



Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY310695
Inspection date	26 January 2006
Inspector	Valerie Anne Curotto
Setting Address	Jubilee Centre, Savages Wood Road, Bradley Stoke, South Gloucestershire, BS32 8HL
Telephone number	01454 633309
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Registered person	LA Childcare Ltd
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

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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Pre-School operates from a community building in the centre of Bradley Stoke in South Gloucestershire. It opened in 1997 and moved to its present location in September 2002. It serves the local community and surrounding areas. Although the premises are shared with other organisations, the pre-school has self-contained accommodation when operating, including kitchen and toilet facilities. There is access to an enclosed, outdoor play area from the main play room. The group opens

every week day during term time. Sessions are from 09:00 to 11:40 hours and 12:20 to 15:00 hours. Children may bring a packed lunch and attend for extended sessions or a full day, within these hours.

There are 84 children on roll and up to 26 may attend each session. The setting receives funding for nursery education and there are currently 43 funded three-year-olds and 14 funded four-year-olds attending. The setting supports children with special needs and children who speak English as an additional language. A team of 10 part time staff and the 2 proprietors work with the children. Of these, only 2 staff do not hold an appropriate child care qualification and responsibility for leading sessions is shared. Parents provide additional support on a rota system. The setting receives support from the local authority and is affiliated to the Pre-school Learning Alliance. The pre-school is registered to care for up to 26 children aged 2 years to 5 years and takes children from 2 years six months. The setting is one of two pre-schools run by a private partnership. It received a new registration in June 2004, having become a limited company, under the existing management team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a range of indoor and outdoor activities which promotes their health and physical development. They enjoy movement to music in the hall; hopping like rabbits and paddling like ducks. Outside, they practice individual balancing skills on stilts and play ring games together as a large group. Children's individual health and dietary needs are promoted by the gathering of relevant details from parents. Information is shared well with parents to safeguard the health of all children, such as exclusion periods for sickness. The setting received a 'Healthy Pre-school' award in 2005 and continues to make children aware of healthy options, such as walking to the pre-school. Children enjoy fruit regularly at snack time and access drinking water independently. They learn to understand how their bodies work through interesting topic work, such as x-ray pictures. A range of written policies and procedures protect children's health by promoting hygiene routines, which are observed well by staff. Records are appropriately maintained of children's accidents and medication administered, to effectively share information with parents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The setting demonstrates a strong commitment to protect children, through a combination of written safety procedures and good practice by staff. Children are protected by thoughtful security arrangements. These include use of video-phone entry and a collection book, which are monitored effectively by staff. Children are cared for in a bright, attractive environment and a variety of equipment is organised well, before they arrive each day. This enables children to negotiate their way safely around activities on tables and floor mats. The room is cleared appropriately of

hazards when used for large group activities such as music and movement. Equipment, such as furniture and toilets are child-sized to enable children to use them safely and independently. Regular fire drills ensure children are familiar with evacuation procedures. Children are further safeguarded by staff awareness of first aid and child protection issues.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are familiar with the clear structure and routine which the setting provides and appear secure in their surroundings. They enjoy a good balance of free play, structured activities and large group time during each session. Children are generally well occupied, confidently choosing from the range of equipment put out by staff each day. They are happy and relate well to the adults involved in their activities. Children develop skills in completing puzzles and extend their vocabulary as staff offer good, spontaneous support at times, during free play. They enjoy singing in groups and predicting the outcome of familiar stories. Young children show concentration during key worker groups, although the context of these activities is not always meaningful to them. Older children play along side each other with cars and puppets and develop imaginative ideas together during role play in the home corner. Children are regularly involved in creating group displays or individual art work, during adult led craft activities. However they have limited opportunities for spontaneous creativity, combining a wide range of materials.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are familiar with the foundation stage curriculum and share responsibility for planning, which includes a specific, adult-led activity each day. Children benefit from a generally broad-based curriculum which provides a variety of themed activities and interest throughout the year. Curriculum planning incorporates the six areas of learning and some aspects are programmed well. Children develop a good understanding of the seasons and growth cycles through circle time and practical activities. There is a strong emphasis on colour, name and number recognition at circle time and pencil control during structured craft activities. However planning for other areas is less effective in providing regular opportunities to promote children's learning in aspects such as, calculating and problem solving, and to differentiate learning outcomes for children of different ages.

Children are assessed regularly through observations and key worker sessions. Their progress is monitored well in some areas as children develop pencil control using worksheets and confidence in particular tasks, such as singing. However, the format for children's assessments is limited and does not provide opportunities to record a wider range of children's communication skills and physical and creative development. This limits their effective use in guiding planning for individual children and small groups of children with similar needs. For example, tracking the development of a range of movement, such as climbing, scrambling and negotiating space. A keyworker system is used appropriately to provide an opportunity for

focussed, small group activities, at a set time each session. Children are encouraged to complete specific tasks, as staff offer age-appropriate support. However assessment tools and the range of ways used to support children's learning at these sessions are not extensive. As a result activities are not always effective in providing sufficient challenge for older children and encouraging children to make links in their own learning; for example, through independent investigation.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Settling in procedures are flexible to meet children's needs and they settle well as a result on arrival. Children are friendly and welcoming to new children, who benefit from one to one support if necessary, from staff. The special needs coordinator is familiar with her role and is able to access appropriate support for children to ensure their needs are identified. The setting places a strong emphasis on social skills and children learn to take turns and share with adult encouragement. However, opportunities for children to express and communicate individual ideas; for example, in craft activities and discussion, are not offered as consistently. Children behave well, are helpful and responsive to staff. They increase their awareness of their local community during visits to the setting from a librarian and school teacher. Their understanding of difference is supported by resources, such as books and in topic work about a variety of cultures. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are welcomed and their contribution to the setting is valued. An informative prospectus and regular newsletters, provide useful information about their children's care. Positive, informal relationships encourages the sharing of information about children's development. Resources, such as books and matching games are loaned to parents which support their children's learning. Information on children's progress is shared formally each term and parent's evenings provide an opportunity for discussion with the key worker.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from high staff ratios which provide them with a secure and warm environment. An effective rota system ensures variation of equipment from the wide range available, to provide interest for children. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures effectively supports children's health and safety. There is a robust system for the recruitment and vetting of staff to ensure children are protected. Record keeping is generally well organised and appropriate records maintained which support children's care.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. An ongoing commitment to staff training and support ensures that staff continue to develop skills to benefit children. The management team share common goals and there is a strong team ethos. Staff share the responsibility for curriculum planning and the day to day running of

sessions, which they discuss at regular team meetings. However an effective system to monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education, particularly the use of assessments in planning a balanced curriculum, is not yet in place. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration in June 2005. The provision 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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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- increase opportunities for children to express and communicate their own ideas; for example, in craft activities and group discussions

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):

- extend the range of assessment tools and ways in which children's learning is supported, to increase challenge and interest for different age groups
- develop the scope and use of children's assessments to impact more effectively on planning.

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