



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 508710

DfES Number: 513264

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 09/12/2003
Inspector Name Gillian Jefferson

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Acorns Pre School
Setting Address St Andrews School
Great Yeldham
Halstead
Essex
CO9 4PT

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Acorns Pre School Committee 1045883

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Acorns Pre School Committee
Address St Andrews School
Great Yeldham
Halstead
Essex
CO9 4PT

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

Acorns Pre-school opened in 1992 . It operates from a demountable classroom in the grounds of St Andrews School in the village of Great Yeldham. The pre-school serves the local area.

There are currently 27 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. This includes 22 funded 3 year olds and 1 funded 4 year old. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports a small number of children with special needs but there are no children currently attending who speak English as an additional language

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 to 11:30 Monday to Friday with afternoon session between 12:30 and 15:00 on Tuesday and Thursday. From January 2004 an afternoon session will be held each day from 12:30 to 15:00.

One full time and six part time staff work with the children. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3. Two staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA). The group have also developed close links with St Andrews School and receive regular visits from the head teacher and liaise closely with the reception class teacher.

How good is the Day Care?

Acorns Pre-School provides a satisfactory standard of care for children.

The group is well organised, the room is clean and well presented. A broad selection of equipment is made available daily and the room well prepared for each session. Many staff are currently training to extend their knowledge of childcare, which will further enhance the provision and ensure the qualification requirements are met in due course. All staff also regularly attend additional training courses and workshops to develop their skills. All required documentation is in place, though some needs

updating to reflect current practice.

Staff are vigilant and use risk assessments regularly to ensure the children's safety is maintained. Information is gathered to help staff care for all of the children according to their individual needs, including those with special needs and the high staff to child ratio further assist this. The careful implementation of policies and procedures helps staff provide good quality care.

Children are involved in a worthwhile programme of activities that promote their learning in all areas. Staff skilfully interact and question the children to promote their learning and development. The children's behaviour is very good and they form strong friendships.

Partnership with parents and carers is effective. Staff are approachable and welcoming and regularly share information. Parents and carers are encouraged to be involved in the pre-school through their participation in the parent/carer rota and supportive comments have been received via questionnaires.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the time of the last inspection the group agreed to meet fire safety recommendations (re: log book), provide a medication record and update the complaints procedure.

A fire log book and medication record book are now in place and used. The complaints procedures has also been updated to include Ofsted's contact details and is made available to parents/carers.

What is being done well?

- The high ratio of staff to children which helps their development and learning through questioning. The high level of interaction also enables the group to effectively meet all the children's needs, including those with special needs.
- Children are encouraged to make decisions, explore and investigate through their involvement in a programme of worthwhile activities and access to a broad and balanced range of resources during each session.
- Children relate well to each other and staff, and build strong friendships.
- Staff create a warm and welcoming environment, enhanced by the display of children's artwork.
- The regular use of risk assessments by staff to support them in ensuring the children remain safe within the setting.

What needs to be improved?

- Records of staff clearances.
- Detail of policies and procedures for induction, sick children and child

protection to ensure all required elements are included.

- Confidentiality of some documents, particularly the accident book.

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
1	Update staff records held, to provide confirmation of clearance and suitability for all staff.
14	Update policies, procedures and documentation in line with the requirements of the National Standards. (This refers to the induction procedures, sick children policy and child protection policy and procedures)
14	Review all policies procedures and documentation in line with the confidentiality policy.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision of nursery education at Acorns Pre-School is of good quality and enables children to make generally good progress in all areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff provide a wide variety of worthwhile topic related activities. Links to the early learning goals and stepping stones within the planning and assessment documentation are in place, but are still in their early stages. This means a balanced programme that covers all areas of learning is not yet evident within the planning and the use of assessment observations are not yet informing the planning of future activities. Staff members successfully interact with the children to promote their learning. They also help the children develop good relationships and motivation to learn through modelling behaviour and their enthusiastic involvement.

The leadership and management of the group is generally good. The staff team works well and show commitment to improving the learning environment they create and the care and education for all children. There is a new committee in place and members are familiarising themselves with the requirements of the group. The consistency of the staff team and the development of procedures to share information about responsibilities during changes to the committee will ease the transition period.

Partnership with parents and carers is also generally good. The group keep them well informed, particularly through their involvement in a parent/carer rota, verbal feedback and regular newsletters. They also have access to their children's developmental records, and the addition of observational notes will help the children's achievements in progressing towards the early learning goals become clear.

What is being done well?

- Staff's planning and provision of a programme of interesting and worthwhile topic related activities to support the children's development and learning. Staff's modelling of acceptable behaviour and involvement and enthusiasm towards learning and being involved in activities, which helps the children develop positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- The high level and quality of interaction between the staff and children, that supports the children's language and communication development and prompts their learning through questioning.
- Staff have built up a very efficient team which enables them to organise the learning environment effectively to assist the children's development.

What needs to be improved?

- Detail within the planning to demonstrate the full extent of learning that is being promoted each session.
- The assessment records to reflect the observations made about the children's achievements against the stepping stones and towards the early learning goals and then use these to inform planning.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Acorns Pre-School has made generally good progress since the last inspection.

The staff team have extended their knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones and early learning goals through having independent access to the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and discussions within team meetings.

Assessment records are now in place that record the children's progress and attainment that are clearly related to the early learning goals, and these are being extended to include observations made as examples of the children's achievements.

The recently revised planning system now includes the learning intentions of some activities in relation to the stepping stones within the six areas of learning, but it is not yet reflecting the wider learning promoted in practice within the sessions and it is difficult to see a balance across all areas of learning as it is still in such an early stage of development.

Staff now widely use practical situations to develop the children's mathematical learning.

The children's early reading and writing skills are encouraged more regularly. The alphabet is now familiar to the children and labelling around the room provides opportunities for the children to read familiar words. Planned activities also promote the children towards writing their names and to communicate meaning.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

The children have very good disposition and attitudes towards learning and new and familiar activities. They are confident and become actively involved. Staff effectively support the children's progress in this area, but some children would benefit from opportunities to develop their independence. The children form good relationships with each other and the staff. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and demonstrate good behaviour.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children use language to efficiently communicate their feelings, desires and support their thinking and learning in other areas. The staff support the children in learning about sounds of letters but this is not yet clear within the planning. Children have access to lots of opportunities to develop their early reading and writing skills. They are confident mark makers, with some able to write letters from their own names. Many recite songs and rhymes with skill.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children develop a high awareness of numbers for counting and as labels and refer to them within their play, use of resources and in number games. The provision for calculation is not yet clear within the planning. The children are very confident in referring to both 2D and 3D shapes. They skilfully compare size and measure within their play and planned activities.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are involved in a programme of interesting and worthwhile activities that support their development through topic themes. They are encouraged to design and make a variety of things, but the more able children would benefit from more freedom to develop their independence in this. Children have daily access to computers, and staff are building their confidence in supporting the children in this area. Children learn about cultures and beliefs through festival related work.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are provided with regular opportunities to develop their skills in moving in a variety of ways with increasing control, skill and safety. The children are able to have physical play inside and outside, weather permitting, on an almost daily basis. They learn to use a large selection of equipment tools and materials. Healthy eating is reinforced through topic work and a themed week.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are enthusiastic singers and love to learn new songs and action rhymes. They use their imagination readily within their play, though this is not always extended into their art and craftwork. Staff encourage the children to demonstrate their feelings and express themselves in response to stories songs and rhymes. Staff provide many opportunities for children to explore a wide variety of materials and media.

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

- Continue with the implementation of the new planning system, extending it to detail the learning intentions within the activities provided and maintain a balance across all six areas, ensuring the extent of learning promoted within each session is fully reflected.
- Extend the assessment records to include observation notes made about the children's achievements, and use them to inform planning.

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.