



Grovelands Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109432
Inspection date	13 October 2005
Inspector	Felicity Gaff
Setting Address	Grovelands School, Dunbar Drive, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 3UW
Telephone number	01323 449194
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Registered person	Grovelands 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Grovelands Acorns Pre-school opened in 1997. It is a committee-run nursery held in two play rooms in a modern school building in Hailsham. There is a secure area for outdoor play. The nursery serves families from the local residential area. It provides sessional day care from 09:00 to 11:30 and from 13:00 until 15:30 on Mondays to Fridays during term time.

The pre-school is registered for 24 children aged over 2 and under 5 years and there

are 56 children on roll, 44 of whom receive funded nursery education. The pre-school supports three children who speak English as an additional language and one with special educational needs. There are five members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. All staff attend first aid and child protection training; they also attend further professional training to enhance their knowledge and expertise.

The nursery receives regular support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are well protected from illness and infection because staff offer a clean, hygienic and well maintained environment. Children learn good personal hygiene routines and begin to understand the reasons for them, for instance, they are able to explain why they need to wash their hands before eating. They learn about healthy eating as they enjoy fruit at snack time and they are able to help themselves to fresh drinking water at any time. Staff promote children's health by managing minor accidents appropriately and by having good systems for administering any necessary medication. They teach children how to handle visiting small animals safely and liaise effectively with parents to ensure the needs of children with allergies are met. Children develop their physical skills well as they participate with enthusiasm in daily opportunities for vigorous activity both indoors and out.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's physical safety is promoted well because they are cared for in modern, safe and secure premises. Staff follow clear procedures to protect children from unvetted persons. They have established effective routines when moving furniture or folding the climbing frame to ensure children are safe. However, they miss opportunities to teach children how to carry chairs themselves. This means that when children need to do so they do not always use safe methods. Children benefit from a very well-resourced environment where they choose from safe, high quality play materials. Equipment such as books and the computer are easily accessible on solid, purpose built units so children can access them independently and use them comfortably and safely. They enjoy a welcoming book corner where they can share books, play quietly, or rest and relax in comfort. Although the storage drawers for children's toys and play materials are labelled with both words and pictures, the pictures are very small and indistinct so children do not often help themselves. Staff arrange regular fire drills. However, they do not vary the exit used and do not ensure that all the children participate. As a result, children may not take part in a fire drill for several months and have insufficient opportunities to become familiar with the routines. Staff have a reasonable awareness of possible signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect, although the designated person has an insecure understanding of

how and when to report concerns. The procedures for dealing with allegations against a member of staff lack detail. These weaknesses restrict the ability of the setting to protect children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children develop and achieve well in the supportive and nurturing atmosphere created by the staff. Staff take time to build a close and trusting relationship with each child and family. They offer a great deal of individual care and attention to help children feel valued. They are particularly effective at taking time to ensure children become familiar with pre-school routines. They tell children regularly and clearly what is expected of them and what will happen next. As a result children feel secure and relaxed, settling readily into the familiar rhythms of the pre-school. Children are eager to engage adults in conversation, for example as they explain who lives in their family. They learn to listen to each other because staff have realistic expectations and group children appropriately. Staff use everyday play resources well to encourage children to talk about what they do as they experiment with paint, dough and glue. Some staff are very skilful in teaching children effective techniques to manage their own coats and shoes and children gain a sense of achievement as they develop their skills. However, staff sometimes offer assistance too quickly and this does not encourage children to persevere independently.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The well-qualified staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They plan interesting activities which are planned to cover all areas of learning. They use their knowledge of individual children effectively to meet their differing needs. For example, some story sessions and circle times are split according to age and maturity to ensure all children are included. Children listen attentively to well-read stories and demonstrate their good understanding of reading conventions as they share books with each other independently. They use their imaginations as they engage in satisfying role play. They express their own views clearly and take those of other children into consideration as they plan and organise their play and resolve disagreements.

Staff display children's work attractively showing them that it is valued. They encourage children to express their own ideas and children show confidence in solving problems as they make junk models and experiment with paint. Children join in singing times with enjoyment and sing musically; they move expressively to their own instrumental accompaniment. Children count confidently because staff use incidental opportunities well to discuss numbers and counting for real purposes with the children. Staff work closely with individuals using structural apparatus such as Number Bears effectively to develop their understanding of calculation. Children explore weight, size, shape and capacity through a range of planned activities and as they experiment with wet and dry sand or at the water tray. Although staff plan activities such as cooking these are not always organised to ensure children have as much direct, first hand experiences as possible. As a result they miss opportunities

for children to measure and count ingredients for themselves and observe changes closely which limits their learning.

Staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and to plan for their future learning. Plans are linked closely to the stepping stones and enable staff to adapt activities well to meet the needs of all the children. Staff monitor what children do and keep records of their observations. However, some of these are purely descriptive and fail to identify what children have learned or understand, which limits their usefulness in planning what they need to do next.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn to understand their own needs and those of other people because staff create a positive and inclusive ethos. They show children that they are valued by encouraging them to express their own ideas and opinions and by displaying their work attractively. They provide a range of books reflecting positive images of cultural diversity. They help children feel at ease by learning key phrases in their home languages and displaying examples of words and numbers in those scripts. They have good arrangements for ensuring staff know how to meet any cultural dietary requirements. Staff use a pictorial timetable to ensure that all children, including those who do not yet speak English or who have communication difficulties, understand the rhythms of the pre-school session. Arrangements to support children with special educational needs are very good. Staff have a good understanding of the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and work closely with parents and other agencies to make sure that children with additional needs are fully included and thrive.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff provide very good guidance to children; they explain clearly how and why they need to tidy up and what will happen next so children understand what is expected of them. Children reflect the courtesy and respect shown towards them by the staff in their dealings with each other, for example, a 3-year-old asked another child, 'Excuse me, may I play, too?'. Children play together harmoniously in pairs and small groups, planning and negotiating their roles in imaginative play and finding their own solutions to disagreements while sharing resources amicably. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents receive clear, detailed and attractively produced written information about the pre-school before children attend. Staff provide clear information about the Foundation Stage and display plans and objectives to help parents understand how their children learn through play. Children are proud to take books in their own book bag to share at home. Parents receive good information about the setting through regular newsletters. Staff are available to exchange information at the start and end of sessions and also organise termly open evenings with the opportunity for individual parent consultations to inform parents of their children's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The care of the children is very well supported by the committee which is led by a committed and enthusiastic chairperson who has a good understanding of her role and responsibilities. The chairperson recognises the importance of ensuring staff have the knowledge, skills and ability to do their jobs and are suitable to be in charge of children. Effective employment procedures and ongoing training opportunities mean that all staff hold Level 3 qualifications and work well together as a team to provide good quality care for the children. All the required policies and procedures are in place although the committee does not review and update them sufficiently rigorously.

Leadership and management are good. The effective planning and assessment procedures ensure children make appropriate progress along the stepping stones. The play rooms are organised well to allow children to engage in satisfying, freely chosen play. The qualified staff are well-deployed to work directly with the children, offering them very good support and helping them to move on in their learning. Pre-school staff liaise with the reception class in the host school to ensure a smooth transfer for children. The children are well-prepared for school and feel secure as they move up.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous Children Act inspection Ofsted recommended that the registered person improve the first aid box and the storage of food, and expand the policies and procedures for child protection and for complaints. The contents of the first aid box have been updated which improves the arrangements for dealing with accidents. Food is stored appropriately which protects children from infection. The provider now makes sure parents know how to contact Ofsted through an informative parent pack and by displaying contact details prominently. The policies and procedures for complaints and child protection support staff in protecting children, although the procedure for responding to allegations made against staff lacks detail.

At the last inspection of funded nursery education the provider was asked to develop children's use of mathematics in everyday activities; to develop the use of the outdoor area for physical development; and to develop assessments and written plans in order to meet the needs of all children. There are now ample opportunities for children to discuss and use numbers in everyday activities as well as through good use of structured apparatus such as Number Bears. Plans identify learning objectives for the outdoor area and staff select equipment to support these to ensure children make satisfactory progress. Plans show how activities can be adapted to meet the needs of children at different ages and stages.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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.

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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 regular fire drills are organised for all children
- develop the child protection procedures concerning allegations against a member of staff and ensure staff are aware of child protection issues and know how to report concerns.

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):

- increase opportunities for children to learn from first hand, practical experience during activities such as cooking
- improve written observations of what children do to show what they understand and how they make progress.

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