



Acorn Community Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	303430
Inspection date	27 September 2005
Inspector	Chris Scully
Setting Address	Kingshead Close, Castlefields, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2JE
Telephone number	01928 576 369
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Registered person	Astmoor Community Project Ltd
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acorn Day Nursery opened in 2000 and is run by a committee. It is situated in a refurbished infant's school in the Castlefields area of Runcorn. It serves the local area. A maximum of 70 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday all year round from 07.30 until 18.30. The children are cared for in rooms according to their age, and also have access to several secure outdoor play areas.

There are currently 76 children from 0 to 5 years on roll. Of these, 20 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 17 full-time and two part-time staff. All staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children thrive because staff follow effective procedures and practices which meet the children's physical and health needs. Children are cared for in a warm, clean and well maintained environment. Staff are knowledgeable about the children's individual health needs and meet these well in practice. This is supported by effective systems which are in place to ensure all staff are fully informed of children's needs, such as food allergies. Children learn how to keep themselves healthy through daily routines, such as washing their hands before meals.

Good adult support enables children to gain an understanding of staying healthy, such as blowing their nose, or covering their mouths when coughing to reduce the risk of cross infection. This is effectively supported by the implementation of the sick children policy. Staff are proactive in reducing potential risks to children, such as ensuring they eat the correct foods to prevent exacerbating their condition, further promoting their health and well-being.

Children are eager to test, explore and develop their physical control in the exciting outdoor area, where they are confident to use a range of climbing resources and tyre swings. Older, more able children, are very confident in the outdoor area and are skilled at using a range of resources and play equipment. They relish the challenge of parking their car in the parking bays, ensuring that they keep between the lines. They have good opportunities to use the large hall for music and movement and follow the staff's instructions well. Children use a range of small resources such as scissors with increasing control, for example two children spent a considerable amount of time helping each other cut paper at the craft table to create a picture.

Children have access to a range of drinks at set times throughout the day however, they do not have easy access to additional drinking water to keep themselves refreshed. Children enjoy relaxed social occasions at snack and meal times, which fosters their enjoyment of meal times. Staff are knowledgeable about children's individual needs and ensure these are fully met. Children are provided with a range of healthy meals and snacks that promote their all round development. The nutritional needs of babies are well met. Staff use information provided by the parents effectively to promote continuity of care with regards to their nutritional, health and sleep requirements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a bright, welcoming and clean environment which means they can play and explore their surroundings in safety and comfort. This is supported by the effective maintenance and cleaning systems in place to maintain the building. Children have access to a range of resources that promote their all round development. They are actively engaged in a range of purposeful play and learning experiences. Older children are confident to self-select their resources. However, younger children have limited opportunities to do so due to the lack of low level storage in the rooms, as most toys are stored in the toy store. Appropriate systems are in place to maintain the resources and equipment to ensure children's safety and well-being.

Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised in the well organised setting which has good safety and security precautions in place such as, the key pads on all external doors to prevent unwanted visitors gaining access to the children. Effective risk assessments are carried out by the nominated health and safety officer, which enhances the children's safety both indoors and outdoors. Although, the nursery must ensure cleaning fluids, such as sterilizing fluid, which are decanted in to spray bottles are clearly labelled. Clear procedures are in place for keeping children safe on outings, these include a thorough risk assessment and pre-visit being carried out by a member of staff to ensure children's safety. Children are encouraged to keep themselves safe outdoors by using the equipment correctly and moving safely indoors, such as no running.

Children are protected from harm by the clear child protection systems in place. The policy is detailed and includes all action to be taken by the setting to protect children. This is supported by the appointment of a child protection officer and induction systems which ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities to keep children safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled, they enter the rooms eagerly and rush off to play. Staff provide a range of interesting and stimulating activities to all children. They are skilled at adapting activities to ensure all children can participate and that their needs are fully met. Staff are in the process of implementing the Birth to three matters framework in order to further enhance the play and learning opportunities provided to younger children.

Care of babies is good, they enjoy lots of cuddles and have a secure bond with their carers. Staff are very knowledgeable about the babies in their care and use information from the parents effectively to ensure continuity of care. Babies enjoy high levels of interaction with the staff that enables them to feel safe and confident to explore their surroundings. Staff encourage the babies to try new experiences, such as making hand prints. Babies are confident to use a range of resources, they

particularly enjoy listening to different types of music and rock rhythmically to the sounds.

Staff spend considerable amounts of time talking, listening and interacting with the children. This significantly enhances their learning opportunities. Children feel safe in their environment due to the development of warm, caring relationships with staff. The effective key worker system enables staff to effectively identify and meet children's individual needs. Children are familiar with the daily routines and know that 'daddy is coming after dinner to collect them'. They receive good levels of praise and encouragement from all staff which successfully fosters their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff build good relationships with younger children that enables them to feel safe and secure in their surroundings. Children relate well to one another and are keen to seek out their friends and engage them in various play activities. Children have good opportunities to become involved in a range of interesting and stimulating activities. However, art and craft activities are very adult led and the excessive use of templates hinders children's creativity. Children enjoy singing a range of songs and enjoy using apparatus and equipment within the hall.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff work very well together and are positive role models to children. Effective systems are in place to enable new children to settle into their new room and understand the daily routines. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They use their skills effectively to provide an extensive range of interesting and stimulating activities. Staff use their knowledge of the children effectively to provide activities that stimulate and enhance their interest, such as the dinosaur theme, where one child gave a talk at news time about his favourite subject. Children's learning is effectively promoted in all areas, this is supported by clear planning systems. Regular assessments are made of the children's progress clearly identifying the next steps in the learning, however, this information is not used well to evaluate or inform future planning.

Staff consistently pitch questions at the right level for each child. The effective use of questions enable children to think, communicate and helps them to move forward in their learning. Children are interested, enthusiastic learners who embrace new learning opportunities, such as the discovery room. The children learn how things work such as clocks, by taking them apart and using real tools in a well supported and safe environment. They explore a range of real objects and use scientific resources with confidence for example, looking at mini-beasts with magnifying glasses. The discovery room also effectively enables children to learn a range of mathematical concepts such as sorting objects by size, shape and colour. This area is exceptionally well organised and actively enhances children's learning experiences in a safe, fun environment.

Older children provide good support to younger or new children, they help them to become familiar with the daily routines enabling them to feel secure in their surroundings. Children show concern for one another for example, when talking

about baking cakes they explain that they need to bake special cakes for some children who have food allergies. Children are confident to choose their own resources and where to play. They are purposefully engaged in a range of self chosen play and learning activities.

Children enjoy listening to stories and are keen to inspect the new books from the library, they particularly enjoy the new 'Goldilocks and the three bears'. Staff regularly introduce new words to children to extend their vocabulary such as 'scrunchy', when describing the sound made by the paper. The print rich environment enables children to understand that print carries meaning. Children have good opportunities to practise writing for a purpose in various ways, for example writing shopping lists and playing in the Post Office. This is supported well by staff who organise trips to the local post office to see how it works and meet the postman.

Children are imaginative and enjoy a range of role play scenarios to include the Chinese restaurant, home corner and hospital. They relish the opportunities to dress up and take on their roles enthusiastically. One child delivers his letters to all the children whilst another declares 'I'm a God' as he struts around the room in his ethnic costume. They learn about different cultures and beliefs through planned activities throughout the year such as Chinese New year.

Children have good opportunities to learn about mini-beasts, small animals and the environment through the nature garden, here staff have created insect houses which are regularly inspected by the children. Children confidently recognise a range of numerals within the environment. Older children help to count each other as they go outdoors. They confidently sing a range of songs that enable them to learn about addition and subtraction, such as 'five little men in a flying saucer'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and happy at the nursery. Staff build warm, caring relationships with the children that enable them to feel safe and secure. Staff have a secure knowledge of the children in their care. This means they are able to provide appropriate activities to meet their individual needs. Effective systems support new children, this includes a number of visits to their room before they start.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are developing an understanding of the world in which we live through well planned activities such as festivals. This means children are developing a positive attitude to others. Older children have access to an extensive range of resources promoting positive images however, younger children's access to these resources is limited. This hinders their understanding of other people and the world around us. Children are consistently well behaved, they share resources and take turns well. The children have a clear understanding of the nursery rules, which enables them to understand what is expected of them. Children have a sense of belonging, they are familiar with the daily routines and have significant friendships with their peers.

The care of children with special needs is superb. Children benefit from an effective

partnership with parents and other professionals in order for staff to provide good quality care, play and learning opportunities for children. Staff ensure all additional resources are in place to enable children to fully participate in activities, such as the correct seating. Staff meet the children's individual needs very well in practice, they successfully follow all individual learning and exercise programmes to promote their all round development.

The partnership with parents is good. The nursery works well with parents to support children's learning. Effective communication systems keep parents well informed about the setting and its provision. Parents regularly volunteer their time to support the nursery and the children's learning, for example, one parent came in to talk to the children about a trip to Alaska where they had seen penguins. There are regular opportunities for parents to speak to staff and share information about their child's progress. This is effectively supported by the well written child progress reports and, the completion of the daily routines sheet for younger children by parents, which enables staff to provide continuity of care. This successful partnership enhances the care, learning and play opportunities provided to children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and settled in the well organised environment. This enables them to move freely around the rooms and participate in a range of activities. Opportunities are created for children to rest, play and sleep according to their individual needs. This is supported well by the effective key worker systems that are in place, staff are organised in order to meet the needs of the children and support them in their chosen activities.

Effective recruitment and induction systems ensure all staff are suitably qualified, vetted and informed of their roles and responsibilities. All staff have opportunities to attend training throughout the year, for example Birth to three matters to enhance the learning and play opportunities for younger children. The delegation of specific roles for example SENCO, and health and safety ensures the well-being and safety of children.

Children's safety and welfare is promoted as policies and procedures are followed effectively by staff, this contributes to the positive outcomes for children. Record systems are in place and are effectively maintained however, parents do not currently sign the medication record to acknowledge the entry. Most staff hold recognised first aid certificates which means children's accidents are dealt with appropriately.

The leadership and management is good. The enthusiastic and committed leadership of the nursery actively contributes to the children's care, learning and play. Clear, appropriate aims for children's care and education are understood and implemented by staff. These are effectively achieved in practice to enable children to make good progress towards the early learning goals. There is a strong commitment to improvement, training and the professional development of staff. This significantly improves the level of care and learning provided to children. Overall, the setting meets the needs of all the children attending.

Improvements since the last inspection

The nursery has enhanced the children's safety, well-being and play opportunities by addressing the issues from the last inspection. Systems have been implemented to make fresh drinking water accessible to children. Older children have free access to drinks within their room however, this is not in place for younger children, subsequently this has been raised again as a recommendation. The range of sensory activities and play opportunities for babies and younger children has been extended. This means children enjoy a wider range of activities to enable them to meet their all round development. A medication policy has been created and implemented by staff which ensures all medications are stored in their original containers and only prescribed medication is administered. This ensures children's health is protected. Most children have access to a range of resources that promote equality of opportunity which enables them to learn about the world in which we live. The behaviour management policy clearly identifies the methods used to manage children's behaviour. This ensures children's behaviour is appropriately managed.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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):

- ensure all cleaning sprays not in their original containers such as sterilizing fluid are correctly labelled
- revise the use of templates to ensure children's creativity is not hindered
- ensure parents sign the medication records to acknowledge the entry
- ensure children have free access to drinking water

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- revise the evaluation systems and observations to ensure they more fully inform the planning.

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