

Acorns Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	199426
Inspection date	11/11/2008
Inspector	Eira Gill
Setting address	Church Road, Christian Malford, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 4BW
Telephone number	Mobile 07816 280810
Email	
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).

Description of the setting

Acorns Playgroup opened in 1972 and is managed by a committee. It is located in the grounds of Christian Malford Primary School. One large classroom opens out on to a fairly extensive and very imaginative outside learning environment. In addition there is a welcoming area where children's coats can be stored, plus toilets and a kitchen. The playgroup serves the local area. There are currently 18 children aged from two to five years on roll; this includes eight children in receipt of nursery education funding. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although there are none currently on roll. The setting opens four days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 15:00. There are three full time staff working with children and all staff hold early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the local authority. There is disabled access. This provider is on the Early Years Register.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Little Acorns Nursery provides well for children in the early years age group. Excellent links with parents, outside agencies and the host school ensure that all children enjoy well planned activities and make good progress. Staff plan exciting learning opportunities and provide good quality resources that include and appeal to all groups of children. These are closely linked to the children's needs and interests and are very effective in promoting their development in all areas of learning. The manager is very skilled and experienced and, together with capable staff, demonstrates a good commitment to continued improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- build upon the current good practice in evaluating the effectiveness and improvement of provision, by making more precise reference to how provision is extending the children's skills and understanding
- improve the outdoor provision to further support children's physical development

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager is very experienced and sensitive to children's needs. She knows the parents well and excellent links benefit the children immensely. A system has been organised whereby all parents, when possible, act as a duty parent by spending a day in the playgroup once or twice a half term. One parent said, 'I like being the duty parent as I can step back from my child, but still observe him from a distance. I see him growing and maturing.' Another commented, 'The setting is so friendly. Nothing is too much trouble.' Parents are pleased to have the opportunity of

discussing their child's development during the fairly newly established parents' evenings. Partnerships with parents have improved as a result of self-evaluation and parents are now kept fully informed and made very welcome. On arrival, there is a happy buzz, with parents, staff and children greeting each other. Children are happy to join their friends and quickly become involved in the table top activities and other equipment prepared for them.

Safeguarding policies are fully in place and ensure that the children are well protected. New staff are vetted appropriately. All staff, with one exception, are appropriately qualified. Staff meetings take place weekly, and close and effective teamwork between the manager and her assistants ensures that children are safe, feel valued and make good progress in their learning. Risk assessments are rigorous. Staff share their observations at regular meetings to maintain children's good progress. Good self-evaluation is ongoing. Staff can voice their thoughts about whether planned activities have been successful or not. As a result, activities are often modified or alternatives put into place. Although notes are taken at staff meetings, evaluation could be improved even further by ensuring that planning and decisions that have proved successful or otherwise in moving children forward in their learning are recorded in more detail.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

A stimulating programme of learning opportunities, supported effectively by thoughtful and caring staff, helps all children to make at least good progress across all areas of learning. A good balance of adult-led and free choice activities develops children's confidence and social skills very effectively. The personal development of the children and their progress is noted in their learning journals in detail. The manager and staff use these observations to ensure the needs of children are met in day-to-day planning. The setting is a very safe environment in which risk is minimised and all children are very aware of how important it is to keep safe. Staff have a clear understanding of how child protection and other policies are implemented.

The children are given every opportunity to play inside or outside even if it is raining. They wear waterproof clothing that includes trousers and wellies. The manager and staff have established an outstanding play area for children to explore in total safety. An award has been granted to the setting that congratulates staff on providing the children with such an exciting environment using very little money. The children love being outside bouncing on the balancing planks, climbing up the spider ropes, clambering up the ladders to whizz down the slides and crawling all over the play houses, even on the roofs. Unfortunately, it is all grass which becomes extremely muddy. The manager and committee are exploring further the possibilities, but at present the surface is not always suitable for the range of activity.

Snack time is extended to ensure that children do not have to stop in the middle of doing something they really enjoy. The manager is instilling into the children the need to wash their hands very thoroughly before they eat. The children all sing, 'This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands'. They are given opportunities

to help put out the cups and are also encouraged to clear away their own utensils. They are beginning to understand how they can contribute to their community.

Time is used very effectively. Individual staff work with small groups of children at different times of the day, working on aspects of their learning. Staff have a good knowledge of the different needs of individual children. Children's learning is assessed through questioning and staff ensure, through planning, that more extended activities continue to move learning forward. Table top activities are waiting for the children as they arrive and, immediately, children become involved and 'have a go' at, for example, knocking nails in small tiles of different shapes to make pictures. One child said, 'I'm making a sea robot'. Others play quietly with the small world equipment or join the manager as she encourages a small group to make playdough. They make shapes using rolling pins and cutters. Plenty of chatting about what they are learning goes on in these groups and the children's vocabulary improves noticeably. The children are confident and very happy.

Outstanding teaching and learning skills were evident in a session when letter sounds were taught to the whole group by the manager. She made it such fun that all of the children listened exceptionally well for their age. They laughed a lot when they sang the 'Silly Song'. They were given several opportunities to repeat the many words that end in 'at', such as hat and bat. This excellent lesson showed how well the children's skills of concentration are developing. Their behaviour during this session was first rate.

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?	2
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?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
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?	2
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 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.