



## Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY305073
<b>Inspection date</b>	04 November 2005
<b>Inspector</b>	Kay Roberts
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<b>Registered person</b>	Nancy Beck, Carol Stenner and Nicolette Beardsley
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day 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](http://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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns is a private nursery which first opened in 2005. It operates from 4 rooms in a converted house in Kingswood, Bristol. The nursery is located in a housing area close to shops and parks. It opens Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 18.00 hours, 51 weeks a year. Children have access to a secure enclosed outside play area.

The nursery is registered to provide care for a maximum of 24 children under 5-years and currently there are 28 children on roll and of these there are 5 funded

3-year-olds. No children have English as an additional language. The nursery caters for children with special educational needs. Children attending the nursery come from a large catchment area.

The nursery employs 7 members of staff, 5 of whom hold a relevant child care qualification. Advice on the educational programme is provided by South Gloucestershire's Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children play in a clean environment. The risk of them becoming ill is minimised through hygienic procedures and the exclusion of children who are ill. Children know that they must wash their hands after painting and before meals. Staff assist younger children by showing them where to get the paper towels from. Theme based, fun activities enable children to understand the importance of personal hygiene. For example, dental hygiene was reinforced by making giant toothbrushes from painted card and cotton wool. Supporting literature given to parents and their involvement contributes to children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

Snack and lunch times are relaxed occasions when all children sit together, including babies. The menu has gradually been adapted to provide children with healthy meals which they like and take into account special dietary requirements. Children enjoy their meals and snacks. They do not get hungry; they help themselves to more fruit from the plate at snack time and at meal times confidently ask for more. Children understand how fruit and vegetables grow as in the summer they help to plant and water a selection of fruit, vegetables and herbs. Some of the crops are included in the menu and children make their own cheese and cress sandwiches.

Children benefit from daily opportunities to play outside in the garden, which is still being developed with ideas from both parents and children being taken into consideration. Children have fun sitting in the sand and develop large muscle skills as they squeeze through the holes in the climbing frame. Physical skills are also developed indoors using the parachute and moving to music when they march up and down to 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. Children do not become overtired. If children become tired they snuggle up next to an adult and listen to a story. Babies are cuddled and gently rocked before being placed in a slightly darkened room where they sleep peacefully.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children feel welcome at Little Acorns as they receive a warm greeting from staff. The bright, colourful, child focussed environment helps them relax. Resources are set up prior to their arrival and children confidently help themselves to other toys which they can see through the clear boxes. They are proud of their displays of art work

and photographs on the wall. Organisation of the nursery provides children with space to play undisturbed and to move around freely and unhindered by furniture or activities. They move between the 2 playrooms on the ground floor, which offer different activities so that children remain interested.

Children play in safe, secure premises. The risk of children having an accident is minimised as the premises are checked on a daily basis to ensure there are no potential hazards. The detailed risk assessment is regularly reviewed and staff are vigilant. In the event of a fire children know how to evacuate the premises, which has been learnt through practise. They know that if they run they might bump into something and hurt either themselves or others. If they splash water on the bathroom floor they either inform a member of staff or sometimes try to mop it up themselves because they do not want to slip. They also help to brush up sand spilt on the floor.

Children's welfare is promoted as staff have a clear understanding of the child protection procedures.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy being at the nursery and have fun. They confidently make decisions about what they want to do and show enthusiasm for the activities available. Some children enjoy exploring what happens when they put pieces of train through the tunnel and then watch as the train rushes down the slope. They repeat the action many times. Children carefully paint rockets and with help from members of staff add silver foil for a tail. As they sprinkle on glitter they feel the texture. Later children use chalk on black paper to create fireworks and as they do so ask staff to help. One member of staff quickly draws a spiral which makes one child laugh. As they draw staff talk to the children about the colours and noise of fireworks; they introduce new words which children try to copy. Language development is well promoted through the continual interaction between staff and all babies and children. They chat to babies as they observe what is happening in the room around them. As children get a little older they look at the photographs of themselves and other children. Staff encourage them to name the children and to comment on what the children are doing. They recall planting sunflowers in the garden. On an individual basis children listen to stories as they sit on an adults lap and look at books. On some occasions stories in a large group are less successful as younger children quickly lose interest.

Young children begin to recognise parts of their body as they build figures from the construction kit. When a child comments that someone has yellow hair, staff offer the correct terminology and say it is called blond. Sometimes children deliberately stick parts of the body in the wrong position, for example putting an arm on top of a head and laugh as they do so. As adults point and name parts of their body, children follow. Later they sing, 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' and some children are able to follow the actions. When they dress up they look at themselves in the mirror and staff reinforce the activity and children's self-esteem by commenting on how beautiful they look.

An effective monitoring system based on the Birth to Three Matters framework

ensures that babies and young children make good progress.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children develop good communication skills; they enjoy chatting and confidently talk about life at home and their new sparkly play dough. They sing and play musical instruments to their favourite rhymes such as 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' and follow the actions to 'I'm a Jingle, Jangle Scarecrow'. Children are able to express their views. Proud of their achievements they comment that their picture 'looks pretty'. They also express their dislikes and say if they do not like a particular song. The 3 year old children know that print carries meaning and are beginning to recognise and sound letters of the alphabet. As they try to copy letters of the alphabet staff offer guidance on how to hold a pen and if necessary gently hold their hand to show how a letter is formed until children are confident to try themselves. Other activities such as using a toy screwdriver and weaving with a range of paper and tinsel also help to develop fine muscle skills. Creativity is encouraged by providing a good range of readily accessible resources such as paint, chalk and glue. Children use their imagination; they help themselves to the dressing up clothes and when asked if the doll they are holding is okay, they comment 'no, actually she is not, she is crying'. Children are becoming increasingly independent; they assume responsibility for their personal hygiene and at snack time hand out plates to their peers. They count out 4 pieces of fruit. Children are beginning to understand the concept of size and, full and empty. They develop friendships within the group and play in harmony throughout the session. One child brought in a car for his friend so that they could both play with the same toy, as there was only one of this specific model within the nursery.

Staff undertake regular observations of their key children and are compiling a collection of each child's work together with pertinent comments and photographs in a folder. However as staff have not yet received training on completing the South Gloucestershire Stepping Stones children's progress is not being monitored effectively across all areas of learning. Staff provide a good range of theme based activities which cover all areas of learning and appeal to children, such as pets. However, planning does not take into consideration children's individual stage of development. Consequently children may not progress to their full potential.

## Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children new to the nursery settle quickly as they become interested in playing with the toys. There is a phased introduction based on parents' wishes and children's individual needs. Babies feel secure as staff follow their home routines and give lots of cuddles. Staff are sensitive to individual needs and offer encouragement and a high level of one-to-one support so that less confident children can participate in group activities. However the key worker system is not fully effective as key workers are not always present on some of the days children attend. Staff are particularly sensitive to children's special needs and work in close partnership with parents and other professionals to provide a quality service.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are fostered as they learn about the world in which we live. They learn from example; children are polite, take responsibility for their environment by helping to tidy up after themselves, are able to share and show care and consideration for each other. Children learn about nature as they grow vegetables and watch the cabbages being eaten by caterpillars which will turn into butterflies. Children's pets have visited the nursery and so children know that kittens are playful, hamsters are nocturnal and that a tortoise feels like a stone. A topic based on the world increased children's knowledge about a range of cultures as they looked at different types of money, studied flags, tasted a range of foods and tried on clothes.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. The good rapport between parents and staff helps children to feel secure. Parents receive a warm welcome and are well informed about practices within the setting. They receive a detailed prospectus when their child commences nursery and are regularly updated via newsletters which include details of forthcoming events and topics within the nursery. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning as they are asked to contribute any items which they feel will enhance the current topic and are provided with supporting literature for some themes, such as dental hygiene. Parents suggestions for the garden have been incorporated into the design. Although parents are updated both verbally and in writing about their child's day and are able to see some evidence of their child's progress, parents of 3 year olds are not given information about their child's progress in relation to the curriculum.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The environment is well organised; babies have a quiet area in which to sleep, children can move freely between rooms on the ground floor and space to play unimpeded. Children receive a high level of support as throughout the nursery there is a ratio of 1 adult to 3 children. Staff and students are clear about their remit. They know all children well as this is a small setting. Staff play with children and encourage them to develop self-esteem and to try new activities. For much of the time the key worker system works well and where necessary children receive almost one-to-one support throughout the day from their key worker. Unfortunately, as many staff work on a part-time basis children's key workers may not always be present on all the days they attend. On the other hand employing part-time staff provides flexibility within the workforce. Up-to-date documentation complies with the requirements of the National Standards. It is confidentially maintained and where appropriate shared with parents.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are rigorous recruitment procedures and systems for checking the ongoing suitability of staff. Staff are actively encouraged to pursue further training, which is easily accommodated because of the staffing ratios. As this setting is still in its infancy, the manager is still refining systems to ensure they effectively meet the needs of children, for example, the menu, questionnaires for parents and further developing the garden. On the day of the inspection the management team responded well to an emergency situation. Staff

were given clear direction so that children were safe and actively occupied.

The management team compliment each other; one has extensive experience in caring for babies, the other has worked for many years as a playgroup leader with children from 3 to 5 years. Their knowledge has been pooled so that all staff are aware of outcomes required for children. An effective system for monitoring the progress for children under 3 years has been devised and the system made clear to staff by providing a simple, colour coded example. The manager is aware that the system for monitoring the progress of funded children needs to be implemented as a matter of urgency and has been actively pursuing appropriate training.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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):

- further develop story time so that all children enjoy and remain interested in stories
- further develop the grouping of children and the key worker system so that key workers are present on all days when their key children attend

#### **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):

- monitor children's progress across all areas of learning and develop an effective planning cycle

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