

Acorn Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY361455
Inspection date	07 May 2008
Inspector	Elaine Murray
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Registered person	Linda Margaret Pritchard
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 satisfactory. 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 a privately owned group. It has operated for many years, and in 2007 moved to the current premises in Neston Primary School, Neston, Cheshire. The group operates from designated rooms within the school building. A maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The group is open Monday to Friday from 09.00 until 11.30, and on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons from 12.30 until 15.00 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 46 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of whom 22 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The playgroup currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs seven staff. Five staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications, and one member is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Appropriate measures are in place to promote children's good health. The playgroup's clear sickness policy is shared with parents. When placement begins parents sign to agree the group's policy regarding infectious illnesses. These measures help to protect children from the spread of infection. However, staff do not request written parental permission to the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment in the future. Children show an awareness of simple hygiene procedures as they routinely wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet. Staff follow hygienic procedures as they clean surfaces and equipment, helping to protect children from the spread of germs.

Children's physical development and enjoyment of exercise is promoted well. Staff value the importance of regular fresh air and outdoor play. Children have daily access to the outdoor area, and have access to the school playground and playing field for robust exercise. They are provided with waterproof coats and wellington boots, to ensure that they can access outdoor play all year round. Children enjoy balancing on 'bridges' they have made using wooden planks, and use a range of equipment, such as wheeled toys and balls to develop skills.

Children learn to enjoy a healthy diet as they are provided with varied and nutritious snacks, including fresh fruit. Children learn about healthy foods as they help to prepare the ingredients to make vegetable soup. Children are aware of when they are thirsty and help themselves to drinking water, which is freely available from the water jug and cups at their height. This helps to promote children's good health.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming environment which helps them feel secure. There are colourful displays of children's art work and books and equipment are visible and accessible. This helps to foster children's sense of security and belonging. The outdoor area provides a stimulating learning environment, where children can access a range of equipment and toys, as well as taking part in planting and physical activities. Space is well used as areas are provided for different purposes, for example, for children to look at books or be involved in messy play, role play or mark making activities. There is a broad range of toys and equipment which are suitable for different ages and abilities, helping to meet children's needs.

Generally good safety procedures are in place to protect children from hazards and dangers. Staff produce a written risk assessment of the premises. They make a daily safety check of the premises and outdoor area. Children learn to protect themselves in the event of a fire or emergency through regularly practicing the fire evacuation procedure. Children develop an awareness of how to protect their own safety as staff talk to them, for example, about why it is important not to run on playgroup.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and hold relevant contact numbers, however, not all staff are sufficiently clear about the procedures to be followed relating to child protection which has a negative effect on children's safety. The child protection policy does not make clear the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are content and secure and have positive relationships with staff. Staff make good use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to promote learning. Children enjoy learning to explore and investigate using their senses as they play with water, sand and paint and explore the texture of soil. They make connections as they find out what happens when they pour water from the water tray down a large tube leading to the ground. Staff interact well with children to sustain their interest, ensuring that children are occupied and involved. Staff assess children's progress in learning and use this information effectively to inform the next steps.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals. They follow children's interests to effectively develop learning. Children respond well to staff's enthusiasm and positive interaction. They show a high level of motivation and engagement as they work together with large wooden construction blocks to make a 'boat'. children's language skills and imagination are then developed well by staff as they help to create scenarios about adventures on the 'boat'. Staff question children effectively to make them think and extend their learning. For example, at snack time children are asked to think how many chairs are needed, and how many if there is one more child at the table. Staff have a good awareness of children's capabilities. They make regular observations of children's learning and use this information effectively to inform their day to day teaching. This means that planning and teaching builds on what children know and learning is developed well. Staff plan informally, which works well on day to day basis. However, the lack of clearly defined plans for adult led activities makes it difficult to ensure that all children's needs are consistently met .

Children show high levels of independence as they give out snack and put on their own aprons for water play. They recognise their names on cards at snack time. Children's vocabulary is developed as they think of words to describe how soil feels. They make frequent use of the many opportunities available to them to write or make marks, such as chalking and using whiteboards and blackboard. Children show an interest in number as they count each other at snack time and some children work out the total number on their table. Children show curiosity as they explore with magnifying glasses and torches. The show wonder and delight as they find worms in the soil in the outdoor area. They show skills using a range of construction materials to build for a purpose. Children are confident to use a computer to support their learning. Children develop manipulative skills using play dough cutters and peg boards. They learn to express their own ideas as they make their own creations using glue and a range of materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are valued and staff work positively to ensure that individual needs are met. All children have access to the activities provided. Staff provide appropriate support to younger children and those with additional needs. They respond sensitively to children's requests and adapt their approach where necessary. Staff work well with parents and outside agencies, helping to ensure that children's additional needs are met. Children for whom English is an additional language are appropriately supported. Children develop an awareness of diversity and the wider community through a generally good selection of resources and activities that promote positive images.

Children behave generally well due to staff's positive approach. Staff use an approach which is appropriate to children's age and stage of development. Younger children are distracted from unwanted behaviour, and good behaviour is praised and encouraged. Staff follow the group's positive behaviour management policy, but this does not contain reference to bullying. Children contribute to the life of the setting as they take turns to sound a tambourine to signal tidy up time, and play and active part in giving out and clearing away at snack time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of children receiving nursery education is satisfactory. Parents receive a sound level of information about the setting and children's learning. They have regular chances to see their child's assessment profiles and discuss progress. However, they are given limited information about the Foundation Stage of learning. Staff encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning through, for example, sharing books at home from the groups' library.

Staff have established positive relationships with parents. Parents receive a handbook, giving helpful information about the group. Staff request information from parents about their child when placement begins and use this to meet children's needs appropriately.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager provides positive direction to staff. Roles are clear and staff work well together to share responsibilities and to teach. Staff work closely together to share information about children's progress and decide on their next steps in learning. The provision is evaluated at regular meetings. There is a commitment to extending staff knowledge through attending regular training courses, and the manager seeks and act upon advice from the early year partnership regarding improvements. This approach has a positive effect on the quality of children's learning.

Children are cared for in an appropriately organised environment. Positive staff ratios ensure that children receive a good level of attention and support. Most staff hold relevant qualifications, which has a beneficial effect on children's learning and welfare. Records are in place, although some were not available for inspection. The required policies and procedures are in place, although there is weakness in the child protection policy.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

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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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):

- obtain a record of parents wishes regarding the seeking of emergency medical advice or treatment
- ensure that staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed relating to child protection issues, and that the policy makes clear the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer
- ensure that records are available for inspection.

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):

- develop planning of adult led activities to ensure that all children's needs are consistently met
- provide more information to parents about the Foundation Stage of 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