

Acorn Childcare Nursery Limited

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY280796
Inspection date	17/11/2008
Inspector	Janice Linsdell
Setting address	Off Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1JJ
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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 Childcare Nursery was registered in 2004. It is owned by a limited company and operates from a purpose built facility situated in the Hartford area of Cheshire. Children are cared for within four playrooms and share access to secure outdoor play areas. A maximum of 58 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open five days a week from 08.00 to 18.00 all year round, except public holidays and a period between Christmas and New Year. Children attend from the local community and surrounding areas.

There are currently 95 children on roll, all of whom are within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The nursery is also registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently no children attending with learning difficulties and disabilities. The nursery supports a small number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 26 members of staff including the manager. Of these, 10 staff are qualified to level 3 in early years, nine staff are qualified to level 2 and the manager is qualified to level 4. A further four staff are working towards a recognised qualification. In addition, the nursery employs a cook, kitchen assistant and a cleaner. The nursery receives support from the local authority early years advisory team.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

The nursery is welcoming, inviting and accessible to all children. Staff work well to meet children's individual needs and promote their care and welfare. This results in positive outcomes for children and forms a solid basis for children to make sound progress in their learning and development. Successful partnerships with parents and others are established, and staff are making efforts to develop and improve the setting. There are some weaknesses in recording information and using the EYFS framework effectively to fully support children's learning.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve the procedures for confirming the suitability of all staff by recording accurate details of Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks
- make sure fire evacuation drills are carried out regularly
- using the EYFS framework, improve systems to monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals, ensuring all areas of learning are being covered in sufficient depth and breadth
- use observations to evaluate activities and their impact on children's learning, and consider their next steps when planning a balance of adult-led, as well as child-initiated activities that meet children's individual learning needs.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff are very caring, responsive and make sure children's individual needs are recognised and addressed. In the main, the key person system works well, but there is no room leader in the room for children aged three to five years. This impacts on the manager's time and the number of children in each key group. A good number of staff are qualified in early years and several staff, including the manager, are attending further training. This shows a commitment to continuous professional development. Overall, appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to safeguard children and managers ensure unvetted staff are not left unsupervised. However, there are inconsistencies in recording details of staff CRB checks and accurate details are not available to confirm the suitability of all staff.

Managers have organised in-house EYFS training for all staff to help them develop their knowledge and skills, and some staff have attended more in-depth training. However, the EYFS framework is not fully implemented and, as a result, out-of-date documentation and frameworks, such as 'Birth to three matters' are still being used. This means staff are finding it difficult to accurately monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals. Managers are in the process of developing new systems to support staff in this area. Required documentation is appropriately maintained and stored confidentially. The premises are safe and security is good. Playrooms are spacious and effective risk assessments ensure any hazards are quickly identified and addressed. Positive steps are taken to ensure all staff have a clear understanding of their role in protecting children. Regular fire drills are not being carried out, which restricts children's ability to practise what to do in the event of a fire.

Ofsted's self evaluation form (SEF) has not been completed, but managers and staff are working through the local authority 'Moving on' document to evaluate the setting and make plans for the future. This is leading to some improvements for children, such as increasing the range of sensory toys. Progress has been made to address all recommendations made at the last inspection, by updating policies and offering better learning experiences for children. Managers show a commitment to achieving high standards and highlight some plans for further improvement, such as creating a shaded area in the garden and developing parent questionnaires. Staff work well with local schools and are developing positive links with the nearby children's centre. Partnership with parents is a strength because staff provide a good level of verbal and written feedback about the children. Information sheets about topics and activities help parents to become involved in their children's learning at home. Staff value parents' observations of their children and use these to contribute to their progress. Parents speak highly about the staff and express positive comments about the nursery being very bright and welcoming, with a great outdoor area.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children are making steady progress in their learning and development. Playrooms are well organised to offer a continuous provision of resources that promote all

areas of learning. Staff offer some adult-led activities and actively promote children's free choice, showing skill in following their lead and encouraging them to initiate their own ideas. They maintain children's profiles and carry out spontaneous observations, but this information is not always evaluated effectively to inform planning for individual children. Staff support children well and engage them in conversations to promote their language skills. They help children to make marks in various ways and put interesting items in the treasure baskets for younger children to explore. Circle time enables children to reflect on their play, and with staff support, plan what they would like to do next. Children confidently express their needs and show developing independence as they collect their own meal at lunchtime. They enjoy singing counting rhymes, such as 'Five little men' and begin to use some mathematical language to describe size and shape. Children use the large wooden blocks to design and build, and show talent as they develop their own ideas to create interesting models on display.

Staff understand the value of outdoor play in all weathers and use the gardens successfully to promote children's creative and physical development, as well as their understanding of the natural world. For example, children enjoy wrapping up warm to play on the hill and balance on the tyres. They help to grow plants, enjoy den building activities and play imaginatively in the large boat. Older children access more challenging equipment to practice their coordination skills and take supervised risks, such as climbing the trees. Staff promote inclusive practice by putting the welfare of children first and making sure no-one feels disadvantaged. Children take part in topics about different countries and there are several displays which reflect positive images of diversity, such as Egyptian pictures, Italian flags and Diwali celebrations. This helps children to develop a positive view of the wider world.

Children display good standards of behaviour and show consideration for others, for example, as one child helps another to put up his hood before outdoor play. They are developing a positive sense of themselves because staff act as good role models and offer plenty of praise and encouragement. Children begin to develop some awareness of safety issues because staff highlight general hazards and explain consequences of actions. The nursery is proud of their five star rating 'food safe award' for the provision of safe and healthy foods. Menus have been reviewed and amended following advice from a nutritionist to ensure children receive a well balanced and healthy diet. Bowls of fresh fruit are available in all rooms for children to freely access, along with drinks of water and juice. Good hygiene practices are followed and photographs in the bathroom, along with explanations from staff, help children to understand why hand washing is important.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is 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?	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

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