



Office for Standards  
in Education

## COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 220111

DfES Number: 511531

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 25/05/2004  
Inspector Name Rachael Mankiewicz

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care  
Setting Name Acorn Child Care Headlands Centre Day Nursery  
Setting Address Bushland Road  
Northampton  
Northamptonshire  
NN3 2NS

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Acorn Childcare (UK) 4321656 1090086

### ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Acorn Childcare (UK)  
Address Bushland Road  
Northampton  
Northamptonshire  
NN3 2NS

## 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

Acorn Childcare is a registered charitable trust which was established in 1992. The Headlands Centre Day Nursery is situated on the campus of Headlands school in Northampton. It is a full day care facility which runs all the year round other than Bank Holidays and Christmas, with out of school care for children aged five to fourteen years, including holiday play schemes. Children attending the day care and play schemes come from the town and its surrounding areas.

There are currently 130 children on roll, including twenty funded three year-olds and fifteen funded four year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The staff are able to support children with special educational needs and those with English as a second language.

There are around 25 staff working with the children on a regular basis at the Headlands centre, but other staff from the other Acorn Child Care Centres may cover as necessary. All the room co-ordinators, and most of the experienced staff, have Level 3 qualifications in early years care. Many are working towards Level 4 in early years care and also in Play Work. Other, newer staff are working towards Level 2 qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The Acorn Child Care organisation holds the Investors in People mark of good practice.

### How good is the Day Care?

Acorn Child Care Headlands Centre Day Nursery provides a good quality of care for children. The premises are safe and well-maintained, both inside and outside, creating a child-friendly environment. The staff and management have a good awareness of health and safety issues, and they encourage children to learn good hygiene practices and to keep themselves safe. Staff deployment, which ensures the safety and welfare of all children, is not always consistent, although staff : child ratios in the nursery overall are correct.

An excellent range of toys, resources and activities is available, which meets the

needs of children across the different ages and stages of development. Planning of activities to progress children's learning is carried out from the baby room upwards, providing activities to encourage children to learn through play. Staff use their knowledge and experience to help them support children's individual needs, and encourage them in their interests. Methods of managing behaviour are sensitive and age-appropriate.

Staff and management have a good awareness of the importance of working in partnership with parents. Information is shared at the end of the day, on a regular basis and written information is also reviewed on a regular basis. Documentation is generally well organised and clearly presented, with good information about the setting made available to the parents.

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

At the last inspection, the registered provider agreed to make available a risk assessment of the swimming activity. This has been addressed, helping to ensure the safety of the children taking part in this activity.

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

- The management and staff have a good awareness of safety issues that ensures the children are safe and secure when indoors and outside. Security is good, and risk assessments of new activities and outings are carried out. Health and hygiene practices are good. Children are encouraged to think about health and hygiene, including healthy eating.
- The children benefit from the excellent range of activities and resources across the ages and stages of development both indoors and outside. This includes resources which reflect positive images of race, disability, gender and age. Staff organise an interesting programme of activities for school-aged children and encourage them to make their own choices about what they do.
- Staff have a good knowledge and experience of caring for the needs of all children, including special needs. There is a strong commitment to training and improving on good practice, with many staff extending their qualifications with Play Work training for the out of school provision.
- Parents are encouraged to work in partnership with the nursery to benefit the children. Staff know the parents well, make them feel welcome and acknowledge their input in the assessment of the children. Some parents are on the management committee.

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

- staff deployment, to ensure that the required adult : child ratios are met throughout the nursery

**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	Demonstrate that staff are deployed effectively to meet the required adult : child ratios throughout the nursery to ensure the children's safety, welfare and development.

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

### How effective is the nursery education?

The Acorn Headlands Centre Day Nursery provides very good nursery education in an environment where children show enthusiasm for learning through play. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals, and personal, social and emotional development is particularly good.

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage, which can be seen through the planning of a wide range of interesting activities. Assessments are mostly used effectively to inform children's progress. Staff know the children very well, and are able to adjust activities to meet individual needs and interests, but assessments are not always used effectively to promote children's progress. Staff have the knowledge and experience to successfully support children with special educational needs or who are learning to speak English as an additional language. All children are encouraged to take part in all the activities.

Good staff:child ratios allow for individual and small group work. Staff explain activities clearly, and make good use of questioning to encourage children to think. Sessions are well organised to allow free-play, and children move around confidently, showing interest in activities. Staff promote good behaviour effectively through consistent methods of behaviour management.

The partnership with parents and carers is very good. Although the current prospectus lacks information about the Foundation Stage, parents can access useful information about the curriculum, the daily programme and their child's day-to-day achievements to help them extend their children's learning. Children's records are always available and parents can talk to staff at any time.

Leadership and management is very good overall. Staff have relevant qualifications and continue to develop their skills. Management and staff show commitment to the continuing improvement of care and education through evaluation.

### What is being done well?

- The area of personal, social and emotional development is very good. Children talk confidently to each other, to staff and to other adults. They listen and interact in large and small groups, and express their feelings and experiences well. Their personal independence is fostered well through many of the activities and responsibilities given to the children.
- The children's natural enthusiasm for learning is being developed as they choose to participate in the different rooms during free-play or take part in the adult-directed activities. Attractive displays and resources are used well to

help create a stimulating learning environment.

- Staff:child ratios are high which enable the individual needs of children to be met. Some staff have particular knowledge and experience in the field of special needs. They work in partnership with parents, carers and outside agencies to ensure all children are involved in all the activities and that they benefit from their time at the nursery.
- Parents and nursery staff work in close partnership to promote children's learning. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress, and information about the planned activities and how they can extend their children's learning at home.
- Leadership and management systems are very successful in maintaining the good quality of the provision. The management and staff work together very well as a team and create a happy and purposeful atmosphere.

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

- the planning to be detailed to reflect the gaps in children's learning and the challenges available to extend the children's learning
- the information about the Foundation Stage already given to the parents to help them understand how funded children should be helped to make progress towards the early learning goals.

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

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Management and staff have continued to build on strategies to ensure that they maintain the quality and standards of the educational provision. This has included staff appraisal and monitoring to ensure that they are familiar with the Foundation Stage. Further staff training and the provision of further resources have been made available where necessary. The training has included staff developing their techniques of questioning children to help them extend their learning. Staff effectively use open-ended questions and encouragement. The assessment of children has been reviewed to ensure that the Foundation Stage Stepping Stones are being achieved. The results of the observations are not always included in the planning to ensure that children progress in their learning. However, the inspector is assured that staff know the children very well, and are able to adjust planning to cover any individual needs and interests.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

The children show confidence and independence as they move around the activities; between rooms and indoors and outside. They persevere with activities for good lengths of time both in small groups and as individuals. The interaction between children and adults is very good. Children behave very well, understand what is right and wrong and show care and concern for each other. Children develop an awareness of other cultures through an interest in festivals and real-life routines.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children communicate confidently and take turns in conversations. They use language to sequence stories, and songs and rhymes. They tell others what they are doing and how they feel. Older children understand that written words convey messages. Their early mark-making skills are good, including writing lists. Most of the children recognise letters and their sounds, and are extending this skill in both writing and talking. The children show enjoyment of books and know how to use them.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

The children count at every opportunity, with more able children working with large numbers. They compare different numbers of objects, and learn about simple addition and subtraction through games. They are developing their knowledge of different shapes, including some 3-D examples, by the comparison of objects. They understand concepts around size, weight and volume, as they measure and compare in activities such as water play. They begin to make patterns and sequences.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

The children have a good awareness of the natural world and the changing seasons; looking at the local environment for learning experiences. They explore actions and reactions with different materials, such as foodstuffs. They talk successfully about past events; in their life-time and through houses and artefacts. Their awareness of their own families, their cultures and the beliefs of others is also developing. Children are adept at using the computer and other machines.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Very Good

Children explore a variety of ways of moving; in the hall, block-room and outside. They show confidence and good control as they negotiate obstacles with wheeled toys. Large apparatus, balls and other small sports equipment are used well and with enjoyment. They handle an interesting range of materials and tools, and their manipulative skills are good. Older children show a good awareness of their own physical needs- through aerobic exercises, good hygiene practice and a topic on their bodies.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Very Good

Children enjoy taking part in varied role-play both inside and outdoors, and in stories with props. They work imaginatively with small-world resources, water and other materials-experiencing a good range of sensory experiences throughout the free-play activities. They explore sound with a range of instruments, music and singing. Children draw and paint freely, and have free-access to modelling materials.

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



## **OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION**

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very 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**

*There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:*

- There are no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to improving the following:
- the effective assessment of children's achievements to guide planning and teaching, including setting the correct level of challenge for children and covering the individual needs of children
- the inclusion of information in the parent's handbook about the Foundation Stage.

*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.*