

Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks Club

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY371758
Inspection date	22/09/2008
Inspector	Lynne Kathleen Talbot
Setting address	School Lane, SHEFFORD, Bedfordshire, SG17 5XA
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Acorn Pre-School and the Mighty Oaks out of school club registered in April 2008 within the current setting, was previously registered since 1989 with the Children Act 1989. The provision operates from a building on the site of Shefford Lower School in Shefford, Bedfordshire. A level surface to the main entrance means that the premises are easily accessible. Children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

The provision is open each weekday during term-time and sessions are from 08:00 to 18:00. Within that time sessions include a breakfast club, pre-school sessions, lunch club and an out of school club. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are 26 places for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there are currently 62 children attending who are within this age group. Most of the children live locally or travel from the surrounding areas. Twelve children attend other settings such as the early years unit of the local primary school and childminders.

The setting also offers care to children aged over five years to under ten years. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary Childcare Register. Children occupying these places share the same facilities as the children in the Early Years age range. There are nine staff members with two administrators. Of these, six hold relevant childcare qualifications and two are completing training to achieve a level 2 or 3 childcare qualification.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Acorn Pre-school and The Mighty Oaks Club provides effectively for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Planning is detailed and completed by all staff, it provides for challenge and differentiation and is sufficiently broad to offer a full range of activities and opportunities for children. However, it does not arise from children's interests or achievements, and this means it may fail to fully offer child-initiated learning opportunities. Staff create a very welcoming environment, building secure relationships with the children and making sure that all are able to participate meaningfully in the daily routines of the setting. Staff are skilled at making sure that all children may benefit from the provision and work with other professionals to plan learning programmes. Staff have specific skills, such as signing or previous experience within other specialist settings, and this ensures that all children's needs may be fully met.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- plan and provide experiences which are appropriate to each child's stage of development as they progress towards the early learning goals; this refers to activities designed to promote understanding of everyday technology leading to skills to foster future economic well-being

- ensure that there is a balance of adult-led and freely-chosen or child-initiated activities, delivered through indoor and outdoor play; ensure that information is obtained to enable children's starting points to be fully understood and use observations made during sessions to fully feed the planning for next steps
- carry out regular staff appraisals to identify the training needs of staff and continued professional development, use that evaluation for continued development and improvement through action plans
- further develop links with parents and families by sharing information, offering support for extended learning in the home and involving parents in the learning programme.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Robust safeguarding policies ensure that children are well protected. For instance, the recruitment process is followed by a clear induction programme completed over a four week period. Staff continue to be supported because the managers supply guidance with regard to completion of children's development files and introduce training seminars, such as for behaviour management, periodically. The managers offer guidance to their staff and value their input as is shown by their contribution within sessions and at staff meetings or with planning. However, the measures to assess the training needs of staff, review practice, or use that information to inform the overall development and improvement for the staff is not yet developed.

Policies and procedures are comprehensive and are reviewed regularly with the management committee. They continue to review safety for the children attending and have introduced measures to ensure safety. For example number pad security on doors, safety checks before each session, and emergency evacuation procedures are effective. The managers and committee are developing opportunities for all staff to work for improvement within the setting, they recognise their strengths and areas for improvement. For example, recent introductions such as increased use of outdoors, increased independence and choice have all contributed to better learning experiences. The provision has established clear partnerships with other agencies to support ongoing development. However, relationships with parents, whilst positive, are not yet developed to inform the starting points of children nor to continue involvement within the learning programme either in the setting or at home. This means that children are not fully supported to reach their full potential.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children are offered good opportunities to help them progress and develop across all areas of learning and development. Staff plan activities based around themes. It is based on narrative and spontaneous observation, and target activities. This then forms the basis of the developmental file with supportive evidence to show children's current attainment levels. Staff use practical methods to gain information from parents but this is not used to inform either the starting levels for children nor an ongoing dialogue to inform the planning.

During activities the staff support children well and encourage them to be aware of others around them. For example, a child building a large structure is observed only until another steps in and breaks the structure. Encouragement leads to both children re-making the structure and having a detailed discussion on length, shape, discussing tunnels and comparing buildings they have seen in the community. A positive approach resulting in some good learning experience. Children work well together and eagerly share their thoughts and ideas. For instance, children building a bridge with planks and tyres outdoors discuss how they may make the bridge taller to reach the leaves on a tree. They discover that the 'bridge' bounces and if they gently bounce could jump higher. Children are competent with the use of the computer and change programmes independently. They have, however, few opportunities to develop a use of other everyday technology or access provision because it is held in the 'science' box and not freely accessible to them. This limits their exploratory learning instinct and inhibits self-motivated learning. Children engage in extensive role play independently and with staff. For example they enjoy acting the story the 'Three Little Pigs' building the houses from boxes and blocks and following the story book avidly. Children sing enthusiastically and show a clear enjoyment of music and singing. They count both in groups and alone as seen when weighing ingredients to make apple crumbles to take home to their families.

Children are cared for in a safe, secure environment and staff help children to gain an understanding about taking care of themselves. Children recognise and talk about 'portable signs' that indicate a wet floor and know they must take care. They mop up spilt water from the floor and inform staff so that no-one else trips over. Children wear fluorescent waistcoats when outside the premises and walking locally, this ensures that they continue to gain a firm understanding of safety in the community. Staff are vigilant where children have allergies and check every ingredient of items, even those brought from home, to bring to managers attention any item that is potentially harmful. This attention to detail further ensures children's well-being.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	Satisfactory
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	Good
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	Satisfactory

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	Satisfactory
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	Satisfactory
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	Satisfactory
How well are children safeguarded?	Good

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	Good
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	Good
How well are children helped to stay safe?	Good
How well are children helped to be healthy?	Good
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	Good
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	Good
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	Good

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met

Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration or the last inspection. 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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