



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 226232

DfES Number: 585523

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 15/06/2004
Inspector Name Kerry Durkin

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Little Acorns Pre-School - Oakthorpe
Setting Address Oakthorpe Primary School
School Street, Oakthorpe
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE12 7RE

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Little Acorns Pre-School 1034655

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Little Acorns Pre-School
Address Oakthorpe Primary School
School Street, Oakthorpe
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE12 7RE

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Little Acorns Playgroup opened in 1998. It operates from a portacabin in the grounds of Oakthorpe Primary School in the rural village of Oakthorpe in Derbyshire. The group serves the local community.

There are currently 37 children on roll aged two to five years. This includes fourteen funded three-year-olds and seven funded four-year-olds. There are no children who attend with special educational needs and no children for whom English is an additional language.

The group opens five mornings a week during school term time. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:30. Children attend a variety of sessions.

Three full-time staff work directly with the children. One member of staff has an early years qualification to NVQ level 3 and the other two staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher/ mentor from the Leicestershire Early Years' Development and Childcare Partnership.

How good is the Day Care?

Little Acorns Playgroup provides good quality care for children.

The staff work well as a team and have good opportunities for development. They regularly take part in training programmes such as special needs and equal opportunities. There are clear policies and procedures in place which underpin the effective organisation of the group although one procedure lacks some necessary detail. The playgroup offers a warm and welcoming atmosphere and the layout of the room provides a comfortable, secure and well-structured environment for children to engage in different types of activities and to make independent choices and decisions.

Staff are vigilant about children's safety and there are good procedures in place

however the risk assessment has yet to be fully effective in practice. Children are involved in good hygiene routines and staff actively encourage children to learn about this in the daily routines. Staff have a good understanding regarding child protection issues which is supported by a well written policy.

A broad and well-presented range of activities helps support children's development and learning. Staff encourage and support children's purposeful play, helping them to extend their language and thinking. A calm and orderly environment and staff's positive relationships with children helps to develop children's cooperation and self esteem.

The playgroup have positive relationships with parents and carers. Written records, policies and procedures and daily discussions contribute to ensuring children are cared for according to parents wishes and to ensure they are well informed about the provision and their child's care and development.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the playgroup were asked to complete a number of actions. One member of staff is now suitably qualified and the other two staff are working towards a recognised childcare qualification ensuring that staff have appropriate training and skills to work with children. Policies for child protection and behaviour are now in place and available to parents ensuring consistent and correct procedures are followed. Written records of volunteers and helpers and a visitors book has been introduced ensuring that all details are recorded appropriately. Parents are given full access to policies and procedures and there are regular systems in place to share individual records with parents to ensure they are well informed about their child and the provision. Written consent for medication is now in place to raise awareness for parents. The temperature of the water in the toilet area has now been addressed ensuring that children may wash their hands safely and drinking water is available at all sessions. Fire drills are now recorded and procedures displayed ensuring safe practice in an emergency. There is an operational plan in place which includes all the necessary information regarding the provision.

What is being done well?

- The premises are warm and welcoming. Good resources are well presented and children are able to access equipment and toys independently
- A varied range of practical and purposeful play activities helps children to build on their natural curiosity and develop their skills for language, thinking and imagination
- Staff's positive relationships with children help to build children's confidence and self esteem and encourage good behaviour.

What needs to be improved?

- the register to ensure the arrival and departure times are recorded for staff and children
- the risk assessment to ensure it works in practice and is regularly monitored and reviewed.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
2	ensure the register records the arrival and departure times of children and staff on the premises
6	update and regularly review the risk assessment on the premises to ensure it is effective and works in practice

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Little Acorns Pre-School provides good quality nursery education overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals with some very good progress being made in communication and language skills and knowledge and understanding of the world.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Activities and experiences provided for the children, such as the dinosaur project, are carefully planned with staff using their sound knowledge of the stepping stones. Systems for planning and assessing children's progress are generally effective, staff are flexible and like to build on children's current interests. However, the next steps identified for children's learning are not always used in plans and not all aspects of the stepping stones are covered consistently. Staff use suitable methods such as small groups to teach children, but do not always challenge older four-year-olds sufficiently in some areas. Behaviour is managed effectively with staff being consistent. Innovative use is made of the available resources, particularly from the school to support and enhance children's learning.

Leadership and management is generally good. The manager and staff team work well together using individual skills and interests to good effect. However, the management committee is less actively involved in the day to day running of the setting. A plan exists giving a clear focus for future direction drawn from informally identified strengths and weaknesses. Less emphasis is placed on evaluating educational provision but staff have continued to implement improvements from previous inspections.

Partnerships with parents are generally good. Staff enjoy good relationships with parents, ensuring that information about children's progress is passed on. However they are less well informed about the curriculum or the progress children are making towards the early learning goals. Opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning are few.

What is being done well?

- Children are developing good skills in communication, they speak confidently in a group and enjoy drawing with some older children beginning to form recognisable letters.
- Good opportunities exist for children to explore the natural world through growing things such as spider plants.
- Relationships between staff and children are close. Children are also developing close and warm relationships with each other.
- The staff team work closely together using each others individual strengths to good effect.

What needs to be improved?

- planning which is clearly linked to the assessment of children's progress, covering the clusters consistently and which offers sufficient challenge to four-year-olds
- involvement of parents in their children's learning and sharing of their progress towards the early learning goals
- involvement of the management committee in the running of the setting and the evaluating of the educational provision.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last Nursery Education Inspection in 1999 the setting was asked to improve the mathematical programme offered to the children, particularly, opportunities to problem solve and to add and subtract.

Since the last inspection the setting has made generally good improvements to their mathematical programme. Children now have many effective opportunities to count and use number as well as solving problems with shapes and size, however, there continues to be fewer opportunities for older children to learn about simple calculating such as adding and taking away.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children happily leave their carer, eagerly getting involved in activities. They are keen to join in and stay for long periods at activities which interest them. They share warm and close relationships with staff and each other with four-year-olds often offering to help three-year-olds. Children behave really well and are developing a good sense of belonging. While most three-year-olds tackle tasks for themselves, four-year-olds are less experienced at acting independently.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Most three-year-olds speak confidently using sentences while four-year-olds have a growing vocabulary and explanations. Children listen well to stories and instructions and enjoy using the book corner, handling books carefully. They enjoy playing with sounds, many older children have a good understanding of the initial sounds of letters. Children enjoy drawing and are beginning to write recognisable letters. Some older children understand the use of writing for different purposes.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children count with confidence well beyond ten and enjoy rhymes which use numbers such as the rocket rhyme. The four-year-olds use numbers in their play and recognise when they have the same number of objects. Knowledge and use of common shapes is good. The exploration of size such as comparing long and short dinosaur tails is effective. While most children enjoy simple problem solving, working out where to fit puzzle pieces, four-year-olds are less experienced at adding and taking away.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children participate in well thought activities such as creating a dinosaur landscape, which really foster their curiosity in how things work. They display excellent skills in joining materials purposefully to make mountains and dinosaurs. They use technology well to support their learning such as using a digital camera. Children are developing an understanding of time and have a lively interest in the world around them especially natural things. Their knowledge of other cultures is growing.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children move around the setting really well, their large body skills are well developed, particularly in climbing. They are adept at getting around the room avoiding obstacles and each other, finding spaces to sit easily. Children display good hand movements using tools and pencils competently and safely. The three-year-olds take care of their own personal needs well, although, four-year-olds have less understanding of healthy practices and the effects of exercise.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children have a good knowledge of colour and texture enjoying creating their own art work in both two and three dimensions. They have a growing repertoire of songs and rhymes, although they are less experienced with music and recreating rhythm. Children's imaginative skills are good, the four-year-olds are beginning to involve others in their play in simple scenarios. While children are interested in using their senses they are less experienced in using them to explore their environment.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- develop partnerships with parents which inform them about the curriculum and what children are learning. Ensure that parents are well informed about and can contribute to assessments of their children's progress and are actively involved in their children's learning
- ensure that the management committee are actively involved in the management of the setting and that the setting effectively evaluates its educational provision
- develop the planning and assessment of children's progress to ensure that targets for children's learning are clearly reflected in the plans. Ensure that all aspects of the stepping stones are evenly and regularly covered to ensure that children's learning is embedded and that four-year-olds are sufficiently challenged in all areas.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.