

The Acorns Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	15/09/2010
Inspector	Fler Wright

Setting address	Westmeston Parish Hall, Lewes Road, Westmeston, Near Ditchling, East Sussex, BN6 8RL
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

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Description of the setting

The Acorns Nursery School at Westmeston was registered in 2002. It is privately owned and is one of three 'sister' settings run by the same individual. The nursery school occupies the Parish Hall in Westmeston, between Ditchling and Plumpton in East Sussex. It opens term time only, every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9.00am to 2.30pm, with an extended day from 9.00am to 5.00pm on Fridays. One of the sister settings is located at Stoneywish Nature Reserve, and it opens to allow continuity of provision when the Westmeston site is unavailable every Tuesday. Holiday fun adventure days run during school holidays from 9.00am to 5.00pm. The setting is registered to provide care for 30 children between 2 and 8 years. There are currently 31 children on roll. The provider is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. Children have access to a large main hall, a smaller hall, toilet and hand-washing facilities, and all children share access to over an acre of secure outdoor play space. There are currently five members of staff, four of whom are early years qualified, and two of whom are currently upgrading their qualifications. One volunteer also works regularly at the setting. The owner of the school is a qualified teacher with Early Years Professional Status.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children enjoy a wealth of stimulating, challenging activities and experiences and are making excellent progress in their learning and development given their starting points and capabilities. Each child's individuality is recognised and nurtured by all staff, who have a secure knowledge of their family and home circumstances, individual needs, interests and abilities. Staff are beginning to work in partnership with other early years settings to help ensure continuity for all children. The formal and informal self-evaluation techniques in place ensure priorities for development are identified and acted upon, meaning the setting has a strong capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure effective partnerships with any other childcare settings children attend

are fully encouraged to further support continuity of care

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff are aware of the procedures to follow to ensure children are safeguarded, and robust recruitment and vetting procedures are in place, ensuring all staff are suitable to work with children. Daily risk assessments help to ensure children's safety and welfare are of paramount importance.

The owner of the setting is very passionate about her role and this successfully motivates her staff team into creating an environment where children are able to flourish. Effective use of self evaluation and reflective practice techniques ensure the setting is continually improving and meeting the needs of all its users. Staff are eager to further their knowledge by attending regular training in order to enhance the outcomes for children. A balanced and exciting curriculum means children are eager to learn, and are involved with an excellent range of activities and experiences that help them to make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Staff take the time to get to know each child individually, and the strong family approach of the setting means time is dedicated to ensuring good relationships are established from the outset. This helps to ensure all staff are able to identify what all children know, can do and understand, so helping them to thrive.

There are many opportunities for parents to become involved with their child's learning, and daily suggestions are made as to what they are able to bring in from home to help support the day's activities. Further ideas are passed to them to help extend their child's learning at home. Policies and procedures are available for parents to view at all times, and regular exchanges of information ensure parents are kept up to date with what's going on at the setting. Parents are very complementary of the nursery school, and feel reassured that their children settle well and staff make every effort to get to know them. They particularly like the opportunities children have to play and learn about the outdoors in the natural, rural environment available. The nursery school works closely with its sister settings to ensure consistency for those children who attend more than one. Staff work regularly with outside agencies to ensure children are given opportunities to progress with support, and they are beginning to form relationships with other local childcare providers. However, staff do not always instigate immediate contact, meaning some channels of communication take a while to prove beneficial to those concerned.

The nursery is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and works with parents and other agencies to support and meet children's individual needs. All children and families are valued and appreciated by staff who are proactive in ensuring the nursery school environment is inclusive for all. Staff are very aware of the differing abilities of the children in attendance and these are easily catered for both formally and informally within the educational programme, meaning all children are able to make excellent progress in their learning given their capabilities and starting points.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children show an excellent understanding of healthy eating and make healthy choices at snack and meal times. They are able to help themselves to foods and pour their own drinks, giving them an important sense of independence and achievement. Healthy meals are prepared on the premises by staff using locally sourced produce, and children are encouraged to discuss, explore and taste different foods such as cooked beetroot, and help to shell peas before they eat them. The routines in place are generally effective in helping children to learn about the importance of good hygiene and most children wash their hands without the need for reminding. Children have many opportunities to engage in a wide range of physical activities, both indoors and out and this is a particular area of strength at the nursery school. They gain a secure understanding about the importance of regular exercise as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Regular walks around the local countryside and weekly 'forest school' sessions help children to build their stamina and learn skills or experiences such as climbing over stiles or up trees, building campfires, learning about endangered flowers and making mud pies. They are able to take well calculated risks, which staff see as an important part of learning. Children are able to bring in an outdoor toy of their own every Friday, and this results in many children being able to ride two-wheeled bicycles by the time they leave the setting to go to school.

Children greatly enjoy their time at the nursery. They are very used to the routines in place. They take pleasure in looking at books and listening to stories. They use a wide range of tools and equipment safely, for example, when using a garlic press with the dough, using scissors on the craft table or when riding bikes in the grounds. They have a very good awareness of safety, and understand the reasons for regular fire drills. Even young children participate sensibly and listen to staff as they evacuate the premises in an efficient manner. Most children speak with a great deal of confidence, expressing themselves in a mature way and indicating that their views are regularly listened to. They demonstrate good progress in developing the skills that will help them in the future.

All children are highly valued and staff pride themselves in knowing each child very well. Staff have an excellent understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and this helps to support children to achieve excellent outcomes. Open ended questions and thought-provoking questions help staff to extend children's knowledge base. Children make extremely good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff make observations of the children throughout the day meaning they each have an excellent knowledge of where each child is at in their learning. Staff update children's learning journals regularly, meaning they accurately reflect the ways all children are continually developing. Staff highlight the next steps in each child's learning and as they have such an in depth knowledge of each individual, they are able to skilfully adapt the planning and the activities and experiences on offer to ensure they are each able to achieve their full potential. Home visits and close observations ensure staff highlight children's starting points and how they plan to move them forward, and these are reviewed

regularly to ensure good progress is being made. The dedication of the staff, their enthusiasm and the praise and encouragement they give to children, all help to ensure the children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals.

Children form very close bonds with adults and other children at the nursery. They confidently go to adults for support or for a cuddle if they feel the need to, showing strong relationships have been built. Their relationships with their peers go from strength-to-strength as they are able to play together throughout the day. Children are consistently polite, thoughtful and well behaved and demonstrate high levels of self control.

Children are able to roam freely around the space available to them and the use of space and accessibility of equipment allows children to continually make choices for themselves as they become independent learners, thus promoting their confidence and increasing their self-motivation. There is a mix of adult and child-sized furniture that is used appropriately. The open plan environment allows children to join in with individual, small or large group play. The resources within the nursery school are well organised and in plentiful supply. They are structured to ensure that children are able to experience all areas of learning through their play.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met