

Acorn Childcare (UK)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 220111
Inspection date 18/01/2010
Inspector Isobel Randall

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

Acorn Childcare is a registered charitable trust, run by a committee, which was established in 1992. It is situated on the site of Headlands Primary School in Northampton. It provides a variety of full and sessional day care for children aged from three months to four years, and out of school care for children attending the school. It also offers holiday play schemes for all children in the Northampton area. It is registered on the Early Years Register and also on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 130 children may attend the setting at any one time, with a maximum of 18 children under two years. The before school and after school clubs have a maximum of 48 children. The nursery is open each weekday from 8.00am to 6.00pm for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 120 children under eight years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for early education. At present 16 children are under two years. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. Staff collaborate closely with the Children's Centre on the same site. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 28 members of staff. Of these, the 23 adults who work directly with children hold appropriate early years qualifications and one holds early years professional status.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The provision at Acorn Childcare is outstanding, with highly effective provision for early years children. The committee, managers and staff continuously improve their effectiveness through thorough and very informed self-evaluation. The nursery is very inclusive, with close attention to individual needs.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- consider encouraging parents to collaborate more closely with the work of the nursery in meeting their children's interests and learning needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Leadership and management of the early years provision is exceptionally effective in promoting the welfare, learning and development of the children. Managers enforce stringent measures to ensure that the children are safe. Thorough recruitment systems ensure that all employees are fit and qualified to work with children. All adults have been trained in child protection, and there are three

nominated child protection officers. Although there are no children on the child protection register, the nursery works closely with the Children's Centre and with outside agencies to ensure the welfare and safety of vulnerable children. Risk assessments are thorough and are developed in response to changing circumstances or events. Adults carry out daily checks on equipment and premises to ensure that they are in good order. The proportion of adults to children is carefully maintained in excess of the legal minimum, and there is an adult trained in first aid for children in each room at all times. All statutory policies, specific to the circumstances of the nursery, are carried out in practice.

Leaders encourage and assist all who work with children to develop their professional expertise through in-service training and by improving their own qualifications. Led by the early years professional, staff throughout the nursery carry out consistently rigorous observations of children's experiences and achievements that inform their planning to meet individual needs. They communicate well with parents through spoken and written reports and information. Through meetings and questionnaires they ascertain and then act on the views of the parents who form the majority on the management committee. Strenuous attempts to engage parents have resulted in good attendance at open sessions, and the nursery offers training to parents in aspects of child care. Although many parents, encouraged by the nursery, inform staff about their children's experiences at home, and enjoy looking at their children's learning journey records, they do not all systematically provide staff with information about achievements that could feed into planning to meet children's learning needs. A close link between the nursery and the children's centre on the same site is highly effective in supporting the welfare and development of the children. The nursery provides useful crèche facilities for children whose parents are attending courses linked to the Children's Centre. Collaboration with the school and children's centre are strengthened by the head teacher's and centre leader's membership of the nursery management committee.

The nursery is engaged at the time of the inspection in formal self-evaluation involving all staff. Leaders have brought about continuous improvement through staff discussion, and in response to training and consultation coupled with reaction to events and experiences. Records show that all issues are examined and dealt with as soon as they arise, in consultation with relevant agencies and partners. The nursery is exceptionally well resourced. Each room is well equipped, with excellent match to the children's needs and interests. The outdoor area has a broad range of equipment for sensory exploration and exercise on safe surfaces. Leaders, recognising a need for increased shelter outdoors, have plans under way to provide a new covered area. Staff meet babies' needs in full through exceptionally well designed play and rest areas. The nursery is highly inclusive. Staff plan carefully to meet individual needs so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress in relation to their needs. Children at an early stage of learning English are very well supported in close collaboration with their parents. Aware of the need to improve boys' attitude to writing, staff have developed resources that appeal to their interests. Curriculum planning has developed well, with evaluation of its impact leading to refinements that encourage children to enjoy and learn from their experiences.

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

The provision ensures that children have excellent opportunities for enjoyment and development in a safe and secure environment. The nursery's key persons each observe and support their children thoroughly so that each child has appropriate opportunities for play. Adults plan for children in each room to have an independent choice of stimulating experiences, including free-flow between rooms as well as to the outdoor area. All children are actively engaged, demonstrating, for example, excellent attention to a book that they share with an adult. Afterwards they are able to recount the story and talk about the characters. Babies enjoy the level of attention that provides a wide range of tactile, visual and auditory experiences, laughing with real pleasure while listening to bells or exploring a soft surface. The area for sleep is quiet and comfortable.

Toddlers are totally absorbed in exploring sand or painting toys with water, while others enjoy the sticky sensation of gluing tissue to sheets of paper. Children in the exciting sensory area explore different sounds while shaking containers or investigate the different textures of toys. Attention to health is highly effective. Cooked meals are prepared on the site, with healthy food presented in dishes that help children to eat independently. Hand-washing is a clear routine before meals, after toileting and after messy play. Children have excellent opportunities to take exercise in the large outdoor area whose thoughtful design invites them to cycle uphill and to climb. They learn to make a positive contribution to each other's day, with excellent attitudes to each other. Following the example of the adults, they share equipment well, learn to wait for a turn and help each other with activities, such as adding detail to a road plan for model vehicles. Staff plan for and achieve excellent development of future skills. There are many opportunities to learn number, for example, counting cutlery while helping to prepare for lunch. Boys and girls are all learning eagerly to enjoy writing, using the attractively labelled pencils that motivate them to try.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress in relation to their targets, in particular in their personal development when they learn to socialise with others and to express their wishes politely. Pupils whose first language is not English are given a high level of support, quickly become fluent when talking with their friends and discussing their games with adults. Good opportunities for role play are highly effective in motivating children to take on adult roles and to work with each other. Activities observed in appropriate detail are used well to inform planning, in which children are encouraged to choose for themselves. Staff encourage higher attaining children to move into groups of older children so that they can improve their performance through greater challenge. As a result, all children are settled, busy and interested in their surroundings so that they make excellent progress, especially in their personal development.

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	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met