



Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509573
Inspection date	26 June 2006
Inspector	Lilyanne Taylor
Setting Address	St John's Room, 19 St John's Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hampshire, SO30 4AF
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Registered person	Kevin Crowley
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Day Nursery opened in 1997. It operates from three rooms on two floors of a converted Parish Hall. The nursery is privately owned and located near to the town centre of Hedge End, Southampton.

A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year, closing only for the

week of Christmas. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently there are 73 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, 17 children receive funding for early education. The nursery employs 15 members of staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications and 2 are working towards a qualification. The nursery receive support visits from the Pre-school Learning Alliance development worker and the local authority early years advisory teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health and dietary needs are met, because staff work well with parents. They respect parents' preferences and maintain records of children's individual needs. Children are provided with healthy and nutritious meals and snacks; they consist of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry and pasta. Children are protected from the spread of illness through the clear policies in place regarding the attendance of sick children. Those children, who become sick whilst attending the nursery, are cared for sensitively until their parents arrive. Although children are developing an awareness of good personal hygiene practices through everyday routines, such as washing hands prior to snack and meal times and after toileting, children that are cared for in the toddler room are not fully protected from germs. They wash their hands then play on the floor while they wait for their snacks to be served. Babies' individual sleeping and feeding routines are met. Sleeping children are monitored and all bedding is kept unique to each child and laundered on a daily basis. Equipment such as babies' high chairs and feeding utensils are sterilised after use. However, toys such as teething rings and hand held rattles are not, which means babies are not fully protected from the spread of germs and infection. Children develop a positive attitude towards physical exercise. They benefit from outside play at regular intervals throughout the day which helps develop their physical skills. They show a good sense of space and move around the various activities with confidence. They competently use a range of equipment and show good co-ordination and balancing skills. For example while using the climbing equipment and when stepping from one stepping stone log to another.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean, satisfactorily maintained environment, which is effectively organised to enable them to move around safely. Children access available resources independently from trays and boxes, which are stored at child height. All toys and equipment are appropriate for the age range of children and maintained in a satisfactory condition. The premises are kept secure and systems in place ensure only authorised persons gain entry. Effective arrangements for the collection and non-collection of children contribute to ensuring the children's safety.

Although records of children and staff's attendance are maintained to show who is present within each base room they are not updated throughout the session to reflect when children have moved from one base room to another. Consequently, it is not clear to see how many children are being cared for at anyone time in the various areas of the nursery. Daily risk assessments are carried out both inside and outside the premises, which ensures risks to children are minimised. Procedures for evacuating the premises in the event of an emergency ensure all children can exit safely. Children are protected from possible abuse or neglect. Staff have a good understanding of the procedures they are required to follow with any concerns they may have. They are fully aware of the types of abuse and the signs to look for and a record of injuries children come in with is maintained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children settle quickly on arrival, as they are met at the door by staff. They are encouraged to hang up their coats and bags, increasing their independence, while staff and parents ensure younger children are assisted as necessary. Children are happy and they laugh and giggle throughout the activities; for example when they play with corn flour which has been mixed with water and bang on a drum to create the noise rain makes when it is pouring down. Children have a good relationship with staff and like to share conversations with them. Most children feel secure; they each have a member of staff who is their key worker. Staff working with children under 3 plan activities using the Birth to three framework. They use suggested ideas and link these to the children's observations, to ensure experiences are appropriate for them and help them make progress. Children make friendships with other children and play well alongside one another. Most of the time younger children in the pre-school department are interested and fully involved in a range of self chosen activities. However, because routine activities such as story and singing time are carried out with all pre-school children in a large group the needs of younger children are not always met and they become bored and restless.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

Most staff that regularly work with the children funded for nursery education have an insecure knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones of the Foundation stage and how children learn and develop. Although the curriculum is well balanced and covers all areas of learning, the delivery of the curriculum is inconsistent among staff, due to their varying degrees of training, experience and confidence. As a result not all children are appropriately challenged or supported to gain the most learning experiences from activities they engage in. Activities are not always delivered well or evaluated effectively. Staff are not always fully aware of their purpose and although planning sheets indicate the learning objectives for some activities have been met by the children, it is not always clear to see how they have been achieved through the activities provided.

Most of the time staff have low expectations of most children because they are

unsure of the activities learning potential. Very little use is made of routines and children's self chosen play to extend children's learning because staff lack an understanding of the stepping stones and how they can use these to promote children's learning across all aspects of the session. Consequently, opportunities to develop and extend children's learning are often missed. Most of the time because younger children are grouped with the older children staff are supervising an activity and not teaching. This lack of interaction is inhibiting the progress children are making in most areas of their learning.

Most children independently put on their own coats for outdoor play and require minimal assistance from staff when pouring their own drinks.

Children have some opportunities to recognise letters; however, early reading is rarely promoted. Some more able children are beginning to write their own name with some letters correctly formed. However, children have limited opportunities to practice or develop their writing skills; they are not regularly encouraged to write their own name on their own work.

Some children are becoming confident communicators and enjoy sharing their experiences with others. For example, they talk about their home and other members of their family. Although children enjoy having stories read the organisation of story time does not always ensure they are able to concentrate, sustain their interest or gain the most learning from them. Children's vocabulary is not extended because staff are not always able to explain the meaning of new words they introduce to children.

Although children have some opportunities to count throughout a session, for example during stories or song time they are not consistently supported to gain an understanding of all aspects of mathematics; very little use is made of routines, incidental opportunities and children's self chosen play to extend their understanding of mathematical concepts.

Children have some opportunities to discuss the world in which they live. For example, while outdoors they look at the clouds and predict what the weather might be if they see a grey cloud or a white one, they then discuss the type of clothing they may need to wear if it is hot, cold or wet and how when it rains and it is cold this falls as snow.

Children have some opportunities to dance and move their bodies to musical movement activities.

Children enthusiastically volunteer to sing their favourite songs to others. However, because staff are not always fully aware of what is going on around them they talk over children while they are singing. This undermines children's efforts and lowers their self esteem.

Although, children benefit from being able to make their own decisions about the activities they engage in, the structure of the session, use of space, and deployment of staff does not always ensure they receive sufficient challenges consistently across the session.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery has effective systems in place to ensure all children and parents are welcomed into the provision, supported and their home language recognised and valued. Children learn about the diverse world around them through some of the activities and resources available. There are systems in place to draw up individual learning plans for children with learning difficulties or disabilities, although staff have not identified any children who need these.

Older children enjoy having responsibilities. They are encouraged to help tidy away resources and sometimes help to get the cups ready for drinks and lay the table ready for dinner. Staff are effective in the way in which they manage children's behaviour helping them to think about their actions, and how this might affect other people. Consequently, children gain a good understanding of what is right and wrong, which impacts on their behaviour and the relationships they build with one another. Children play well together, learn how to share and take turns and are beginning to accept the needs of others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory

Children benefit from the effective relationship staff build with their parents. Parents receive good information about the nursery and some information of the Foundation Stage in the form of a prospectus, newsletters and a well stocked information board at the entrance to the nursery. Good settling in procedures are offered to all children; they are able to attend pre-visits with their parents prior to attending. This provides them with the opportunity to become familiar with the staff and the surroundings in which they will be cared for. Parents have the opportunity to discuss any specific care arrangements or individual needs their children may have. As a result, children are provided with appropriate, continuous care. Information is exchanged daily regarding the care that has been provided for babies, toddlers and most children under the age of 3. A daily diary

exchanged contains details of care provided, food intake, nappy changes, sleeps and activities children have engaged in. Weekly plans of activities children are to engage in are displayed on the notice board. However, the plans of activities displayed for children in receipt of nursery education do not always identify the correct learning objective that is to be worked towards achieving based on the stepping stones. Consequently, some information parents have access to of the learning their child is gaining is not accurate. Parents are able to look at their child's written progress records at any time. In addition to this they are invited into the setting to discuss their child's progress records formally and to engage in some of the activities their children take part in. This raises parent's awareness of the enjoyment and learning their children gain from some of the activities they engage in while they are in the care of the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

All staff are suitably vetted for the roles they hold. They are made aware of the responsibility they have to inform management of any changes to their circumstances which may affect their suitability and eligibility to work with children at the time of their induction. This along with systems management has in place ensure all staff working with children are suitable to do so.

Staff that hold supervisory positions are qualified to NVQ level 3 in early years. The correct adult to child ratio is maintained at all times and there are effective systems in place to cover staff absenteeism and emergency situations.

Most policies and procedures the nursery work to are effectively put into practice which means the health, safety and well-being of most children is promoted satisfactorily.

The organisation of space provides children with the opportunity to experience and engage in wide range of activities. However, the grouping of children and the deployment of staff and the negative impact this has on children's individual learning has not been fully recognised. Consequently, although children are happy and engaged in their play, they do not always receive appropriate support or sufficient challenges across all aspects of the session.

All documentation is in place as required. However, because children's records of attendance are not always maintained in sufficient detail, children's safety is compromised. Staff are aware information they hold about children is confidential so they keep it safe.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is inadequate.

While it is acknowledged that management are receptive to ways in which the nursery provision may be improved and that they have shown a positive attitude, and taken appropriate steps to significantly improve the organisation and some aspects of the monitoring of the provision since their last inspection, recent changes to the staff team within the pre-school department is having a significant impact on the learning and progress children are making. Staff work together as a team. However, most are inexperienced and have little knowledge of how to plan and deliver a curriculum based on the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage. Management do not ensure staff have a sufficient knowledge of the curriculum guidance to help all children achieve well. As a result children are not always appropriately supported, challenged or helped to make progress in their next steps of learning. Although management is aware there are some weaknesses within the provision not all areas of weakness have been identified or appropriately addressed. The proprietor of the provision is responsible for ensuring the nursery education children are provided with is of an acceptable standard. The task for monitoring the nursery education is delegated to two managers. However, because their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined the monitoring of the nursery education children are being provided with is not being carried out effectively. This is having a negative impact on the learning children gain and the progress they are making. The nursery does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

Improvements since the last inspection

Care inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery were asked to ensure children are consistently taught good hygiene practice, that cleaning of toy provision adequately protects children's health and to ensure all existing injuries are recorded.

Procedures now in place ensure all children are becoming aware of good hygiene practices; they wash their hands prior to snack and mealtimes and after toileting. Most of the toy provision is cleaned on a regular basis which means most children's health is protected. A record of pre-existing injuries children may come in with is maintained. This ensures children's welfare is protected.

Nursery Education

At the last nursery education inspection the quality and standard of nursery education was judged to be Inadequate.

The nursery were asked to take the following action. Ensure the provision for nursery education is effectively monitored.

In response to this key issue, the nursery sought external advice and support and submitted to Ofsted within the given timescale a very comprehensive and detailed action plan. This outlined the action the nursery were going to take to monitor and improve the aspects of the nursery education that were identified as being contributory factors to the inadequate judgement. This included improving the organisation of resources and equipment to ensure they were at the correct height for children, labelling resources, equipment and areas of the provision with words and pictures, offering a well resourced role play area that included opportunities for children to write independently, use spontaneous opportunities in daily routines and play to introduce children to mathematical vocabulary and simple mathematical concepts, amend daily routines to ensure opportunities were provided for sustained play, discussion and conversation in small and large groups, monitor differentiation in planning, ensuring all staff are completing planned and spontaneous observations, regularly completing assessments of children and using these to plan for children's next steps, monitor use of space, plan for outdoor activities, allowing opportunities across all areas of learning and to identify staff roles on planning and to monitor staff deployment ensuring support for children where necessary.

The positive steps the nursery has taken in putting in place and monitoring some of their action plan has significantly improved the learning environment for children. However, recent changes within the staffing of the pre-school department has hi-lighted that not all aspects of the nursery education provided for children is being monitored effectively. Consequently, this is having a negative impact on the learning and progress children are making and remains to be a key issue for improvement at this inspection.

Children are able to access resources and equipment independently and they have many opportunities to see written words. For example, through labelled resources,

equipment and wall displays. A role play area is in situ for children's use at all times with some materials provided so that children can independently write. For example when the role play area is a shop children are encouraged to write their own shopping lists. Space is organised well so that children are provided with opportunities for quiet or energetic play. Children have regular opportunities to play outdoors; activities they partake in cover all areas of their learning.

Children's mathematical development is hindered because staff do not capitalise on the use of daily routines and play to introduce children to simple mathematical concepts. Daily routines are not organised well. Consequently, children have few opportunities to play, discuss and converse in small groups. Staff's lack of confidence and knowledge and understanding of the Foundation stage is having a negative impact on the progress children are making. Written plans are not adequately monitored to ensure the intended learning objectives can actually be achieved through the activities provided. As a result of this, it is not always clear to see the actual learning children have gained or whether they are being appropriately supported to make progress in their next steps of learning through some of the activities they engage in.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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.

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.

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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 good hygiene practices and procedures are put in place for children aged under three so they are fully protected from the spread of germs and infection.

- ensure records of children's attendance are updated throughout a session so it is clear to see the areas of the nursery children are being cared for in at any one time.
- ensure the grouping of children for activities in the pre-school department is appropriate for meeting the needs of all children

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop staff's knowledge of the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage so children are provided with a well presented curriculum which meets their learning needs.
- improve the grouping of children and deployment of staff to ensure the learning needs of all children are met and they are supported to gain the most learning and enjoyment from the activities they engage in
- further develop systems for monitoring the nursery education provided to ensure pre-school staff are supported to improve practice and deliver the curriculum effectively.

These actions are set out in a ***notice of action to improve*** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk