water bottles labelled with their names. They are encouraged to recognise when they are thirsty, for example they are reminded to drink after vigorous outdoor exercise.

All children have ample opportunity for fresh air and exercise as they play outdoors in the school playground or garden. Here they develop their large muscles as they learn to run, kick with confidence and practise catching balls. Children recognise when they become hot and they remove their coats. They play together with the parachute, carefully follow instructions to be gentle and then taking great delight in shaking the material quickly to make a rough sea.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an orderly and spacious environment, which is carefully planned by adults in order to maximise children's free movement and use of space. Children use a wide range of toys and resources that are in good condition and stored at their level for easy access.

Children are kept safe by staff that are vigilant in their supervision of children and who maintain high ratios of adults to children at all times. The playroom is secure and visitors are asked to record their presence on arrival, helping to keep children safe. Risks of accidental injury to children are minimised because staff are extremely vigilant and conduct daily risk assessments to reduce potential hazards. Children are encouraged to participate in keeping themselves safe by taking part in, and understanding the need for, regular fire drills.

The child protection policy does not include a clear procedure to follow if a member of staff is accused of harming a child. However, staff have a good knowledge of child protection issues and procedures, which would enable them to seek appropriate support for children if necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly on arrival in the playgroup, responding to the warm welcome they receive. Staff work hard at getting to know each child well in order to ensure that the care children enjoy closely matches their individual needs. Children show high levels of confidence and self-esteem as they participate in a very good range of activities designed to promote learning and development. Children are independent, self-selecting activities and asking for help when needed.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all the six areas of learning. Children clearly enjoy their time in the setting as they enthusiastically join in a wide range of activities provided, both indoors and out. They are making friendships and becoming independent in self-care, such as hand washing and putting on their coats before outdoor play. They are developing confident communication skills and they respond to their names at circle time. Their reading skills are developed through daily routines, such as finding their name on arrival and recognising their named water bottle when they need a drink. Their recognition of letter sounds is enhanced as they listen to the starting sound of their names when special jobs for the day are allocated. Children show confidence in their understanding of mathematical concepts. They count the number of children present and enjoy number rhymes where they count backwards from five. When playing in the sand tray they use language such as full and empty with accuracy. Children use the computer with confidence and independently switch on music in the playroom. They show an interest in the world around them, discussing moles when they see piles of soil outdoors and carefully planting cress seeds in cotton wool and then watering these. Children's imaginations are allowed to flourish in well-resourced role-play areas and they concentrate for long periods as they enjoy the pretend game of hairdressers. They enjoy taking part in daily singing or music making activities. Children participate in activities that develop their awareness of their own and other people's cultures appropriately. For example, they visit a nearby school to see a play and visit nearby lifeboat and fire stations.

Staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and of how children learn and develop. This knowledge is used to plan a broad and interesting range of activities in which children participate with enthusiasm. There is a good balance between adult and child led activities throughout the session and across the six areas of learning. Careful developmental records of individual children's achievements are kept and used to plan the next stages of the children's learning. There is good photographic evidence to show children's achievements. Behaviour is generally good. However, staff are not always effectively deployed to ensure children access support for their learning during whole group activities. Some younger children find it difficult to concentrate on listening to a story in a large group and, as they become restless, this disrupts the activity for the older and more able children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children are made to feel very welcome within the playgroup. They are greeted warmly upon arrival and their family lives and individual needs are well known to staff. Children know the daily routines and help tidy away as they sing a special song before snack time. They develop self-esteem and take pride in being a 'special helper', for example handing out the beakers at

snack time. Children have access to a range of resources to learn about the wider world and participate in a range of planned activities which enable them to learn about their local community. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

Children's behaviour is generally good and staff gently discourage any poor behaviour by reminding children what is unacceptable. Good manners are praised and children are encouraged to share. There is a written complaints policy which includes details of the regulating body. However, not all the required procedures to be followed are included in the policy.

The partnership with parents is good. There are strong relationships between parents and staff, with daily verbal exchanges contributing to the quality of care and keeping parents informed of their child's progress. The prospectus shares information with all families and includes clear details of the six areas of learning. Newsletters are shared with parents each half term and staff are implementing twice yearly parent meetings to discuss individual children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children enjoy good levels of care as a result of high adult ratios, with parents helping in the playgroup on rota and generally effective staff deployment. The operational plan reflects the work of the group, and policies are in largely good order, with only minor amendments to the complaints policy and child protection policy needed to ensure that the requirements of the National Standards are met in full. The premises are well organised with indoor space laid out to maximise play opportunities for the children.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are fully supported by the committee of parents who are aware of the needs of the group, for example any new equipment required. The playgroup has completed a detailed self-evaluation form, which includes their current good practice and the improvements they would like to make in the future to improve the provision for the children. There is a strong focus on the personal development and achievement of all children. The playgroup meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to review and update the child protection policy and procedures and to review the wording of the written permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment.

The wording of the written permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment now makes clear that it gives permission for clinicians to act in the child's best interests in a life-threatening situation, to maintain children's health. The playgroup reviewed the child protection policy in January this year. However, it does not include clear procedures to follow if a member of staff is accused of harming a child. This issue needs to be addressed in order to ensure the safety of children.

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):

- make sure the child protection policy includes the procedure to be followed if staff are accused of harming a child
- update the complaints policy to include all the necessary requirements.

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):

- consider whole group activities, and the organisation and deployment of staff at these times, to prevent younger children becoming restless and disrupting the sessions for the older and more able children.

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