



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN EY103722

DfES Number: 538132

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 23/09/2004
Inspector Name Noreen Elizabeth Appleby

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care
Setting Name Little Acorns (North East) Ltd.,
Setting Address 216-218 Park Road
South Moor
Stanley
Co Durham
DH9 7AN

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Mr John Owens

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 (North East) Limited, Stanley opened in 2001. It operates from two storey premises in South Moor, approximately one mile from Stanley town centre. The group mainly serves the needs of families from the local geographical area.

The facility is registered for 99 children aged from birth to under eight years. There are presently 42 children on roll, including 13 funded three-year-olds and 1 funded four-year-old. On the day of this inspection there are 23 children present, including 13 funded three-year-olds and 1 funded four-year-old. Children usually attend regular sessions. The setting does not currently support any children who have special educational needs, nor any children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens Monday to Friday, throughout the year, excluding public holidays. It provides Full Day Care sessions between 07:30 and 18:00 from Monday to Thursday and 07:30 and 17:30 on Fridays; Sessional Day Care sessions from 08:45 and 11:15 and from 12:30 to 15:00 and Out of School sessions from 07:30 to 09:00 and from 15:00 to 18:00.

Five full-time and four part-time regular members of staff work with the children. Of these, five already hold a recognised NVQ level three, or equivalent, child care qualification. Other staff are working towards relevant qualifications. One holds an NVQ level two qualification and one has completed a Playwork certificate; both are due to start fast-track courses in the near future.

The setting receives support from a link-teacher from SureStart, County Durham.

How good is the Day Care?

Little Acorns (North East) Limited, Stanley provides good quality care for children. There are sound recruitment, vetting and induction procedures in place to ensure staff are suitable for their individual roles. Comprehensive recording systems have been set up and are maintained in line with the requirements of the 'National

Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding.'

Premises are bright and welcoming. Most rooms are comfortably warm. Child care areas are well set out to provide an attractive, child-friendly environment. Notice boards are effectively used to share information with parents. There are regular routines in place and good operational procedures ensure children are well cared for.

Adequate health, safety and hygiene standards are maintained throughout. Staff take steps to keep children safe indoors, out of doors and on outings. Relevant good practice is promoted with children i.e. tidying up, hand washing and personal hygiene. Most issues are well addressed, but present arrangements do not always ensure children's privacy. Children receive regular drinks and a good variety of nutritious meals and snacks suited to their dietary needs. Relevant staff hold food handling and hygiene certificates.

In all child-care rooms staff plan and provide a broad range of interesting play and learning opportunities, suitable for children's individual ages and stages of development. Play areas are well set out to promote 'free choice' and independence. Children have good opportunities to play individually or take part in group activities, as well as having times for quiet activities and rests. Staff interact positively with the children, providing advice, encouragement and praise.

Partnership with parents is very good. Staff work closely with them sharing information regularly to ensure that children's individual needs are continually well met. Comments from parents indicate that they are very happy with the quality of care provided.

What has improved since the last inspection?

not applicable

What is being done well?

- All childcare rooms are very well-equipped and staff, in all areas, provide a good range of interesting and enjoyable activities that help children gain new skills across all areas of their development. Children respond well to positive staff interaction, encouragement and praise.
- Staff show strong commitment to training and personal development. Most hold, or are working towards, formal child care qualifications. All demonstrate enthusiasm towards on-going training courses to further develop their practice e.g. Birth to Three Matters, Literacy and Numeracy, Food Hygiene etc.
- Sound employment, induction and appraisal systems ensure staff are suitably qualified, experienced and vetted to work with children. Staff have regular appraisals and performance management reviews to make sure they continue to be well supported.

- Comprehensive recording systems ensure information is shared consistently and effectively between staff, parents and management. As a result, children's on-going needs are continually reviewed, updated and addressed effectively.

What needs to be improved?

- toilet arrangements, to ensure that the dignity and privacy of children are respected
- procedures for monitor and maintaining comfortable temperatures in child care rooms, particularly for non-mobile children
- procedures for ensuring the safety of children at all times in nappy-changing areas.

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
4	Improve toilet arrangements to ensure that the dignity and privacy of children are respected.
4	Monitor and maintain comfortable temperatures in child care rooms, particularly for non-mobile children.
4	Ensure the safety of children at all times in nappy-changing areas.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Little Acorns (North East) Limited, Stanley provides good quality nursery education overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. Progress in mathematical development is very good. Progress in personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development is generally good.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff interact positively with the children and have high expectations for them, resulting in a warm, child-friendly environment, although routines do not always ensure all children are included and sufficiently challenged. Staff have adequate knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage of Learning which they use to plan and provide a range of well-organised resources and activities that help children learn new skills. Curriculum plans ensure the six areas of learning are included. Staff are continuing to develop planning and assessment systems to link the curriculum more closely to the stepping stones and early learning goals, taking account of children's existing skills and knowledge.

Leadership and management systems are very good. There is a structured management system in place and staff are very well supported. Management and staff are able to identify their current strengths and areas for development. All are encouraged to undertake training and personal development. They show a strong commitment to monitoring and improving practices within the group.

Partnership with parents and carers is very good. They receive very good quality information about the setting and information is shared effectively regarding the curriculum. There are regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress and to share relevant information. They are kept up to date with current themes/activities and encouraged to take an active interest in their child's learning at home.

What is being done well?

- Staff and management are hard working. They can identify their strengths and areas they wish to develop in order to help children to reach their full potential within the early learning goals before they leave the setting.
- Children's enthusiasm towards learning is evident. They enjoy a very good range of interesting learning opportunities. They are developing the confidence to try out new activities and are gaining good concentration skills.
- Parents receive very good information about the curriculum and their child's progress e.g. through written booklets, posters, notice boards, newsletters, planning displays, open nights and daily discussion. They have good opportunities to enjoy activities with children at home.

- Children enjoy fun and interesting mathematical opportunities that encourage a strong interest in numbers and counting. Many use number names and language spontaneously and enthusiastically during their play.

What needs to be improved?

- opportunities for less confident children to be sufficiently included in group activities, for children to have time to explore and enjoy their experiences at their own pace and for children to use and handle books independently
- computer activities, so they maintain children's interest and effectively challenge more able children
- planning and assessment systems, to build upon children's existing skills and knowledge and to ensure all children receive a broad balanced curriculum closely linked to the stepping stones and early learning goals.

What has improved since the last inspection?

not applicable

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are interested and eager to learn. All separate confidently from parents and are gaining a sound awareness of daily routines. Most behave well. More able children stand up for their own rights. Most relate well to staff, adults and peers. Many talk freely about their life experiences, although less confident children are not always fully included. All are gaining a strong sense of community whilst developing confidence, independence and self worth.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are gaining good communication and language skills. More able children speak confidently, some using complex vocabulary. Others listen with interest, sometimes using gestures or body language to communicate. Most enjoy listening to stories, looking at the illustrations and join in enthusiastically with refrains, although they are not always sufficiently encouraged to use and handle books independently. Some children enjoy mark making and use one-handed tools and equipment well.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are gaining good mathematical skills. They show a strong interest in numbers. Some count spontaneously to ten and beyond. More able children can touch count a series of objects well. Most recognise and use positional words and language relating to size correctly. They are developing a good understanding of shape, space and measure. More able children are learning to measure and compare groups of objects and can recognise when they are the same.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are developing knowledge and understanding of the world. They show curiosity in why things happen and how things work. They are interested in ICT, although computer activities do not always maintain children's interest or effectively challenge more able children. Children use construction materials well and are beginning to realise that tools can be used for a purpose. Planned activities help children to learn about different cultures and beliefs.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are developing good fine and gross motor skills and move around confidently. Most control body movements well whilst walking, running and negotiating obstacles, although planning is not always sufficiently structured to build upon what children already know or can do. Most children carry out healthy practices competently e.g. toileting, hand-washing, pouring drinks. All are developing good hand/eye co-ordination. Many select and use one-handed tools and equipment skilfully.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children effectively use a range of creative materials that promote colour, texture and sensory awareness. They are interested in what they see, hear, smell, taste and touch. They are gaining very good imaginative skills. Some show a strong interest in musical instruments, although they are not always given sufficiently time to explore and enjoy their experiences at their own pace. More able children join in enthusiastically with action songs and rhymes, whilst others watch with interest.

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

- Improve opportunities for less confident children to be sufficiently included in group activities, for children to have time to explore and enjoy their experiences at their own pace and for children to use and handle books independently.
- Develop computer activities, so they maintain children's interest and effectively challenge more able children.
- Continue to develop planning and assessment systems, to build upon children's existing skills and knowledge and to ensure all children receive a broad balanced curriculum closely linked to the stepping stones and 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.