



Acorn Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY233564
Inspection date	31 January 2006
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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

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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?

Acorn Day Nursery opened in 2002. The nursery operates from a chalet bungalow style property in Luton. The children are cared for in 4 separate classrooms. The baby unit is based in a separate building adjacent to the main nursery. The nursery has a large garden that is divided into different play areas for different age ranges.

The provision is registered for 50 children aged 3 months to 5 years. Children can attend for a variety of sessions, although most attend full-time. There are currently 63

children on roll. This includes 18 funded children. The nursery is open on weekdays for 50 weeks a year, from 08:00 to 18:00 daily.

There are 14 full-time, and 1 part-time staff who work with the children. Of these, 9 hold early years qualifications to level 2 or 3, and the remainder are working towards an appropriate qualification. The setting also accommodates regular students. The setting is able to support children with special needs or who have English as an additional language. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. No overnight care is offered.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy because staff follow generally effective health and hygiene policies and procedures. Sick children are excluded from the provision to minimise the spread of infection and the premises are maintained in an acceptably clean state. Tables are regularly sprayed with anti-bacterial spray and cloths are colour coded to prevent cross contamination. Children independently use tissues to blow their noses and discard them appropriately in the bin. Children receive appropriate treatment in a medical emergency because many staff hold suitable first aid qualifications and the first aid box is accessible and acceptably stocked. Accidents are recorded and generally comply with requirements. However, parents do not always countersign the entry. Children learn about germs through the daily routines. For example, having washed their hands in preparation for lunch, a child is aware that germs can be picked up from touching other items such as clothing. Clear procedures for washing hands after handling the rabbits are posted on the wall to remind staff and children. Staff adhere to their health and safety procedures wearing disposable gloves and aprons when changing nappies and dealing with bodily fluids. This effectively minimises the potential for cross contamination.

All the older children enjoy daily indoor and outdoor activities, which enables them to develop control of their bodies and improve their physical skills through an appropriate level of challenge. For example, all children have access to age appropriate wheeled toys, climbing apparatus and small equipment. However, babies do not benefit from daily walks or play in the fresh air. The new baby garden affords secure space for babies to play outdoors, but this is only used in warmer weather.

Children do not always benefit from a healthy diet and staff responsible for the handling of food lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of food safety and hygiene. Children bring packed food from home to meet their own dietary needs and requirements. This is stored appropriately and reheated as required. However, in view of the numbers of meals requiring re-heating and the limitations of the facilities available, the system is proving unmanageable in some of the rooms. Although meal times are a social occasion where children benefit from sitting together, learning manners and social skills, many children receive a meal that has gone cold. Staff do not use temperature probes to ensure that food has been heated to the required temperature and some meals containing rice or frozen food are being re-heated

twice, contravening environmental health recommendations. The nursery now provides fruit for morning snack to ensure that children receive some fruit during the day. Despite recent attempts through the newsletters to educate parents about providing healthy foods, some children bring crisps and chocolate bars to eat for their dessert. Children have access to regular drinks throughout the day and clearly know which cup is theirs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff give sensible priority to the security of the premises and the supervision of the children. The front door access is monitored effectively and the door is kept locked. Staff monitor visitors to the setting but the record of visitors does not provide space for recording the actual purpose of the visit to the premises. A recent full risk assessment on the premises has resulted in an action plan to address the issues raised to further reduce risks to children and staff. Room risk assessments are completed on a daily basis. Staff record fire evacuation procedures and carry out drills with suitable frequency.

Children are warmly welcomed and cared for in a pleasant, generally safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment. The setting uses space creatively and areas are set aside for dedicated activities. For example, space under the eaves in the pre-school room is used creatively to provide a home corner and a library. However, the presentation of books and some other resources does not make them inviting to children. No domestic style furniture is provided in the baby unit to assist children in developing their mobility and continue normal life experiences. Children generally have independent access to a wide range of quality resources which promote their care, learning and play. Children's welfare is safeguarded because they are protected by informed adults who understand current child protection policies and procedures. The manager holds the responsibility for Child Protection in the setting and has received suitable training in this field. This ensures children are sufficiently protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children actively participate in purposeful activities and clearly enjoy the harmonious atmosphere. They are making good progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners continue to develop their understanding of good quality childcare practice. With the constant support of management, the staff are learning how to provide stimulating activities to support children's care, learning and play. Staff provide positive role models for children and give sensitive support to all children. They demonstrate a genuine affection for children; they respect children's feelings, value their comments and clearly enjoy their company. Children are happy, settle quickly and relate well to other children and staff. Practitioners encourage and build children's vocabulary through constant praise and recognition. Staff adapt their questioning to reflect each child's stage of development. This helps them meet the

needs of all children. The stable staff team are suitably qualified and dedicated to the concept of quality childcare and education. They follow children to the activities which engage their interest and provide effective support to draw the learning from play. This promotes positive outcomes for children. However, staff do not yet use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for younger children. For example, babies and toddlers benefit from the introduction of 'treasure baskets' to encourage them to use their senses to explore natural and man-made objects which feel and sound different. Some staff do not yet understand what learning can be gained from such activities.

Babies are happy and settled because staff are welcoming and give them lots of cuddles and attention. They benefit from a very good relationship with the staff, which increases their well-being and sense of trust. Younger children happily play together, and are beginning to take turns, share and to talk to others. They experiment with crayons, pencils and chalk, and explore sand, paint and dough. The beginnings of 'heuristic play' are being introduced by staff who encourage children to explore and experiment with cardboard tubes. Children gesture towards the tape recorder, indicating their wish to have the 'Crazy Frog' music. They squeal with delight as they dance and jig to the sound, waving the tubes in the air. Staff join in the dance and demonstrate a real sense of fun with the children. The 'Rising 3's' room provides opportunities to develop imaginative play and concentration skills. Children sit on the floor with a member of staff to share a story and complete the jigsaw at the back of the book.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Practitioners have a reasonable knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Highly detailed plans provide an overall balance across all six areas of learning. Children access a broad range of well-planned, interesting activities. For example, children make their own books about 'Going into space', displayed with art work reflecting 'Travelling through space'. Children make their own 'treasure maps' for their own Treasure Island. Children are making steady progress towards the early learning goals. Staff work well as a team to prepare toys and equipment in advance and mostly achieve a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Planning is good, appropriately detailed to guide less confident staff and ensures a clear focus to secure and progress children's learning. However, the focus upon getting the planning right has led to neglect of the recording system. The observation based assessments are not regularly updated and the system does not currently support children's progress and learning. Planning is not based upon what children know and can do because the records cannot be used to inform the next steps in children's learning.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is well fostered. Children enjoy the activities on offer, and concentrate and persevere well to complete tasks. They often initiate their own activity, creating an imaginative game of driving off to the castle to attend a wedding, dressed in their beautiful gowns from the dressing up rail. The children fall out of the pretend car and the game continues in another form. Children willingly help to tidy up, assisting a staff member to carry a box of plastic animals. She reminds them to bend their knees when placing the box onto the storage unit and praises them for their helpfulness. Children demonstrate an

awareness of working together cooperatively. One child negotiates with a staff member, offering to wipe the table whilst suggesting that the staff member mops the floor.

Children's speaking and listening skills are developing well. They confidently make valuable contributions to whole group circle time and happily listen to each other as they recall the events from a child's party at the weekend. Staff ask questions which encourage children to think and introduce them to new jungle animals such as 'hummingbirds' and 'tree frogs'. However, times when the whole group sit together are rather lengthy and lack planning in terms of the availability of pictures and books to help children make connections. Younger and less able children begin to fidget and lose interest, and this distracts the others and limits learning for all. However, firmly consistent behaviour management techniques enable the staff to readily regain control. Children practise their early writing skills by tracing over adult scribe to name their work and recognise their names on coat pegs and meal time place labels. A 'library area' is imaginatively located under the eaves providing a lovely cosy arbour for children to enjoy books. However, the books are stacked in plastic boxes and not presented attractively for children, with the result that children do not use this area as intended. Most children can count to ten and enjoy a colour by numbers activity with the help of their own individual number line. Children calculate 'how many monkeys are left swinging through the trees', as they tease Mr Crocodile in the familiar rhyme.

Children build and construct and find out about the needs of living things as they help look after the nursery rabbits. However, children's knowledge and understanding of the world is not well supported by relevant resources. For example, a sand pit in the garden, a simple computer or programmable toys. Children have the opportunity to use a range of tools and equipment safely as well as run about, pedal bikes and climb on the climbing frame in the fresh air daily. The outside area is not yet used to its maximum potential to support learning in other areas of the curriculum. For example, children do not grow vegetables or flowers. The programme promotes children's creative development through a wide range of arts, crafts and messy play. However, staff do not yet achieve high standards of presentation of activities to make them inviting and to enable children to get the most out of the activities. Children have excellent opportunities to experiment freely with musical instruments and they thoroughly enjoy a familiar repertoire of action songs and rhymes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from the local ethnically diverse community are warmly welcomed and included in all activities. Children develop their understanding and appreciation of other cultures through activities that promote a greater awareness of the wider world. This enables the children to develop a positive attitude to others. Children who have particular requirements have their needs met well and individual education plans support their learning in this inclusive setting. Children are well-behaved in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. Staff suitably challenge any inappropriate behaviour with a firm, kindly approach supported by simple explanation. For example, a child who runs in the pre-school room is reminded that running

means that toys are trodden underfoot and that broken toys cannot be played with. However, the behaviour of a few children deteriorates because the lack of sufficient visual aids at the beginning of circle time means that teaching does not continue to hold their interest. Children take turns and show concern for others. This positive approach actively fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff develop warm partnerships with parents to support children's progress in learning. New information books, a regular newsletter and notice boards provide parents with information about the care and education of their children. The setting keeps a record of complaints and parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are complimentary about the level of service provided. Staff and parents share information about the children who receive nursery education. Parents are able to see their child's key worker and discuss their child's progress at any convenient time. A formal consultation evening is occasionally offered but parents seem to prefer informal methods of communication. This two-way sharing benefits the child and enhances their learning. This underpins their progress in the nursery and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Comprehensive and effective recruitment and induction procedures are in place. These ensure children are cared for by suitable staff who are appropriately vetted. The owner and her manager rigorously monitor the provision using their 'green pen approach', to ensure that their clear vision for the future development of the nursery is moving forward. The initial effort has been focussed upon the development of a confident staff team. Most staff hold appropriate qualifications and demonstrate growing confidence in their childcare practice. Much has been achieved since the nursery changed ownership and they are aware that much remains to be done as 'work in progress'. Therefore, the organisation safeguards and promotes children's care and welfare. The development plan has been updated and provides a clear focus on pertinent issues such as further training for staff, healthy eating education, the development of the quality of teaching and improving the system of monitoring and evaluating the setting.

Children in the nursery are cared for in a well-organised environment. Documentation has recently been reviewed and complies with the National Standards and associated regulations. Although these reflect the intended practice of the setting the staff team are not yet fully secure in their implementation of these procedures. This leads to occasional lapses in good practice which continue to potentially compromise the quality of care and education. Some room records are not yet maintained accurately. For example, fridge temperature charts are not always completed and staff do not always ensure that accident records are countersigned by a parent.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The staff's training needs have been identified and an in-house training programme is in place to

improve their confidence, knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. The staff are well-supported by management in the implementation of an effective programme of learning. Children are supported in their play and learning because of the on-going development of the organisation and the improving knowledge of the staff. For example, staff move around the nursery with the flow of play or children and ensure that a wide range of activities are available from which children may freely choose. Children's self-esteem is nurtured in this environment because the staff are consistent, kind and friendly. Taken overall, the needs of all children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of day care in June 2004, the setting was required to provide evidence that the time of children's arrival and departure is recorded, and ensure that parents sign when picking up their children. Room registers now record these details. Four further recommendations were made. The setting was asked to ensure that parental permission is in place for taking and displaying children's photographs. This permission is now sought from parents via the enrolment forms. The setting was asked to ensure that the baby changing facilities were re-located to a more appropriate location and the milk kitchen is made inaccessible to children. The setting has relocated the baby unit to a separate converted building within the nursery grounds and taken the recommendations on board through the design of the facility. The setting was asked to increase the range of toys and materials that promote equal opportunities. Posters reflect equal opportunities and toys and equipment are purchased as funds allow with equal opportunities values in mind. A recent overhaul of documentation has addressed the recommendation to review all policies and procedures regularly.

At the last inspection of funded nursery education in November 2004, 3 key issues were raised. These identified issues concerning the on-going monitoring of the curriculum, ensuring a balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities, and the availability of sufficient, appropriate resources to support the curriculum. Much development work is on-going at the nursery and these issues continue to be addressed through the long-term development plan.

Complaints since the last inspection

Ofsted received a complaint in July 2004 relating to standard 2 (organisation) and 2 actions relating to standard 2 were set. The issues were satisfactorily addressed by the setting. A complaint was raised in December 2005 relating to a number of issues at the nursery. A total of 9 actions were raised under standards 2,5,6,8, and 13. All the issues have been addressed through prompt action taken. A staff meeting was held on the 17/01/2006 when all the issues relating to the complaint were discussed. Reminder notices to staff have been put in place, policies and procedures have been revised and staff training has taken place.

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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 that those responsible for the preparation and handling of food are fully aware of, and comply with, regulations relating to food safety and hygiene in line with current environmental health guidelines
- ensure that babies and young children have access to daily fresh air and physical exercise
- provide some domestic style furniture to further assist babies in developing mobility and to continue normal life experiences. Develop the use of the garden area as a learning resource for all children
- improve the quality of the activities for babies and children under three-years-old, for example, through the use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework

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):

- improve the presentation of resources to make them more inviting for children (for example, this refers to the arrangement of books and to the provision of sufficient quantities of cornflour gloop to enable children to really enjoy the activity)
- ensure that whole group activities are sufficiently planned and prepared to engage and sustain the interest of all children, for example, through the increased use of books and visual aids
- ensure that observations of children's progress and attainment are regularly updated and use this information to determine the next steps in children's learning.

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