

Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509573
Inspection date	08 May 2008
Inspector	Tonia Chilcott
Setting Address	St John's Room, 19 St John's Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hampshire, SO30 4AF
Telephone number	01489 795860
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Registered person	Little Acorns
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Day Nursery opened in 1997. It operates from three rooms on two floors of a converted parish hall. The nursery is privately owned and located near to the town centre of Hedge End, Southampton.

A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year, closing only for the week of Christmas. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 70 children, aged from birth to under five years, on roll, 27 of whom receive funding for early education. The nursery employs 13 members of staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications and six are working towards a qualification in childcare. The nursery receives support visits from the Pre-school Learning Alliance development worker and the local authority early years advisory teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children of all ages benefit from and enjoy a varied, healthy and nutritious diet whilst at the setting; meals and snacks are prepared on site on a daily basis. A written menu is available to ensure that parents remain fully aware of what meals are to be provided to their children. Children are able to make alternative choices from the menu if they do not like a particular option, for instance, some children choose to have spaghetti on a regular basis. All staff have a secure knowledge of the children's individual dietary requirements and work well together to ensure that their needs are met at all times. Drinks are available to children throughout the day, and are provided in individual cups and bottles as part of the nursery's procedures to protect children from the spread of infection. This system works well in the nursery. In the garden, however, bottles and drinks fall on the floor and children touch all the bottles with dirty fingers. Thus children are not effectively protected whilst in the garden.

Sleeping children all access individual sheets and linen whilst sleeping to ensure that they are protected from the spread of infection. Staff ensure that they use linen that is clearly marked for each child, using the new system that has been recently introduced. Younger children in the toddler section of the nursery learn good personal hygiene skills with support from staff who become effective and good role models. Children wash their hands and return to the toddler room to eat snacks and meals. Upon their return to the room they then sit at the table where they clean their hands again with antibacterial gel before eating. Staff talk to the children on an individual basis about why they need to wash their hands again, before staff then clean their own hands with antibacterial gel before handling any food. Preschool children independently access the same toilets as the toddlers and learn to wash their hands with gentle reminders from staff as needed. However, at times, the toilets are insufficiently stocked with toilet roll, thus affecting both preschool and toddler children.

Babies benefit from the procedures followed by staff to ensure that they are fully protected from the spread of illness and infection. For instance, staff ensure that they follow nappy changing procedures, wearing gloves throughout. Whilst most staff throughout the nursery implement the nappy changing procedures well, occasionally some staff fail to wear protective gloves and consequently children are not fully protected. A visual and bright display is used within the baby room to highlight the individual routines for babies, which includes details of nappy change times and mealtimes, to ensure that all staff across the nursery are quickly able to become familiar with each child's individual needs.

Sick or unwell children benefit from the caring and sensitive approach of staff, who take time to ensure that children are comfortable whilst waiting for their parents to collect them. Staff sit with children, talking to them gently and keeping a record of their temperature to share the information with the children's parents when they arrive. Whilst playing in the garden all children benefit from the procedures followed consistently by all staff to ensure that children have sun screen applied. Staff talk to children about why they need to wear it and consequently children are able to tell adults that they 'have to wear it to protect us from the sun'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled within the welcoming environment. Staff make good use of the available notice boards and walls to display a wide range of examples of children's artwork, posters and information for parents, thus contributing to the welcoming feel of the nursery. Staff in the toddler room imaginatively display examples of children's work, using both walls and ceilings to decorate the room warmly; consequently children feel valued and proudly show staff their paintings that have been displayed. The baby room is welcoming and also contains a wide range of examples of posters, information and babies' artwork. Staff ensure that babies are protected by reminding all visitors of the setting's procedures relating to not wearing outside shoes within this area. The preschool area of the nursery is laid out well to allow children to play freely and safely within the available space.

Children of all ages access a good range of toys and materials, most of which are suitable and in a good state of cleanliness and repair. Babies benefit from the procedures implemented by staff to ensure that toys are cleaned on a regular basis. Staff make good use of time to clean toys whilst babies are asleep. Whilst most toys in the garden are now clean and in good repair, some that are in need of repair or are dirty and waiting to be cleaned are stored within a children's play house; consequently children attempt to access the toys and a hazard remains. Children learn how to keep themselves safe in the event of a fire by taking part in regular fire drills. Most staff have a good awareness of how to leave the building in an emergency, although drills are not completed promptly to ensure that all new staff are fully conversant with the procedures. Risk assessments are completed on all areas of the setting. However, some hazards have not been identified, for instance, trip hazards from broken concrete in the toddler room emergency exit and old and frayed carpets on the stairs leading to the toddler room.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages are happy and settled within the nursery and benefit from the relationships that they have developed with kind and caring staff. Children enjoy playing together with children from different areas of the nursery in the garden and regularly begin to sing at different times throughout the day. For instance, within the baby room, children begin to act out the movements of songs and when staff begin to sing along children laugh and smile and continue to match movements to the songs. Within the toddler area, children sing loudly to songs with staff in large groups or whilst playing in the garden when staff begin to sing with them. Younger children, including babies and toddlers, enjoy their time with staff, often seeking staff for a cuddle and laughing and smiling throughout the day. Toddlers and older children enjoy involving the staff in their play and shriek with laughter when taking part in role play with staff in the garden.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Staff have a clear awareness of the Foundation Stage and how children develop, thus allowing them to provide a range of activities that enable children to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Sessions and activities are planned; the planning clearly highlights the intended learning outcome, the adult role, resources needed to complete the activities, and how to ensure that all children make sufficient progress. However, not all staff are aware of the intended learning outcome of activities and consequently do not fully extend children's learning in all areas. Some garden activities are not sufficiently resourced. Despite being

highlighted within the planning, staff do not ensure that spades are available for planting, which means children are unable to dig well. This impacts upon the planned activity and the intended learning and development. Staff spend time observing the children and use the information to identify the children's next steps in learning, which is then used as a tool to aid planning. Whilst the records maintained relating to children's development are comprehensive, occasionally some observations are not dated and the identified next steps in learning are not linked wholly to the Foundation Stage areas of learning.

Children are confident within the preschool and have built good relationships with one another and staff. They regularly seek staff and friends to take part in and share experiences during activities. For example, whilst playing in the garden with younger children, some children involve both toddlers and staff members in their imaginative play. The climbing frame becomes a pirate ship and children and staff play together, pretending to look in the distance with binoculars and using wind chimes as bells to warn other ships of their approach. Children of all ages work well together in groups, both small and large, taking turns and sharing. For example, whilst playing with the sand and water tray in the garden, children negotiate the use of tools between one another. Many children confidently initiate conversations with one another and staff, and are beginning to use language well to express their needs to staff. Most children concentrate well whilst listening to stories with staff, although, at times, some children become distracted when other small groups begin singing loudly. Some children become aimless whilst playing in the garden, as they are not always sufficiently challenged.

Some children have begun to write recognisable letters whilst attempting to write their names, however, they do not consistently learn that English print reads from left to right. Some staff question and extend children's learning well. For instance, small group activities where children take part in simple yoga exercises are extended to discuss the shape and sounds of letters as children create the shape with their bodies. Children become fully engaged in the activity until the singing of other groups distracts them. Children have developed a good repertoire of songs and spontaneously sing throughout the day. They sing loudly with one another in large group activities and sing softly with staff during smaller activities, such as sand play in the garden.

Some children use mathematical language and counting during their everyday play and routines. At snack and lunch time, for instance, children begin to count one another, including how many girls and how many boys. Some staff extend children's understanding of mathematics and number well; they question children about bigger than and smaller than, whilst taking part in the nature trail for instance, and encourage children to think about simple problem-solving when working out how many more cups are needed at snack time. Children learn about living things and how to look after them whilst tending to the pet fish in the preschool or planting seeds in the garden. Children learn about the life cycles of animals, such as frogs, when looking at the changes that occur with tadpoles in the garden.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and feel valued within the caring environment the nursery provides. Children learn about the wider world whilst taking part in a range of planned activities that enable them to learn about the cultures and beliefs of others. A good range of toys, materials and posters that provide positive images of the wider world are readily available and easily accessible, and support children's learning further. Children with identified learning difficulties or disabilities and/or English as an additional language are supported by staff, who have effective systems in place to support children's individual needs. Children in all areas of the nursery behave very

well in response to praise and encouragement from staff. Children receive praise and encouragement throughout the day, for example, when staff tell them 'well done' or 'aren't you clever'. However, occasionally older children become distracted when taking part in large group activities. Parents are provided with information about the nursery's policies and procedures, ensuring that they are fully aware of the nursery's practices; however, some policies are not up-to-date and contain inaccurate information, particularly in relation to contacting Ofsted. Parents of younger children are provided with a range of information about their child's day at the setting. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good.

Good relationships are developed between staff and parents and enable the effective sharing of information to take place. For instance, parents are fully able to discuss their children's progress with staff at regular parent meetings, or on a daily basis should they prefer. Newsletters are provided to parents on a regular basis, and an information board is in place at the entrance of the nursery and within each area of the setting. Information relating to the planning of sessions and activities is readily available to parents and, at their request, is also available online for them to view at any time. This ensures that parents are able to extend their children's learning in the home environment, following the planning at the nursery. Parents' opinions about the setting are sought on a regular basis through questionnaires. The comments and ideas provided by parents are evaluated by staff and used to identify areas where the nursery can improve further.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The staff and managers are suitably experienced to work with children and are encouraged to continue updating and furthering their knowledge and training. A high number of staff are currently fully qualified, and many more are in the process of completing relevant training to extend their knowledge further. All staff display a commitment to improving and, as such, fully take part in the inspection process, quickly implementing improvements where identified. Effective procedures for the appointment of staff and an induction programme are in place; although the procedures relating to emergency evacuation are discussed with new staff they are not practised promptly to further support their understanding of the procedure. Risk assessments are completed on a daily basis and are used to identify most hazards. Occasionally, however, some hazards, such as trip hazards, go unnoticed. Whilst a wide range of written policies and procedures are in place, some contain inaccurate information, for instance relating to the contact details of Ofsted. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

Appraisals of staff are undertaken on a regular basis. This enables both staff and managers to identify any training needs and source appropriate training. The nursery staff and managers display a commitment to improvement, for instance, through taking an active part in the inspection process and commencing an accreditation programme. However, the nursery's continued evaluation of the setting is not wholly effective in identifying areas to improve. For example, although there are systems in place to assess the nursery education, they fail to identify that, at times, large group activities do not engage all children fully and that evaluations of children's progress and activities are not always completed accurately with dates or record actual details of what has been learned.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the nursery was required to take action to ensure that all toys and materials are clean and in good repair prior to children accessing them, particularly garden toys, including the sand tray, easels and tricycles. The staff have removed all unsuitable garden toys and ensure that most are now clean and in good state of repair prior to children accessing them. However, whilst awaiting cleaning, some toys that are very dirty are stored within the children's play house and consequently children continue to access them throughout the day. As a result a further recommendation has been raised. The nursery was also required to assess the risks to children in relation to the garden area, and take action to minimise these, with particular regard to the ivy, brambles and fenced basement area. A new, secure, fence has been erected around the basement area; all ivy and brambles have been removed and steps are taken to ensure that any new ivy or brambles are removed promptly thus ensuring that children are protected. The setting was also required to ensure that risk assessments are completed in all areas of the setting, and that an action plan is in place that identifies the timescales and action to be taken to minimise identified risks. Risk assessments are now completed and action plans highlight the action to be taken to minimise risks. However, risk assessments have not identified some potential hazards and a further recommendation has been raised. Additionally the nursery was asked to make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the procedure to be followed if they have a complaint, including the contact details of Ofsted. Whilst parents have been provided with details of how to make a complaint, the policy, at the commencement of the inspection, contained inaccurate details of the contact details of Ofsted and the procedures to follow should parents wish to make a complaint. Staff took prompt action to rectify this at the time of the inspection and therefore no further recommendations have been raised.

At the last inspection of nursery education, the nursery was asked to further develop the systems for planning the sessions to ensure that a balanced curriculum is provided that will allow the children to make progress, whilst being manageable for staff to deliver appropriately. Planning has now been developed that is manageable to staff, thus allowing them sufficient time to work directly with the children, and clearly identifies the intended learning outcomes of planned activities. The nursery was also asked to ensure that the systems to monitor and record details of children's progress are manageable and provide an accurate picture of children's progress, whilst allowing staff sufficient time to work directly with children. As with planning, staff have developed the systems to monitor children's progress to ensure that staff are fully able to engage directly with the children and continue to record their progress sufficiently. Consequently, children now benefit from the relationships with staff who are now more relaxed and working directly with the children at all times. Additionally the nursery was asked to further develop systems for monitoring the nursery education to ensure preschool staff are supported to deliver the curriculum effectively. Systems are now in place to monitor the nursery education more effectively.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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 that, at all times, toilets are stocked adequately with paper towels and toilet roll
- ensure that children are consistently protected from the spread of illness and infection, with particular regard to the use of gloves whilst changing nappies and the storage of individual cups whilst in the garden
- ensure that all garden toys that are not clean or suitable for use are stored out of reach of children at all times
- ensure that all areas of the setting are free from potential hazards, with particular regard to the toddler fire exit and carpets on stairs
- ensure that all policies contain up to date information, including the correct contact details for Ofsted

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 the systems to evaluate the planned activities ensuring that evaluations contain information about the children's learning
- ensure that all staff are aware of the intended learning outcome of planned activities and that all activities are resourced appropriately, regardless of whether the activity is taking place indoors or out
- ensure that all elements of the session fully engage 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