



Office for Standards  
in Education

## COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 310440

DfES Number: 584135

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 18/05/2004  
Inspector Name Linda McLarty

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care  
Setting Name Little Acorns  
Setting Address Summer Hill School  
Poverty Lane, Maghull  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L31 3DJ

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name

### ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Lesley Briscoe and Jane Weir  
Address Little Acorns Private Day Nursery  
Poverty Lane  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L31 3DT

## 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 Day Nursery opened in 2000. It operates a classroom attached to Summerhill Primary School, Maghull, in a semi-rural location. The nursery serves the local area.

There are currently 56 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 25 funded three year olds and 18 funded four year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting can support children with special needs and children who speak English as an additional language, although all children attending at the time of the inspection had English as their first language.

The group opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 8.00 a.m. until 18.00 p.m.

Two part time and six full time staff work with the children. Six staff have early years qualifications. Two staff are currently on training programmes. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare partnership (EYDCP.)

### How good is the Day Care?

Little Acorns provides satisfactory care in a caring and stimulating environment. The setting is well organized with most necessary documentation in place to support the National Standards, and these are revised as necessary to reflect current legislation. Staff are encouraged to access training to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in early years issues, with beneficial effects upon the care, learning and play experiences provided for children.

Children enjoy a range of activities and have access to a good selection of resources to support every area of their development. The activities include a planned activity each session, and this is balanced well with opportunities for children to select their own play and learning experiences from the equipment prepared by staff each day. Staff are working towards using the outdoor area as an

extension of the nursery room. There is a core team of qualified and experienced staff, supplemented by trainees, and the setting also accepts students and work experience pupils. This sometimes means that the quality of adult interaction with the children is uneven, as not all adults have a good understanding of how to support the care learning and play needs of children.

Most health and safety issues are in place, although the arrangements to secure written parental consent to administer medications are not consistently applied, and the storage arrangements for children's food and crockery are under review. Staff are still working towards consistently good practice regarding hand washing and sharing of food.

The partnership with parents and carers is fostered well, with information about nursery life exchanged frequently through newsletters, informal chats and detailed brochures. Parents appreciate the friendly and approachable staff, and the daily written information about activities that children have enjoyed.

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The setting has made good progress in addressing the actions from the previous inspection, in which they were required to ensure that there are operational procedures for the safe conduct of outings, maintain an accurate record, signed by parents, of all accidents, and include the name, address and telephone number of the regulator in the written complaints procedure. These actions have been addressed in full, with beneficial effects upon the quality of care offered.

#### **What is being done well?**

- Staff are caring and supportive to children, and create a stimulating environment where children develop through play using a good selection of interesting resources.
- The documentation is reviewed regularly and revised in line with current legislation; for example, the Special Educational Needs statement is successfully focussed upon the revised Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Children with Special Educational Needs.
- Children have access to some attractive resources which reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity and gender.
- Staff value parents' comments, and make them feel welcome in the setting, and use various methods such as newsletters and daily diaries to inform parents about what is happening in the nursery.

#### **What needs to be improved?**

- the way staff hours of attendance are recorded so that records are updated daily
- the arrangements for rinsing and storing children's crockery

- the arrangements for ensuring that toys and equipment including the refrigerator are kept clean and safe
- the arrangements to ensure that all adults preparing food are fully aware of, and comply with, regulations relating to food safety and hygiene
- the arrangements to ensure that children playing outside are protected from the sun
- the wording on the current sick children policy so that it informs parents of the nursery's policy on exclusion
- the current arrangements whereby children share food brought from home amongst the whole group.

### Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

### 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
4	Review arrangements for the cleaning of kitchen cupboards and the refrigerator, and the arrangements for rinsing and storing crockery.
5	Ensure that toys and equipment are clean, well maintained and safe.
6	Check with the Fire Safety Officer whether you need to have a Fire Safety blanket in the kitchen area.
7	Revise the wording on your policy regarding sick children so that parents are informed about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious.
7	Ensure that anyone responsible for the preparation and handling of food is aware of, and complies with, Environmental Health requirements.
7	Ensure good hygiene practices are in place regarding hand washing.
7	Obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children.
8	Review the current system of sharing food bought into the nursery by children from home with the whole group, in order to reduce the amount

	of processed food eaten each day, and to ensure that parents are correctly informed of the daily diet.
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## INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

### How effective is the nursery education?

Little Acorns offers good quality nursery education where children enjoy learning through a wide range of interesting activities, and make generally good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Children behave generally well for courteous staff, who show their enjoyment in ways which enhance children's confidence.

The quality of teaching is generally good, but some less experienced staff are yet to develop sensitive questioning skills, and the ability to recognise when children need further support to extend their learning, and the skill to bring out the full learning opportunities of activities offered. This affects the children's learning in all areas. Most staff have a sound knowledge of the foundation stage, and of how young children learn, and plan one adult led activity each session, working through the whole range of stepping-stones towards the early learning goals. The rest of the time, children freely choose from a range of activities prepared each day, and the routine runs smoothly. Assessment is based upon the stepping-stones, but although this information is passed on to the subsequent school, it is not shared with parents who receive limited information about the children's progress towards the early learning goals.

Leadership and management are generally good. There is a strong commitment to ongoing staff development, and a well-structured system of appraisal. Most staff have a shared understanding of good early years practice. The leadership is trying hard to develop an effective staff team but have yet to fully address identified weaknesses.

The partnership with parents and carers is generally good. Parents are well informed about the educational programme, and appreciate the daily diaries that describe the activities enjoyed by their children, but although staff inform parents of areas needing further support, they do not give sufficient detail of the children's achievement and progress towards the goals.

### What is being done well?

- Staff are consistently kind to children, and build children's confidence and self esteem by the appropriate use of praise to reward effort and achievement.
- Children have daily opportunities to use a range of computer programmes to support their learning especially in language and mathematical development.
- Children are developing high levels of personal independence as they chose activities to initiate their own learning, help tidy up, use the toilet independently, and dress themselves for role play and outdoor play.
- The children enjoy a good selection of activities, across all areas of learning,

including some imaginative art and craft activities.

- Frequent storytelling sessions are helping children to develop a love of reading, and they can recognise their own names, and some older and more able children can write their own names on their work.

### **What needs to be improved?**

- the way new words are explained or reinforced, and the way some staff use incorrect speech
- the way some staff do not model a curious attitude to learning and do not use open-ended questions to help children think about why things happen and how things work, and the opportunities provided to help children to investigate objects, living things, interesting artefacts or materials using all of their senses
- the way staff support tactile activities such as sand or water play, to bring out the learning opportunities, such as simple science and mathematics
- the ratio of less experienced adults to the core staff team, so that children receive consistency of support in their learning, especially during the child selected activities and so that all adults in the room are aware of the learning intentions, and how to help children learn in both planned and spontaneous activities
- the way some whole group activities are organised, to ensure that staff keep the attention of all children, and the way some unwanted behaviours go unnoticed and therefore unchallenged
- the way assessments are used to inform parents and carers of their children's achievements and progress towards the early learning goals.

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

Although the management did not own the setting at the time of the last inspection, they have improved the provision to such an extent that the previous key issues have been addressed generally well, and are no longer weaknesses. There are now sufficient multi-cultural resources, equipment and toys to raise the children's awareness of living in a multicultural society. The children now have access to more small physical play equipment such as balls, quoits and bats, and more opportunities to develop balancing skills.

Staff have developed the assessment records so that they fully encompass all six areas of learning. Parents are given more opportunities to contribute to their children's assessments by sharing observations of their children's learning at home in a parents' assessment profile, and staff work hard to foster strong home nursery links, and are friendly and approachable to all parents. Parents have an opportunity to attend an open event where they can formally discuss their children's attainment, learning and progress, although at present this is more of an open evening to show parents what activities their children do. The management has introduced a formal

staff appraisal system.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Most staff develop and support children's skills, knowledge and self-confidence well, which form positive attitudes for their future learning. The mainly child-selected activities are helping children become very independent. Some less experienced staff do not help children to talk about their needs views and feelings, and those of others. Children are learning about sharing and taking turns, although some unwanted behaviour goes unnoticed and unchallenged.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

The children enjoy stories, songs, rhymes and role-play and are learning to practice simple mark making in their play. They are learning to recognize their names and some simple words. Staff do not always explain or reinforce new vocabulary, and some staff do not consistently model correct speech. As less experienced staff are still learning how to question sensitively, this affects how they help children to use language to think through activities, or express their thoughts.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are learning to count and recognize numerals. Staff plan games and activities to help children practice simple addition and subtraction, pattern making, and to learn the language of position and the names of shapes. However, staff do not always support the child selected activities such as sand and water play or construction sufficiently to draw out the learning opportunities of solving simple problems involving space, measure and capacity.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children have frequent access to the computer and a large selection of helpful programs which support their learning in many areas. Daily conversations in circle time are helping them develop a strong sense of time. Not all staff help children to develop a curious attitude to learning or ask open-ended questions about why things happen or how things work. Children have few opportunities to investigate objects, living things, interesting artefacts or materials using all of their senses.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Generally Good

Children benefit from daily opportunities for outdoor play using mobile toys which offer varying degrees of challenge, and is helping children develop control and co-ordination, and to be aware of the space needs of themselves and others and use large and small equipment. Although "health and bodily awareness" is planned for, staff sometimes miss practical opportunities to help children understand about changes to their body when active, or health issues such as washing hands before snack time.

### **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Generally Good

Children experience a range of interesting materials and techniques, and enjoy regular story and singing times. Some less experienced staff do not encourage children's to discuss their responses, or ask open-ended questions to extend the learning opportunities or use of imagination in role-play, small world play and tactile play such as sand and water. The range of percussion instruments, and the resources in the role-play area are quite restricted and limits the children's imagination.

**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**

- Ensure that all staff are able to use the full range of activities and daily routines to develop and consolidate children's learning in all areas, and improve staff questioning skills and knowledge of how young children learn through appropriately supported practical activities.
- Improve the ratios between experienced and less experienced staff, so that children receive more consistent support throughout the educational programme, especially during child selected activities.
- Improve the way some whole group activities are organised, to ensure that they keep the attention of all children,
- Improve the way assessments are used to inform parents and carers of their children's achievements and progress towards the early learning goals.

*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.*