

Little Acorns Pre School (Folkestone)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	127323
Inspection date	28/04/2009
Inspector	Jenny Kane
Setting address	Folkestone Baptist Church, Hill Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 6LY
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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 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

Little Acorns has been registered since 1986. It is a registered charity managed by a committee, made up of church members. The pre-school operates from several rooms in the Folkestone Baptist Church in the Hill Road area of Folkestone. It is open Monday to Friday from 09:15 to 12:15 term time only. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group serves the local area and surrounding area. There is access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The provision is readily accessible with car parking and good facilities for disabled visitors.

The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and a maximum of 40 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 43 children on roll aged between two and four years of whom 27 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven staff. Four, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. They receive support from the local authority early years advisory team and the Speech & Language Therapy Service. They are members of The Pre-school Learning Alliance and have links with several local schools.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is good. The children are happy, confident and enjoy a good mix of activities. The senior staff have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and this ensures children make effective progress in their learning and development. Staff support individual children well and work closely to the pre-school's policy of inclusion. Although the group has yet to develop an effective system for self-evaluation, the manager is able to identify their strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Very good relationships with parents, carers and other providers ensure staff meet children's developmental needs.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure systems are in place to identify and support staff development
- develop an effective system for self-evaluation of the provision to maintain continuous improvement
- update the written information provided for parents and consider how they can be involved in the management of the group
- continue to develop systems for planning, observations and sharing information about the EYFS so parents can support children's learning at home
- ensure routines support the needs of the youngest children

- increase opportunities for children to recognise written word and to be able to self-select resources

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Children enjoy close relationships with staff who are very caring and committed to their safety and welfare. Staff have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities with regard to child protection and several have attended safeguarding training. The committee have delegated responsibility for the running of the group to the manager. Although she is confident in this role there are times when she is unable to work with the children due to the additional tasks. Staff appraisals are not carried out and this means that staff training needs are not formally identified. However, the staff work effectively as a team, they support each other well and the manager leads very much by example. Through discussion, sharing information from courses, in-house training and working with other professionals staff meet the needs of all the children in their care very well.

All mandatory records and documentation are in place, and kept confidentially and securely. Children's records contain relevant and useful information, are shared appropriately with parents and information is used to promote children's welfare. There is very good verbal communication between staff and the parents and this benefits the children. However, there are some weaknesses in the written information provided for parents. Some of the information is out of date and not all are in line with the EYFS. Parents attend social events, share their skills and have opportunities to express their views. They are happy with the service and make positive comments, in particular regarding the friendliness of staff and their good communication. A recent meeting to inform parents about the EYFS and a new system for recording their children's development was well attended. Although staff are beginning to be involved in the self-evaluation process, there is as yet no formal system to include the parents. In addition, there are no parents on the management committee. Although plans to identify continuous improvement are not yet fully identified, the manager and her team have a clear commitment and demonstrate they have the capacity to improve the provision.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children are cared for in a secure, safe environment where staff take positive steps to promote their health and safety. The outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys are suitable and safe because staff carry out daily checks to assess and eliminate risks. Despite having to clear away everything each session, staff manage to make the environment welcoming and child-friendly. There is plenty of space with several different areas for play, although these are not always used to their full potential. For example, there is a lot of lining up, regrouping and clearing away during the short session. Although the older children enjoy large group sessions like show and tell, story times and action songs, some of the younger children are distracted and loose interest.

The senior staff have a very good knowledge of the EYFS and effectively to put the

framework into practice. They support children's learning by planning a balance of activities, which cater for their individual needs. All staff recently benefited from in-house training on the EYFS framework. Although the written planning is basic, it does link to the six areas of learning. There is a notice board that tells parents 'what we did today', and lists activities the children have taken part in, for example castles and flags for St George's Day. The experienced staff keep children's attention well because they recognise when to step in and organise a different activity. For example, when the noise rises the manager starts a game where children have to listen called 'what have I got in the box'. This entails children guessing what is in her hands. They have great fun doing actions for various characters and this goes on for some time while they pretend to be aeroplanes, ballet dancers, mice and elephants.

Children have access to a good range of toys and equipment, which are age appropriate, stimulating, and promote their development. They really enjoy the free-flow system where they decide where they play and if they go outside. They choose what they play with from the resources, which staff put out around the play areas. However, they are not able to self-select as storage units are limited. Staff give children a 'five minute warning' when it is time to clear away. Children respond well, helping to pack away the toys and cooperating with their peers. Staff take a positive approach to managing children's behaviour using explanation to reinforce good behaviour. They are consistent in their strategies and use a lot of positive praise. Therefore, children's behaviour is good.

The staff observe children during their play, key workers make notes in children's development folders and use them to help with future planning. These record books also have photos and samples of work. However, they are rather disorganised and are not yet freely shared with the parents. This means they are not fully involved in their children's learning at home. However, plans to introduce a new system will be beneficial.

Children engage in daily physical activities, which contribute to keeping healthy. Given the choice, children like to play outside in the garden area. They are able to go out in all weathers because they have waterproof suits. The small hall offers an alternative physical play area where there is plenty of space and a good supply of physical play equipment. Children enjoy the role-play areas and resources. They dress up in the hats and masks moving around pretending to be animals. They have fun digging in the soil using small trowels, spades and wearing gardening gloves. They also plant and care for vegetables and bulbs during the year and this gives children an understanding of how things grow. Children also go on occasional outings in the community, for example to the park and the library.

Children receive a healthy snack during the morning. They find their name card and sit in their key group. This is a sociable time where they chat in their group while enjoying a snack of fruit and vegetables. Some children are independent in pouring their milk from the jug and when finished they put their cup and plate in the bowl. However, the process takes a long time because children wait until everyone is back from the toilets before they start. A water dispenser on the main hall enables children to help themselves to fresh drinking water when they are thirsty. Children can sit quietly and relax in the book area, which has cushions and

rugs. They have access to good quality books, which are rotated. However, there is very little written word or labelling of areas and resources.

Inclusion is one of the pre-school's main strengths. The group supports children who have speech and language delay and integrate them well into the setting. These children have regular one to one speech therapy sessions each day. The benefit of this specialist service is that all the children attending gain from the knowledge of the speech therapist who shares information and skills with the staff team. As a result, most of the children are confident and clear communicators. In addition, staff are very aware of the needs of the younger children and the key person system works well in practice. Children have established good relationships with their peers and learn to cooperate and share during play. For example, children ask for the musical instruments out. They enjoy using the drums, tambourines, maracas, bells and cymbals. Under the guidance of a member of staff they manage to make different rhythms by listening to instructions and taking turns. They then join in with some of their favourite action songs.

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.	3

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?	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

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