

Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 141104
Inspection date 08/02/2010
Inspector Janet Armstrong

Setting address Shaftesbury Christian Centre, Christys Lane, Shaftesbury,
Dorset, SP7 8PH
Telephone number 01747 854993
Email Shaftcctr@aol.com
Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

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).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Little Acorns Pre-School has been registered since 2000 and operates from the Shaftesbury Christian Centre, close to the centre of Shaftesbury, Dorset. The pre-school is run by the trustees of the New Covenant Church and provides care for up to 26 children from age two years nine months to the end of the early years age group. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday, term time only from 10am to 2pm on a Monday and Friday, 9.15am to 11.45am on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday with an afternoon session on a Tuesday and Wednesday from 12.30pm to 3pm.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. There are currently 50 children on roll in the early years age range. The pre-school is in receipt of the government funding for early education. They cater for children who have English as an additional language. The pre-school has links with other early years settings in the area.

The premises can be accessed via a ramp and the accommodation is set out on the same level. It offers use of a main play room, spacious hall, that includes a gymnasium, reception area with toilets, changing area and a kitchen. There is an enclosed outdoor play area to the side of the hall.

The pre-school employs a qualified play leader who holds NVQ Level 3 in childcare and education. She is supported by two senior early years practitioners who hold foundation degrees in early years. They are supported by six members of staff, of whom four hold a recognised childcare qualification and two who are working towards one. The team are supported by volunteers.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children's individual care and learning needs are met exceptionally well. This is due to excellent systems in place for working with parents, who are fully involved in contributing towards their child's learning journey and next steps, and the staff's secure knowledge of each child's learning needs and personality. Staff are highly effective in the support, challenges and extension they give to the children which means children are extremely positive, very confident and embrace all activities and opportunities with great enthusiasm. The learning opportunities to challenge children's understanding and use of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy is of a very high standard. Management systems in place are highly successful in monitoring the effectiveness of the setting which means there is a very strong capacity to maintain continuous improvements and address any identified areas through well thought out processes and research that involve staff, the children and parents.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- reviewing the systems for finding out from parents what they know about their child's learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All aspects of children's safety is prioritised. Staff are clear on their responsibilities for safeguarding children's welfare. They are supported by secure safeguarding procedures in place that are shared with parents to enable all parties to work together effectively. Robust recruitment, vetting and staff monitoring processes means that staff's ongoing suitability is secured. Excellent levels of supervision and instruction, and highly effective risk assessment systems, means that children are able to use the different areas safely.

There is excellent organisation and use of the environment and resources. The areas are child-orientated, welcoming and interesting. Sessions are mainly child-led with highly successful planned adult-led activities to introduce children to new interests and ideas. For example, exploration of shadow making. Children begin their day with great enthusiasm and motivation. The well organised environment and layout allows children to access all areas independently, engage in the activities set up for them by staff or make their own free choices in the activities and play provision they want to become involved in. As well as being able to select their own resources, children are also encouraged to contribute to the weekly planning to share their own ideas for their learning and what they want to play with. Staff are a highly effective and strong team unit, sharing tasks and responsibilities throughout the session as they move around the different play areas to ensure that all children's learning is developed and challenged.

Promotion of equality and diversity is excellent which means that children feel highly valued as individuals and in turn, learn to show respect and acceptance for others. This stems from highly efficient behaviour management strategies in place, where staff are positive role models and support the children effectively in recognising and accepting the pre-school's ground rules; sharing, taking turns and considering the needs of others. Potential situations for disagreements are negated through independent use of an egg timer to support them in taking turns. A four-year-old confidently explains that when the sand is at the bottom it is their turn to play with the fire engine. These practices means that all children play very well together and are forming valuable friendships. Children's awareness and acceptance of differences in society is also introduced through planned themes and access to resources which raises their awareness of the wider world in which they live.

There is a comprehensive range of paperwork, documentation, policies and procedures which are used effectively to inform staff, parents and management of practices, issues and individual circumstances to be considered when planning for

and meeting each child's care and learning needs. The partnership with parents and other early years that children attend is highly effective which means that children are extremely confident and very secure in their surroundings. The pre-school has introduced extensive systems to work effectively with parents who play an active role in what their children learn, based on their interests, any potential concerns from home, or any gaps in the children's learning. Parents are very well informed about the setting, its aims and the policies, procedures and practices followed by staff. They are able to support their child's learning at home effectively due to discussions and written information about what their child has been learning on a daily basis as well as the learning progress overall. Parents are asked to share what they know about their child's learning, although, these systems have been currently put on hold due to recent advice. Home/setting link books, as well as telephone calls are also in place for working with other settings that children attend, to ensure there is a consistent and coordinated approach.

Extremely proactive and committed leadership and management systems in place are highly effective in empowering staff, who are highly motivated and dedicated in playing an active role and valuable contribution to all aspects of the organisation. They attend regular training to update their skills and knowledge and cascade their new learning with the others to enable the team to consider new ways of working, for example, observation and assessment and linking sounds to letters. The support and encouragement from management for professional development is very successful and this means that there is a high level of highly qualified staff. Staff attend weekly staff meetings to share what has worked well and ideas to develop practices further. They discuss the children so that all staff are aware of each child's individual care and learning needs. This means they are able to offer very high levels of focused support and extension. Self-evaluation systems are highly effective. This derives from the strong driving ambition and forward thinking of management to constantly evaluate their strengths, identifying areas to be explored for further improvement, how they can be tackled and the impact this will have on the children. Staff and parents all play an active role in this process. These highly effective processes enables the setting to provide outstanding care and education.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are confident, active learners. They have a positive disposition to their learning and engage in the range of activities eagerly. They have very good relationships with others and use their language and communication positively to share their own ideas and listen to others to extend and build on their play. This is due to the highly effective interaction they receive from staff who use open-ended questions to encourage the children to think for themselves. For example, through the use of the story sacks, where children participate and act out the different roles, and at snack time, where children use display boards to help them inform the others of where milk, water and breadsticks comes from. A four-year-old, using the photographs, reports that water comes from the rain which goes into pipes and then into the pre-school's taps. The breadsticks come from wheat which is cut using the machine.

Highly accomplished staff interaction during adult-led and planned activities enables the children to work in small groups to explore feelings and respect for others in meaningful situations and look at how shadows are formed. A toy dog with a bandage on his head is introduced to the children. The member of staff explains that some children threw stones at him. The children respond with genuine concern and pain for the dog and explore how the dog feels. They talk about being sad, hurt and unhappy and consider the actions of throwing stones and hurting others. The children share their own experiences of being sad and consider ways of preventing such situations. Children also explore making shadows using a lamp and black cut out animal shapes. They explore the effects of how to make the shapes bigger and smaller and then find their own materials using black paper, Sellotape and lollipop sticks to make their own shapes.

The high quality practices followed by staff means that children have an excellent introduction to keeping safe and being healthy. Staff remind children at the start of each session about the expectations and rules. At registration, when the children are doing warming up exercises, staff ask the children if they know why it is not safe to stand too close together. This enables the children to consider their actions of jumping too close together. During physical exercise sessions, children are reminded to listen and not talk so that they know what to do and will not get hurt. Children recognise the benefits of leading healthy lifestyles through projects and daily practices where they eat healthily, follow positive hygiene practices, help to grow and tend vegetables and fruits in the pre-school garden, and engage in regular exercise, where they express themselves to music through dance and use of long ribbons and instruments.

The staff's excellent use of numbers and simple calculation means that children are learning to count and solve simple number problems with confidence in their play and daily practical routines. For example, at snack time they talk about how many children at their table want milk or water. Using Velcro numbers they identify that if four children want milk and one wants water, it equals five. A four-year-old child counts backwards from eight down to zero, counting in the expected arrival of the 'pirates'!. Children borrow books from the pre-school and correctly identify which number book it is. At registration time, children confidently identify how many children and adults are present.

Children are competent and confident in their use of modern technology. They independently use the mouse to access different programmes and complete tasks on the computers, listening to the commands and instructions for use.

Planning, observation and assessment systems are highly effective. They are constantly under review to ensure the processes support the children's learning. Observations are effectively recorded and shared with parents, who also record at home what they have observed to contribute towards the learning journey. The current systems mean that each staff member is well informed about individual learning needs to promote children in making excellent progress in their learning.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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

