

Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY359829
Inspection date	28 April 2008
Inspector	Jacqueline Munden
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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?

Little Acorns Pre-school opened under its current management structure in 2007. The group is privately owned and operates from a room in a church centre in Highfield, Southampton. Children have use of a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 17 children may attend at any one time. Sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45 each day and 12:30 to 15:00 on Monday and Wednesday. The group opens weekdays during the school terms. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are currently 41 children from two to five years on roll. Of these, 38 children receive funding for early education.

There are six members of staff working with children, all of whom hold or are working towards an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children play a positive role in keeping themselves healthy and learn about healthy living. They start to take responsibility for their own personal care as they independently access the toilet and washing facilities. They learn that washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet helps keep them healthy. Practitioners follow generally effective hygiene procedures to prevent cross infection including cleaning tables before use and wearing gloves when changing children's soiled clothes. However hand washing procedures before eating do not fully promote children's good health.

Practitioners maintain good records of accidents and any medications administered, and share these with parents and carers. Practitioners are able to respond well to medical emergencies as most are suitably trained in first aid and all in the use of Epipen and appropriate parental consent is obtained.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks of fruit and drinks which contribute to their good health although they cannot access drinking water independently when needed. Children learn about foods that are good for them through planned activities and discussion with practitioners. For example, as they use fruits for printing. Practitioners ensure children's dietary needs are met all times.

Children take part in a variety of daily planned activities which contribute to their good health and physical development. Children relish their time outside as they pedal bikes and climb on low level apparatus. They develop control of their bodies as they jump on the pogo stick and knock the ball through the croquet hoops. Children enjoy taking part in music and movement activities. Children develop small muscles through using the range of construction sets and activities such as puzzles. They use a broad range of creative materials that require dexterity such as tools for dough, painting and sticking.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, secure, warm and welcoming environment. Practitioners give high priority to ensuring children's safety. The high ratio of adults to children ensures children are fully supervised at all times. Access to the setting is well monitored and all visitors are recorded. There are clear procedures for the safe collection of children and parents are well informed of this. They know they need to inform staff in advance if someone else is to collect their child. Children and staff are involved in regular fire drills that are recorded appropriately. Children learn to keep themselves safe as staff remind them not to run indoors. They learn about road safety through planned topics and a road safety officer that visits the setting. Children can access toilet facilities safely and independently. They enjoy using the secure outdoor play area that is an extension of the learning environment. Indoor and outdoor space is organised effectively and creatively allowing children to move around safely providing areas for different activities. Play equipment is clean and in a good, safe condition. Although staff have to pack away all equipment regularly as the hall is used by other members of the community, they show a huge commitment to ensuring the hall is attractive when children arrive. They display posters and children's art work on the walls. The selection of play equipment placed out for children to use is accessible, allowing children to make independent choices.

Children are well safeguarded as practitioners have a sound understanding of child protection procedures and keep local contact numbers accessible. Practitioners are suitably trained and they are clear about their roles and the setting's procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily at the pre-school and are confident with the daily routine. They develop good relationships and talk confidently about their weekend and places they have visited with their families. Younger children benefit from playing alongside their older peers showing high levels of confidence and belonging within the setting. They develop a sense of belonging to the group recognising their photograph on their name card and placing this on the self registration board. Children make their own choices about what they play with from the selection practitioners make available to them. Key workers know the children and their families well. This ensures their needs are met well including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Younger children benefit from the practitioners' secure knowledge of the Birth to three matters framework. Activities are planned for them, their progress recorded and shared with parents.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make sound progress in their learning. They are well motivated by the interesting range of stimulating resources and activities provided in and outdoors. They confidently select from the equipment, which supports their learning in all areas. However, the outside learning environment is not used often enough or as part of the daily free play session. Children are supported by skilled practitioners who extend their learning using positive teaching methods and questioning. For example, when using fruit for printing a practitioner asks where the apples and oranges come from.

Practitioners know each child well and make regular observations and assessments of their development and achievements. Practitioners make plans for all children with individual targets set for each of them which provides appropriate challenges ensuring they reach their full learning potential. The curriculum planning covers all areas of learning and is regularly evaluated.

Children are confident speakers and converse easily with adults and each other. Children enjoy story time and often explore the books and audio tapes that are available. Children's interest in books is nurtured by encouraging them to borrow a book to share with parents and carers at home. They benefit from opportunities to express themselves freely through imaginative play and are skilful communicators, talking about what they are doing. Children invite practitioners to play alongside them when they call to chat on the telephone from the home corner. Children practise pencil control at the writing table, in the garden on a chalk board and role play areas. For example, when playing in the home corner they make notes as they chat on the telephone. Children recognise their name as they self register on arrival, finding their name card and many write their names on their art and creative work. Some children show skills in writing other words sounding them out phonetically. Practitioners provide suitable challenges for these more able children seeking appropriate support from the local authority support teacher where necessary.

Many children count well and happily solve problems. For example, at snack time, children count the number of children present from the registration board and set the table with the corresponding number of cups and plates. Children take part in activities to explore shape and

volume when using water and sand. They enjoy singing number rhymes as they learn to calculate adding and taking away.

Children learn about the natural world through practical activities. They sow seeds and watch plants grow. They examine the feathers and fir cones provided with magnifiers. They describe their differences saying which are soft and hard. Children explore and investigate with a range of materials and resources. Paint, dough and water are available on a daily basis. Children have many opportunities to use their imagination when creating art work as they use recyclable materials to create models. They equally enjoy the planned adult led creative activities such as making caterpillars from strips of egg boxes to link with the day's story, 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. They use pens and various collage materials to decorate them. They learn about themselves as well as develop creative skills as they paint self portraits using mirrors to see what they look like. Children have limited opportunities to explore resources that promote their skills in the use of information and technology. A computer is available but is not always made accessible. Children enjoy singing and explore instruments with confidence. They follow instructions and begin to match the rhythm of fast and slow songs. Outside they make sounds on the tubular bells hanging in the tree.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the pre-school. They are highly valued and their individual needs well met. Good relationships are formed with practitioners who work closely with parents to ensure children's needs are met. Children who speak English as an additional language are supported well. A good range of toys and books which reflects diversity is available to children at all times. Parents are invited into the setting to share their knowledge with all children about their cultures and beliefs.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well as practitioners are committed to ensuring all children are included in the life of the setting. Individual education plans are devised for those who need them and trained staff work with other professionals to support children and their families.

Children are fully included in the life of the setting; they help to tidy up and lay the table for snack time. All have equal access to the toys and resources. Staff know the children well and plan for the children's individual needs and preferences. Children are confident and can express their needs and feelings. They develop independence well as they pour their own drinks and make choices of what to play with.

Children's good behaviour is promoted by practitioners who praise them at every opportunity. Practitioners act as good role models; they are calm, polite and positive in their approach. Children become involved in the community through visitors to the setting including a librarian and a musician. They benefit from outings to the church and local school. Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents find practitioners approachable and feel able to discuss any issues which may arise. They are fully welcomed into the setting and form sound relationships with staff. Parents are provided with good quality information about the setting and its provision including that regarding the Foundation Stage and how children progress through the stepping stones. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress. There are opportunities to meet key workers, regular newsletters and a chance to see and add

comments to the record of achievement; this stimulates interest in their child's learning. Parents are generally provided with a good range of information about the setting although they are not fully informed of the settings responsibilities regarding complaints. Practitioners work closely with parents and carers to help children settle. Parents are invited to offer their opinions and ideas which contributes to the good care and education of children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All aspects of the setting are well organised. Children are effectively cared for and supported by an established team of staff who work well very together. They benefit from the good deployment of the knowledgeable practitioners who have regular appraisals to identify any training needs. Staff have appropriate checks to ensure their suitability and a high staff ratio is maintained at all times. Space and resources are well organised both in and outside. Children are encouraged to move around and choose what to take part in. A good range of policies and procedures are implemented effectively to successfully promote children's care and well being although there is a weakness in informing parents of how to make a complaint. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. Staff are knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage and are experienced in working with pre school aged children. Management and staff are committed to improving their skills and are active in keeping up to date with current regulations, guidance and teaching methods. The manager evaluates the care and education provided to children by reviewing their practice, the progress children make and obtaining opinions from parents. This ensures children reach their full learning potential.

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.

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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):

- improve children's hand washing procedures and ensure they can easily access drinking water throughout the session
- ensure parents are fully informed of the settings complaints procedure.

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):

- increase opportunities for children to extend their learning in the outside area and further develop their skills in information and technology.

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