

Little Thetford Acorns Pre-School and Children's Club

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY405040
Inspection date	28/06/2010
Inspector	Emma Bright

Setting address	Oak Fields, The Wyches, Little Thetford, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3HG
Telephone number	01353 649234
Email	chair@littletthetfordacorns.org.uk
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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

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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

Little Thetford Acorns Pre-school and Children's Club is a well-established pre-school, formerly known as Little Thetford Pre-school. It opened in 2010 and is an incorporated charity run by parents of children attending the setting. They have relocated to new purpose-built premises in the grounds of the village hall in Little Thetford, near Ely, Cambridgeshire. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time and there are currently 34 children on roll who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and is also registered on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The setting currently supports a small number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Opening times are 7.45am to 9am for the breakfast club, 9.15am to 1.15pm for the pre-school and 3pm to 6pm for the out of school club each weekday during term time. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays the pre-school hours are 9.15 to 14.30. The holiday playscheme will open from 8am to 6pm during some school holidays.

The setting employs nine members of staff; of whom five hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are training towards a qualification.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children enjoy a good range of activities and challenging experiences which help them to make good progress in their learning and development. Resources are very well deployed to ensure children's safety and enable them to become active learners. Children play and learn in an interesting and nurturing environment, where they are valued and acknowledged as individuals. Partnerships with parents and carers are a key strength; staff work extremely closely with parents to ensure that all children's needs are effectively met. Effective monitoring and evaluation of the provision enables staff to identify areas for improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- maximise the use of the environment to further support children's learning so that they confidently explore and truly make choices about their play in challenging indoor and outdoor spaces
- ensure that students and volunteers are given full information and guidance on their roles and responsibilities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children procedures and help children to understand how to keep themselves safe. They attend child protection training regularly to ensure their knowledge is up to date. Rigorous recruitment and induction arrangements ensure staff who work with children are suitable to do so. However, students are not always given sufficient information about their roles and this potentially affects children's welfare. Systems are in place to effectively monitor and evaluate the provision to identify priorities for improvement. For example, a 'policy of the month' ensures that parents and staff know about any updated information or issues that are current such as the sun protection policy in the summer months. There is a very strong emphasis on raising standards, continually improving the provision and self-evaluation is good.

The setting works extremely well in partnership with parents and carers; parents and grandparents speak very highly of the setting and in particular of the welcome that each child and their family receive. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the benefits of working closely with parents; they strive to provide frequent opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning. Very good settling-in procedures that are based around their individual needs helps to support children in the transition between home and the setting. To support this further, staff have identified and carry out home visits before children begin at the setting which enables them to gather good information to be used as starting points for care and learning. Parents are very well informed about their child's progress and achievements and they have regular opportunities to share what they know about their child. The setting has a positive attitude to liaising with other settings delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage and made good links to other providers in the area.

Clear risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis to ensure that hazards are identified and minimised to safeguard children. Staff take advice from safety officers for 'safer routes to school' and children wear reflective jackets which means their safety is promoted on their journeys to and from school. Comprehensive documentation is in place for the safe running of the setting and underpins the good practice; policies and procedures are implemented effectively by all staff and shared with parents. Staff have clear strategies in place to care for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work with parents, carers and other agencies to support the children's needs so that they are included in the life of the setting. In addition, parents contribute to their child's individual education plan which has a positive effect on building strong relationships and ensuring children's needs are met. The management team provide strong and effective leadership which means staff work very well together as a cohesive team, presenting positive role models for children. The provision is very well organised and staff are effectively deployed so children are safe and supervised at all times.

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

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage; this enables them to offer challenging activities and practical experiences to support and extend each child's learning and development. Flexible planning is in place and is based on children's interests which means staff can be responsive to children's changing needs and interests. Staff carry out regular observations of the children as they play and these are added to children's individual assessments to inform planning. Good information is gathered from parents about their child's achievements and used to inform planning and identify the next steps in each child's learning. However, staff do not always make full use of the learning environment to further support children's learning both indoors and outdoors.

Children are relaxed and confident in the nurturing care of staff; they are confident and developing good self-esteem because staff are attentive and value their contributions. Children develop good relationships with one another and their behaviour is good; they independently share the mini-trampoline offering each other a turn. Children learn about nature and how to care for living things; they put small plants in pots and explain 'it won't grow without water'. In addition, they grow tomatoes and plant potatoes to help them understand about where food comes from.

Children count with confidence and demonstrate good problem solving skills as they persevere in building large structures with 'waffle bricks'. They enjoy challenges such as trying to fold paper to create paper aeroplanes and discuss how far they will fly and which one will fly the furthest. Children have daily opportunities to share and enjoy books, rhymes and songs. In addition, children take home a book which helps to foster an enjoyment of sharing stories with their parents. Children are confident communicators because staff are responsive to them and listen to their ideas and opinions. They initiate conversations with visitors, eager to share their knowledge and discuss things that are important to them; they explain that they are three and next they will be four and then they go to 'big school'. These simple activities lay firm foundations for children's future learning.

Staff provide opportunities for children to enjoy energetic play in the outdoor area. Children confidently practice a range of movements, such as balancing on mini-stilts or walking along the log train. This is because staff create an environment which is safe and supportive where children learn to be safety conscious without being fearful. Children enjoy healthy snacks which are offered on a 'rolling' basis so that they can choose when they want to eat; this allows them to continue their activities and enhances the flow of the session. Clear information is gathered about children's dietary requirements and this ensures they can eat safely. All staff hold current first aid certificates, which mean that they can respond appropriately if children have an accident whilst in their care. Thorough risk assessments are completed to ensure the environment remains safe for children.

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?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
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	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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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