



Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	143104
Inspection date	12 December 2005
Inspector	Sara Bailey
Setting Address	United Reformed Church Hall, Bower Hinton, Nr Martock, Somerset, TA12 6LN
Telephone number	07815 103980
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Registered person	Acorns Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acorns Pre-school registered in 1997. It operates from the United Reformed Church Hall in Bower Hinton, Martock, Somerset. The group use the hall, kitchen and toilet facilities. There is a fully enclosed, outside play area which comprises of grass and tarmac.

The setting is open Monday to Friday, term time only from 09:30 until 12:00. An afternoon session operates one afternoon a week from 12:30 until 15:00 during the

summer term for the rising fives.

There are currently 19 children aged 2 to 5 years on roll, of whom 12 receive funded nursery education. A team of 4 staff work with the children. Of these, 2 hold level 3 qualification in early years and 2 hold a level 2 qualification. They are supported by a committee and the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and well being is effectively promoted and given high priority by all staff. Children show a very good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. For example, they know the importance of hand washing and independently wash their hands after messy activities and toileting. Older children spontaneously show younger children the routine. Children enthusiastically respond to requests to prepare for snack time by using the toilet and washing their hands. They learn from staff's good role-modelling through routine procedures; such as, tables being cleaned with anti-bacterial spray. Children develop good self care skills, such as wiping their noses, as tissues are easily accessible and staff encourage children to take responsibility for themselves.

Children's dietary requirements are met effectively through discussions with parents. Snack menu's show a commitment to healthy and nutritious foods. These include hot snacks on cold days to promote good health. Children know when they are thirsty and independently access drinking water from a jug and use separate cups to drink from. Children visit a local café for their snack during 'healthy eating week' to learn more about their topic through meaningful activities.

Children benefit from the staff's commitment to improving the health records. For example, between day one and day two of inspection, staff devise and send out to parents, new, improved forms for recording of dietary requirements, accidents, incidents and consent for emergency medical treatment. Medication records are clear and correctly countersigned by parents which promotes children's good health.

Children develop a positive attitude towards physical exercise and enjoy daily outside play opportunities all year round. They benefit from a very well balanced programme for their physical development. Children enthusiastically play on tricycles, tractors and in cars to follow pathways around the outside area. They are confident at using equipment to make their own challenges. For example, some children ride their vehicles with speed down the slight incline. They eagerly engage in ball games and show skill on the climbing apparatus. Children learn about their bodies through movement. They curl up like a Jack-in-the-box and jump up, they wriggle their fingers to wake them up ready to be active. Children learn about appropriate clothes for different weather through routine discussions. Children practise and master fine and gross motor control skills by means of regular access to a very good range of resources. For example, children are encouraged to use scissors from 2-years and progress from training scissors to normal ones appropriate to their stage of

development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe within the setting as staff have identified and minimised risks. Staff complete written risk assessments for hazards such as use of scissors, hot drinks and door security which ensures children's safety at specific times but there is no ongoing, written risk assessment. However, staff are vigilant at monitoring the environment and respond immediately to any new hazards. For example, at Christmas a newly identified risk with trailing leads from the tree lights is pointed out and staff instantly assess the situation, ensure children are safely supervised at one end of the room whilst staff move the tree and furniture to improve safety. They also provide a screen for the planned role-play activity but after a few minutes of observation they consider it to be dangerous and promptly pack it away.

Children learn about safety through regular discussions. They know why they should walk not run inside and older children remind younger children of the rules. Children learn about fire safety through visits by the fire brigade and regular fire drills. Children are very well supervised due to good staff deployment which keeps children safe inside and outside. For example, activities are well supported to ensure children are safe whilst they explore through play and staff are positioned so they can also monitor the bathroom area. Children understand they are not allowed into the kitchen or store room and as they are so engrossed in their play they do not wander. Children independently access a wide range of toys and resources which are safely displayed around the room each morning. For example, craft materials are clearly labelled in a mobile drawer unit which is positioned next to the creative area.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as staff are knowledgeable about child protection issues and know to seek advice if concerned. However, they are not sure of the procedures to follow in line with the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) but they are booked on a course in a few weeks time to develop their knowledge.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the pre-school and show they are comfortable and familiar with routines and all staff members. They achieve very well because staff are skilled at understanding individual needs and meeting them exceptionally well. The two-year-olds are gently introduced to the routine and eagerly participate once established as older children are excellent role-models for them. Staff are knowledgeable about the Birth to three matters framework and are implementing it soon. Activities are already appropriate for all age groups as staff are skilled at introducing learning through play with differing levels of expectation, dependant on individual children's understanding and ability. The two-year-olds have regular observations completed on their development which is recorded in a 0-3 tracking book to help plan for their next steps in learning. Daily planning incorporates basic

provision such as sand, water, painting, role-play and books as well as linking to themes and each of the six areas of learning. Children blossom in all areas of development due to the exceptional way staff engage with them, encourage independence and value their individuality.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Planning is extremely comprehensive, clear and effective to meet the needs of individual children. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and plan together to ensure key workers specifically identify individual children's next stage of development in line with the stepping stones. Staff constantly observe children and record on colour coded notes their achievements which contributes to their overall development records. Staff are skilled at supporting children's learning through appropriate questioning. For example, whilst completing puzzles or sequencing games staff encourage problem solving through open ended questions such as "what happens if...?" or "how do you know...?" Older, more able children are sufficiently challenged at every play activity due to the staffs fantastic knowledge of their development. There is a wonderful feeling of team work and consistency in everything that happens. Staff work exceptionally well together to meet the needs of the children. For example, if a child is receiving one-to-one support at an activity with a puzzle or computer then their next choice of activity is not supported, to allow for child-led play with peers. Staff gently encourage all children to participate in craft activities although they are aware some children are less interested in these so use a variety of skills to make them exciting and interesting. Children enjoy expressing their creativity through a variety of media. Dressing up is extremely popular. Children spend the whole session pretending to be a character from a story or film whilst still engaging in painting, playdoh and table top play. Staff re-enact favourite stories with children using props which are then spontaneously re-enacted by the children themselves several weeks later. Children show an excellent awareness of their learning and soak up the experiences provided by the staff with enthusiasm and excitement. Their language skills are exemplary across everything they do. As well as planned activities to explore letters of the week, children play word games spontaneously whilst waiting for their snack. They listen intently to stories and question the outcomes, feelings of characters and develop every activity into a learning opportunity. For example, whilst playing with a computer, a 3-year-old finds the letter 'C' for his name. He then identifies the letters for all of his friends' names before correctly putting the letters of the alphabet in order. Children show an interest in writing their names routinely on their art work. Some are able to correctly form the letters and write their names at 3 and 4-years-of-age with confidence.

Children achieve exceptionally well in all areas because there is such a strong emphasis on them establishing strengths in their personal, social and emotional development from their very first day at the pre-school. Children talk about their love for each other and show kindness and consideration when playing. They take turns and share equipment with ease as they are praised and encouraged for this. New children are supported by established children who take pride in their role. For example, one child takes another by the hand to take him to the bathroom to prepare for snack time. Children show respect for others when talking and listening with an understanding of adult concepts; such as, staff reminding children to 'look at each

other when you speak'. Children learn about different cultures and festivals around the world using a variety of excellent resources such as maps, crafts and books. A nativity scene is played with rather than just admired from a distance, which really brings children's learning alive. They take turns to be the voices of baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They question time scales and how people used to live, they learn about animals and their roles in times past and present. Children are very knowledgeable about the community they live in and that of others through meaningful discussions and stories.

Children relish group time with the staff as they have the opportunity to explore new, exciting skills. They enthusiastically discuss the calendar and weather board each morning and link their knowledge of numbers and letters. Staff skilfully weave all aspects of children's learning into one activity. Children shine because staff are so knowledgeable about individual children's learning that they stretch and challenge appropriately for them to achieve little and often which makes them feel so clever and important. They use posters to aid their learning about numbers and letters, which are positioned effectively around the room for circle time. Every aspect of their learning is explored and meaningful. For example, children count the number of children present. They talk about numbers being big or little, they find them on the wall chart to see the numeral and then count the number of objects illustrating it. Children recognise addition and subtraction in everything they do. They are often linking their knowledge of maths in sand play or role-play with everyday items. Staff have introduced children to colours and shapes in the same way. For example, when directing children to put something away they refer to it as the 'blue basket' or 'round tin' to differentiate and extend their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are extremely well behaved as they understand the clear boundaries set by staff. Good behaviour is encouraged through positive role modelling provided by staff and consistent messages. Children are praised at every opportunity and their achievements are valued which results in very proud children with high self esteem. A special helper is chosen each morning to assist with tasks which makes the children feel important and they contribute to the good role modelling for younger or new children. Prospective parents are welcomed into the sessions and staff are confident at discussing their individual needs or allaying fears of leaving their children. Parents are fully involved in every aspect of their child's care which promotes excellent partnerships.

Children routinely sign 'Good morning everybody' at registration and talk about their feelings. Children communicate their happiness with the 'thumbs up sign' and when one child reflects she is feeling unhappy with the 'thumbs down sign' it is explored by staff who are told she has a tummy ache. Children's individual needs are exceptionally well identified and met effectively. For example, through comprehensive assessments and recording each aspect of their learning is planned for to ensure they are supported and fully involved in every aspect of the provision. Although there are no children currently attending with special educational needs or English as an

additional language the staff are extremely aware of how to identify, support and liaise with parents and professionals to meet the child's individual needs. Children explore different cultures and festivals through a vast range of activities. Resources promote positive images of diversity and children learn through meaningful discussions about their local community and that of the wider world. Boys and girls have equal opportunities in everything they do and staff are particularly proactive at supporting both genders in their chosen activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Children greatly benefit from an effective partnership between the pre-school and home. Children's activities and learning are shared with parents through the effective use of newsletters and notice boards, informal discussions and twice yearly parents evenings. Individual children's progress along the stepping stones is understood as the information given to parents about the Foundation Stage Curriculum and the six areas of learning is referred to at every opportunity. For example, policies are informative and notices tell parents of the letter of the week so children bring things in from home which link to the current theme. The extended family are enthusiastically welcomed into the group and strong links are formed with prospective parents which all benefit the child.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Every aspect of the daily operation of the setting is exemplary. Staff work harmoniously together to provide a highly effective routine which impacts greatly on the children's happiness and their opportunity to play and learn in an effortless way. The successful organisation of the room is a credit to the staff's hard work as every session requires the furniture and equipment to be packed away. Excellent systems are in place to ensure toys are rotated and individual needs are met. Detailed documentation and highly effective communication between staff ensures a wide range of appropriate resources are accessed by the children on a daily basis. Excellent staff deployment ensures the children are well cared for both inside and outside.

Documentation is clear and professional. New systems have been implemented which show the staff's commitment to improvement. For example, the policy file has several new policies added to reflect changes in practice and through training more knowledge will be gained to further develop existing policies to make them more individual to the setting. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management is outstanding. The supervisor and deputy are recently qualified and fairly new to their posts. However, they are excellent role-models for the rest of the staff team and all staff are confident in their roles and responsibilities which reflects in the smooth running of the setting. The supervisor is extremely conscientious and always striving to improve the care and education for all children. There are very good systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision. Staff appraisals identify individuals' strengths and training is given the highest priority

to further enhance children's care and education.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection it was agreed to address three recommendations; to ensure minimum staff qualifications are met, to keep a fire log and review staff details to include emergency contact numbers. All three are appropriately completed. A new staff team consists of two level three qualified staff and two level two's. A fire log and staff details are well documented.

At the last nursery education inspection it was agreed to address two key issues; to increase children's access to information and communication technology and ensure mathematics is developed. The new supervisor has implemented both exceptionally well to meet all children's needs. Although restrictions on the premises do not allow for a computer children access a wide selection of technology. Children have regular opportunities to use many different battery operated computers, toys and tape recorders. Planning highlights daily mathematics through a vast amount of activities plus every opportunity is exploited to spontaneously explore maths.

Complaints since the last inspection

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.

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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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):

- develop staff's knowledge of child protection procedures in line with the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) and ensure the policy includes procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk