

# Acorn Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY360037
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Susan Cox
<b>Setting Address</b>	Dussindale Primary School, Vane Close, Norwich, NR7 0US
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 436934
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Acorn Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Playgroup is run by a committee of parents and carers. It opened in 1977 and re-registered in 2007 following a move to Dussindale Primary School situated on the outskirts of the city of Norwich, in Norfolk. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open each weekday from 09.15 to 11.45 and 12.30 to 15.00 during school term-times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 70 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 65 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the surrounding area. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties.

The committee employs six members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications. The playgroup receives support from the local authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children's health is very well promoted. This is because the premises are clean and staff maintain hygiene effectively during sessions. Details regarding children's health are gathered from parents. Training for specific medical needs is being sought to enable staff to support the children appropriately. When children have an accident they receive sensitive care from staff trained in first aid. A record is shared with their parents so they understand what has happened and can take any further action they feel necessary to ensure their child's welfare. Children are learning the importance of personal hygiene. For example, a child explains the need to wash their hands after using the toilet because, 'germs might get in my tummy and make me sick'. Older children manage the toilet with confidence and younger ones are sensitively supported as they acquire this skill.

Children enjoy a wide range of snacks that promote healthy eating. Parents are encouraged to supply fruit, vegetables and suitable snacks which staff prepare for the children. Children choose from the attractively presented range of food and happily sit with their friends to enjoy their snack. They pour their drink of milk or water and chat happily to the adult assisting them. Topics and cookery activities help children understand more about food that is good for them in a practical way. When children are thirsty they help themselves to their water bottle or have a drink from the water fountain so are able to meet their own needs.

Children thrive due to the opportunities to play in the fresh air. They play outside in most weathers being protected from extremes in weather under the covered area. Children run, ride a range of wheeled vehicles, push buggies and manoeuvre around objects and through cones. They play with balls, hoops and practise walking on the balancing equipment. Children sit on mats to play with the dolls house or play imaginatively with a range of toy animals. They draw and paint at the table and use the magnetic board to identify familiar letters. Staff support the children very well in their outdoor play extending learning opportunities as they arise.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are eager to attend as they receive a very warm welcome from the staff. The play room is bright and attractive with a range of children's work which is well presented to create a stimulating and interesting environment where children settle quickly. Children confidently access the outside play area as they choose where they wish to play for much of the session. Easy access to the toilets and cloakroom helps them learn independence in their personal care and for staff to give any support that is required. A book area has chairs and cubes which children use to sit on and read books. However, there is no comfortable area for children to snuggle up and enjoy a book or rest comfortably if feeling tired.

Staff conduct daily risk assessments to check that the premises are safe for children to use. The playroom and outside area are secure during sessions so children can not leave without supervision and unauthorised persons do not have entry. This effectively promotes children's safety. Children sometimes use the kitchen with staff for cooking activities and staff are very mindful of safety at these times. They have just noticed that the catches on a low cupboard are not effective so they are being adjusted to further promote children's safety. Children are

learning how to keep themselves safe. For example, they take part in fire drills, practise road safety and understand the need to take care when carrying a chair to prevent accidents.

Children's play and education is enhanced by the wide range of bright and attractive resources that are freely available to them. They make many of their own choices and understand they need to help tidy up as part of the daily routine. Staff monitor what is used to make sure it is safe and appropriate for the children. Low-level storage, with much being clearly labelled, helps children understand where to find resources and promotes their independence. For example, the dressing-up rack displays clothes attractively encouraging children to choose outfits and replace them after their play.

Children's welfare is promoted as staff have a very clear understanding of child protection issues. As a result, they know what to do if they have concerns about a child so that appropriate action is taken to ensure the child's safety.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of interesting play opportunities which promotes their learning and development in all areas. They play happily making their own choices of resources and organise their play confidently. For example, children find the drawing paper, ensure their name is on their picture and put it ready for collection at the end of the session. Children are asked what they would like to have out on the carpet and they help to find and organise what is chosen. This involvement helps to promote their self-esteem and independence successfully. Children engage in a wide range of free play activities concentrating well and working with their friends and staff in a relaxed manner. Staff are readily available to support and extend children's learning and do this in a particularly sensitive manner. Consequently, children are confident in the knowledge that staff will listen to them and value what they say and do. Children's interests are used as starting points for topics and staff realise the benefits of spontaneous events to develop learning. For example, a small spider is seen on the puzzle frame, this catches the attention of a child who watches intently. A member of staff notices this, joins the child and they count legs, talk about how the spider is moving and making a web then find a spider game to play together. They are joined by others and they continue to talk about spiders as they count, take turns and play the game together.

Children benefit from the ability to play outside for much of each session. Staff realise some children learn better in the fresh air and so ensure there is a wide range and balance of learning opportunities both inside and outside. Having looked at caterpillars and considered their life cycle children take pride in and concentrate very well as they make a butterfly picture. They draw around a template, cut and glue tissue paper and straws, colour and decorate whilst looking at pictures of butterflies in a book. A child proudly explains, 'my butterfly painting is symmetrical because both sides are the same', demonstrating a clear understanding of his achievement. Praise and encouragement is freely given to inspire the children to meet new challenges.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is because staff have a very clear understanding of the Foundation Stage, and the six areas of learning, and promote these well through a wide range of interesting and well-resourced activities. They plan using children's interests and are able to adapt to take into account spontaneous events so that valuable learning opportunities

are not missed. Staff observe what the children do and use this information to compile their 'Learning Story'. Photographs and samples of children's work are included and the next steps in children's learning are identified. The children's key person has a clear understanding of the progress they are making and supports them sensitively. However, short term planning is not sufficiently robust to enable all staff to implement the next steps effectively for all children.

Children are happy and becoming increasingly independent. They put on their coats for outdoor play, manage their personal hygiene well and help themselves to a snack. Children enjoy making choices and organising their play including helping to tidy up. They cooperate well with the staff and some spontaneously find a dust pan and brush to tidy up spilt sand. Children are happy and motivated to learn. This is because they are secure in their relationships with staff and know they will receive the help they require as they play. This is supplemented by much praise and encouragement to promote their self-esteem and give confidence to explore and learn. Children are making friends and enjoy playing together. Most children chatter confidently as they play and at group time. They listen intently to and respond to staff who ask them clear questions to extend their learning in a wealth of ways. For example, when working together on a large floor puzzle staff ask the children if they have been on an aeroplane. They happily talk about real and imaginary experiences being helped by questions such as 'can you remember' and 'what did you think?' Children recognise their name, sound out some familiar letters and often explain to staff about their pictures for them to annotate them clearly. This helps children learn that writing carries meaning and encourages early reading skills.

Children count as they play games with older children understanding how to move forward and backwards as they follow rules. Many confidently sequence numbers to 10, sort bears by colour and size and can count higher. For example, when building a tower of eight bricks working out that two more are needed to reach 10. Children weigh, estimate and measure in activities, such as, cookery, playing in the sand and considering the size of the beans they have grown. Children are developing a good understanding of the living world. They planted and grew potatoes, with the help of a grandparent who came in to assist with this activity, and watched beans grow in a jar. Playing outside throughout the year gives a good understanding of the weather and how to dress accordingly, for example, stay safe in the sun. Finding out about transport helps the children learn about road safety and their local community as they look at photographs of Norwich station. They consider timetables and tickets and act out imaginary trips in the role play area. However, there have not been any trips out since moving into these premises although staff are considering developing these in the future. Many children are very confident when using the computer. They manage the mouse well, complete appropriate work packages with little support and some are able to explain to others what to do. Children enjoy taking part in a range of festivals which helps develop their knowledge and understanding of the wider world and how people celebrate.

Children enjoy being physically active inside and in the fresh air. They are learning a range of skills as they use paint brushes, scissors, pencils and crayons. Puzzles are completed, matching games played and models are made which all helps develop hand-eye coordination effectively. Children's creative development is well promoted through a very good range of craft activities. For example, they make clay caterpillars and paint them chatting happily about the colours they are using. They paint freely at easels, draw and make interesting collages. Children concentrate as they thread tinsel and ribbons through netting considering the patterns they make. They play as doctors using the stethoscope to check if friends are well and arrange a tea party in the role play area. Saucepans hanging on the fencing are used with triangles and tambourines to spontaneously create music as they play and dance around with much fun and laughter.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are confident and settled; this is because staff take time and work with their parents to get to know them well. A range of posters promote positive images of cultures and disability and some dual language signs help children understand that people may speak in a range of languages. Children play with a good range of resources that reflect our multicultural society and are encouraged to be caring and show respect for all. Children with learning difficulties are very well supported. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals to make sure the children's needs are met and that they may take part in the range of activities safely. As a result, children are fully included and able to play and learn with their peers. Although, there are not any children with disabilities attending, staff display a clear understanding of how to adapt and be flexible to meet particular needs by working in partnership with parents and other professionals.

Children's behaviour is good. They understand what is expected of them as staff have taken time to talk with them about what is acceptable behaviour and they have made a list which is displayed on the wall. Staff are calm and positive role models, they treat everyone with courtesy and respect and children copy this behaviour. Gentle reminders are given which successfully help children manage their own behaviour. For example, 'we don't push our friends, what do we say?' 'Excuse me,' replies a child. 'Well done'. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. They receive clear information that helps them understand the care and education their children receive. This is supported by a flexible settling-in period when staff gather information about the children's starting points and a relationship with the key person is developed. As a result, children settle quickly as they receive sensitive and caring support. Planning information is displayed to inform parents so they may support their children in their learning and they are encouraged to help on the rota to gain practical experience of what their children do in the group. A questionnaire has recently been issued to find out what parents think about the group. There are many positive comments and parents talk about the sensitive care and support their children receive. Some would welcome further opportunities to talk with the key person and view their children's records and so an open day is being planned to develop this. This will further promote the partnership and help parents support their children's learning and development.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children's safety is promoted as they are cared for by staff who are suitable for their role. Secure employment procedures are used to select staff and make sure they have the skills required to work with the children effectively. As a result, children receive sensitive and caring support from staff who are keen to help them make good progress and enjoy their time at playgroup. Staff are well organised and work effectively as a team. Consequently, they are ready and available to work with the children on their arrival and chatter to parents as is needed. Good use is made of space as children play freely inside and outside. Staff ensure the snack area is clean and appropriate for use and make this a sociable time which the children enjoy. However, there is not a comfortable area in which children may rest if they wish.

All the required documentation is in place and well maintained to make sure children are cared for according to their individual needs and their parent's wishes. Overall, children's needs are met.

Leadership and management is good. The manager has a very good understanding of her role. She is ably supported by the deputy and staff team who work efficiently carrying out their roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm. Staff are well qualified and use their skills and understanding to promote all aspects of children's care and learning through an interesting range of activities. They are keen to keep up-to-date with new developments and accept support willingly, such as, with planning, as they strive to review and develop the service they provide. An active committee supports the work of the staff team and helps to ensure the effective running of the playgroup.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration 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):

- make sure children who wish to relax or rest may do so safely without disturbance.

#### **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):

- improve short term planning to show how individual children are supported in making progress in their learning.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)