

Spooner Row Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY358215
Inspection date	09 July 2008
Inspector	Rosalie Mary Turner
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Registered person	Spooner Row 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Spooner Row Acorns is run by a voluntary committee of parents and carers. It is a long-established provision that opened at the current location in 2007. It operates from a fixed mobile in the grounds of Spooner Row County Primary School, Norfolk. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. A maximum of 11 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 12:55 during school term times and is also open each Monday from 13:30 to 15:30.

There are currently 16 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 13 receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four members of staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted very well because the staff understand and implement effective hygiene routines. They check and clean the premises and resources at the end of each session to ensure children are robustly protected from the spread of infection. Staff give the younger children commendable support to use the toilets independently and manage their own personal hygiene. For example, they display colourful pictures as a prompt to remind them to wash their hands afterwards. Furthermore, staff seize opportunities to talk to children about the importance of keeping their hands clean. They ask 'what happens if you don't get germs off?' and children immediately reply 'your tummy will be poorly' to demonstrate they understand how to look after their bodies and keep themselves healthy.

Children thrive because they are provided with a range of nutritious, freshly prepared snacks that contribute to their understanding of a healthy diet. The '5 a day is the healthy way' snack menu is displayed on the notice board to encourage parents and carers to provide healthy options in their children's lunch boxes and to help them understand that some foods are not so good for their health. The staff take account of children's allergies when providing snacks and offer appetising options such as fresh fruit and chopped vegetables, that meet individual dietary needs. Children have opportunities to cook and eat potatoes that they have planted, tended and harvested in the pre-school garden to further develop their understanding of what they should eat to promote their growth and development. However, the organisation of snack time does not fully meet children's needs as they are not able to choose when to take a break from their play and time is lost while they queue to wash their hands.

Children are developing a very positive attitude to being active. They look forward to playing outside and, during the summer months, they enjoy water play and other routine activities in the fresh air. The staff provide a pleasing range of physical activities to help children learn the positive effect that exercise has upon their health. For instance, they thoroughly enjoy moving and dancing to a wide variety of music to keep themselves supple. Children skilfully manoeuvre the wheeled toys around the play area and chase hoops to show off their stamina. They quickly become aware of the effect that exercise has upon their health because the staff remind them to feel their heart beating faster after they have been energetic.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are warmly welcomed into a safe, child-centred environment where they are able to gain a sense of belonging. The staff work exceptionally hard to make the mobile classroom a rich and stimulating play environment where children feel secure. They decorate the walls with a multitude of attractive posters, photographs and displays of children's work and set out an excellent range of safe, high quality resources. As a result, children settle quickly and they are emotionally secure.

Children's safety is given the utmost priority and they are closely monitored by all staff who are extremely vigilant to protect them from danger. As well as the comprehensive monthly and weekly risk assessments, the staff complete a thorough daily check of the play environment and take worthwhile precautions to minimise any hazards observed. For instance, they ensure that the outside gate remains padlocked to protect children from possible 'stranger danger'

and protect heaters and low-level electrical sockets with safety guards. Children greatly benefit from the visits from 'people who help us' because they understand how to keep themselves safe from a very early age. Their learning is reinforced because staff help them to use the resources safely so that children take extra care when working with scissors and they remind each other to 'be careful because they are sharp'. Older children spontaneously pick up toys that are left on the floor and demonstrate a superb awareness of their responsibility to keep others safe.

Children are extremely well protected from the risk of possible harm. They are never left alone with persons who have not been vetted and the key pad entry system prevents unwanted strangers from gaining access to the classroom and posing a threat to the children. All staff are guided by a robust child protection policy and Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance is kept in the pre-school to ensure they can respond quickly to their concerns. They demonstrate an excellent ability to recognise the signs and symptoms of child abuse and consequently, children's welfare is exceptionally well safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at Acorns and have built strong bonds with the staff who are consistently kind and attentive in their approach to them. They sit at the tables ready to engage children in play and those who are younger relish this close, personal attention and develop confidence from a very early age. The staff produce extremely effective plans that are carefully linked to the aspects and components of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. For example, children are learning to be skilful communicators because they have many opportunities within the daily routine to share their news with others. They quickly become competent learners because they are given time to complete challenges for themselves without staff interrupting their play. Children choose from a vibrant range of materials and concentrate for long periods to freely design and create models and pictures. Staff sensitively keep work when it is time to tidy the toys to enable children to return to their creations and carry out more work. Finished items are proudly taken home to carers or displayed to decorate the pre-school so that children know that their work is valued.

Children come into the pre-school eager to explore the extensive range of bright, colourful toys that they are able to independently access from the low-level storage units. They have superb choices within a free-play programme that is balanced with focused activities and plans are flexible. For example, staff respond to children's interests by exploring 'sea creatures that sting' or enabling them to investigate their questions such as 'do dolphins bite?' Consequently, children are captivated by the exciting experiences that are offered and they remain fully engaged in meaningful play. They rapidly build on their existing skills because the staff make sure routine play is stimulating, for instance, by hiding nuggets under the sand and water and inviting the children to 'pan for gold'.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are motivated to learn, therefore, they make very rapid progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of their learning. All staff members have a strong knowledge of the Foundation Stage and very high expectations for children's achievement. Each child has a key member of staff who uses their comprehensive understanding of how they learn to plan challenging activities that are extremely well matched to their needs. Furthermore, the staff team displays an exceptional enthusiasm and commitment

to their work and, as a result, maintains a vibrant learning environment. Staff meet regularly to plan and they have time after each session to discuss, evaluate and reflect on the day's activities. As a result, the teaching methods they use are highly effective in challenging children of all abilities to develop their skills. Parents complete 'All about Me' books when their children first come into Acorns so that staff have a firm foundation from which to plan the next steps of learning. They carefully observe children's play, keep extensive photographic records of their achievements and record significant moments in their learning stories. The staff use their assessments skilfully to guide future planning and they introduce appropriate resources to address any identified gaps in learning. Consequently, children achieve exceedingly well as the educational programme is highly effective in supporting their learning.

Children have an excellent attitude to learning and they remain actively engaged in an extensive range of stimulating activities and experiences. They are forming firm friendships with their peers and they work together co-operatively to share materials and take turns at their work station. Older children put on their clothes independently before outside play and they competently dress or undress themselves within role play.

Children's communication, language and literacy is exceptionally well promoted. They are strong conversationalists with wide vocabularies and ably make their needs known within their play. Children are able to choose from a superb range of fiction and reference books to help them to develop early reading skills and they quickly learn that they can access information for themselves. Staff skilfully open up discussions, for example, by using puppets or cuddly toys to encourage those who are more reserved to participate. Children's listening skills are impressive and they are attentive when they are in a large group at registration or story times because staff make these times interesting. They provide a splendid range of tools and materials so that children can practise their emergent writing in a variety of situations. Consequently, they speedily progress from using the chunky chinks and wax crayons to forming recognisable letters and writing their names using fine pencils.

Children experience plenty of physical activities, both indoors and outside, to help them to develop control of their bodies. They crawl through the tunnel with great skill and demonstrate very good spatial awareness as they propel their scooters and cars around the outside play area, stopping quickly and changing direction with ease. Children's hand to eye co-ordination is impressive and many confidently pour their own drinks at snack time. They show vivid imaginations as they pretend to go to the seaside during role play. They enthusiastically put on swimsuits and enjoy the relaxing atmosphere that staff have created in the beach café by providing fairy lights and soft, draping materials. Children access a wealth of textured materials including sequins, glitter, tissue paper and shells to design collages and they relish experimenting with cooked pasta or shaving foam to further stimulate their sensory development. They thoroughly enjoy the texture as the foam squeezes between their fingers and staff extend learning by asking 'does it feel different when you put water with it?'

Children's mathematical development is particularly well promoted through the many practical activities that encourage them to count or calculate within routine play. For instance, they confidently use the low-level 'Number Jacks' to recognise numerals and many can work out for themselves 'how many have we got left?' Children use scales and tape measures to help them to talk about size and are thrilled to compare the height of the sunflowers that they have planted. They are competent in their understanding of technology and enjoy completing simple educational programs on the computer. Children effectively learn about their own community through visitors to the pre-school including the local police, dentist and paramedics and explore the wider world by celebrating festivals such as Hanukkah and Diwali.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children from all cultures and of all abilities play a full part in the pre-school because they are highly respected by the staff who value each child's individuality and family context. Children learn to appreciate a wide variety of cultures and beliefs through the superb range of multi-cultural resources and planned topics that are available to them. The range of books are particularly beneficial in helping children learn about the differences in culture and ability that surround them. They are learning respect for each other because the staff are positive in their approach, using praise and maintaining eye contact to help children to feel good about themselves. Children for whom English is an additional language receive exceptional support to ensure they develop trusting relationships with staff and their peers. For example, staff work closely with their parents to learn simple words in their home language and they use meaningful gestures so that all children are able to communicate.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They make friends easily and have many opportunities to learn about the faiths and beliefs of others through the positive images in books, puzzles and posters. Children have outstanding support to help them to manage their own behaviour. For example, the staff recognise if they are becoming restless and quickly intervene to divert them to another activity. They work alongside the children and encourage them to set boundaries for themselves such as 'be kind to each other', so that they understand what is expected of them. All adults have high expectations of the children and continually praise their positive actions so that they are repeated. The staff are superb role models and get down to the children's level and quietly talk about their actions to help them understand right from wrong. As a result, behaviour throughout the pre-school is exemplary.

Children of all abilities are helped to reach their full potential because the staff promptly recognise any developmental delay. The staff pre-consider all needs, therefore, the pre-school is able to accommodate children regardless of their ability. There are robust procedures in place to support those having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to guide staff if children do not appear to be reaching milestones in their development. The pre-school has considerable experience of working closely with parents and children who have varying needs and staff demonstrate great sensitivity in this area. The co-ordinator for the care of those having additional needs guides staff competently and helps them to work alongside other agencies so that children of all abilities make rapid progress.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. There are excellent procedures in place to ensure that they are fully involved in their children's care and learning. For example, parents are provided with a high quality brochure that explains how they can be fully involved in the educational programme that is provided for their children. They are invited to help on a voluntary basis and their views about their children's needs and interests are actively sought throughout their time at pre-school. Parents and carers exchange information with staff as children are delivered or collected, but they also have valuable opportunities to share progress on a more formal basis. For instance, they complete the 'All about Me' booklet to advise staff about their child's starting point towards the early learning goals; they continue to update children's progress in their 'home-school link' books and parents are invited to an open session to discuss their children's learning stories with key workers. Consequently, parents and carers speak extremely positively about the pre-school stating 'my child is very busy and happy here'. They are particularly pleased with 'the friendly atmosphere' in which their children play and learn. Parents feel the staff are 'fantastic with the children' and give them 'a jolly good grounding

for when they start school'. This excellent relationship between staff and parents significantly contributes to the impressive progress that children make towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Overall, children's needs are met. Their care is enhanced by the very good organisation of the premises together with the outstanding leadership of the pre-school, although the organisation of snack time should be reviewed. All staff have a secure understanding of the National Standards as well as their responsibilities to the children and their carers. They clearly enjoy working with the children and individuals show pleasing support for each other. Children are grouped well and staff deployed effectively to promote learning. All staff are committed to continuous improvement and an action plan is in place to show how they will access and continue to train so that their knowledge and skills remain up to date. The staff meet regularly to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of their care and, as a result, children's well-being is promoted very well.

Children are safeguarded because all legally required documentation is appropriately maintained. In addition, the robust recruitment and staff vetting procedures ensure that all adults are suitable to work with the children. The records of attendance are marked as soon as adults and children arrive or depart to ensure they are kept safe in an emergency. Acorns is guided by a commendable range of policies and procedures that are consistently applied by the staff. They are regularly updated so that staff have suitable guidance to help them to provide good quality care for children. In particular, the positive aims 'to provide an environment which caters for the individual needs of all children and allows for independent thought' and 'to develop children's imaginations and ability to communicate' prompt staff to provide a safe, caring and supportive environment in which children thoroughly enjoy themselves.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The roles and responsibilities of the staff are clearly defined. The managing committee works alongside the staff and gives exceptional support and guidance to the experienced staff team. They work together on a daily basis to review the provision to ensure that children's welfare and learning is effectively supported. For instance, questionnaires are issued to parents prior to implementing changes and to assess their satisfaction. The responses enable the staff and committee to gauge how well the pre-school is running and implement change if necessary. The manager has excellent leadership qualities and is proactive to draw up an action plan to address any perceived weakness, for example, to increase the outside play area so that children can use this more effectively. The committee ensures that the already high standards are maintained and improved by appraising the staff and encouraging them to continue to train. Consequently, children are able to develop their personalities within a rich play environment and they make outstanding progress in all areas of their learning.

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 outstanding.

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):

- review the organisation of snack time to ensure children's choices are maximised and the time they wait to wash their hands is reduced.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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