

Acorn Day Nursery (Brafield On The Green)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	220227
Inspection date	01/06/2011
Inspector	Susan Marriott

Setting address	Church Lane, Brafield on the Green, Northamptonshire, NN7 1BA
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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

Acorn Day Nursery was registered in 1997. The nursery is one of eight provisions run by Acorn Childcare Ltd. and operates from an old village school premises in Brafield-on-the-Green, Northamptonshire. There are three playrooms and an enclosed outdoor play area. Children come from a wide geographical area and attend for a variety of sessions.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register to provide a maximum of 36 places for children aged under eight years, all of whom may be in the early years age group and no more than 12 may be under two years. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6pm all year round, except Bank Holidays.

There are currently 55 children aged from four months to five years on roll. Of these, 22 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 12 staff to work with the children, of whom nine hold appropriate early years qualifications. A qualified cook and other domestic staff are also employed. The nursery is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from local authority advisory staff.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are extremely happy in the relaxed atmosphere. This is an extremely friendly, welcoming and inclusive nursery which benefits from a highly competent manager and a genuinely committed and caring staff team. The nursery is a very safe, secure and stimulating place to be for the young children who attend. Their individual needs are fully met within this homely environment where children make good progress in their learning and development and enjoy themselves on a daily basis. Committed, strong leadership and robust, continuous reflective practice ensure that the setting has excellent capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- expand the use of the outdoor area and explore the possibility of enabling free-flow access between the indoors and outdoors.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Good standards of children's care, learning and welfare are effectively underpinned by the highly effective way in which this nursery is led and managed. The nursery manager is an excellent reflective practitioner and demonstrates outstanding drive and ambition to provide the very best care and education for children. She has excellent knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and is highly skilled in motivating her staff team to constantly improve the service. Nevertheless, she has only been in post for a short time and the substantial improvements made have not firmly embedded into daily practice. Consequently, the overall quality and standards are judged to be good, whereas the capacity to continuously improve is outstanding. Current safeguarding requirements are robustly met. The manager has had previous experience of making referrals in relation to safeguarding and is confident about the processes to follow in the event of concerns arising. All staff undergo a vetting process to establish their suitability to work with the children and have up-to-date Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Robust security measures ensure the safety of children and staff. Staff are particularly vigilant and alert to unknown persons being in the vicinity of the nursery. Whenever possible, the manager or deputy answer the door. The presence of visitors is suitably recorded and identification is checked in every instance. Thoroughly detailed risk assessments are carried out visually on a daily basis and written assessments are devised for every area of the nursery school and for every type of outing in the local area and further afield. Regular practise of fire drills secures the safety of children and staff in an emergency. Appropriate record keeping documents, policies and procedures are in place to guide staff practice and ensure children are kept safe from harm.

Effective links with the parents and carers, together with other professionals involved in the care and education of the children, enable the nursery school to tailor activities to the individual needs of children in their care. All required documentation is meticulously organised, readily accessible and effectively underpins the safe and efficient management of the setting. The nursery school is fully inclusive and meets the needs of all children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language. Policies and procedures are consistently implemented to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of inclusion. For example, they ensure that children with dietary restrictions are not excluded because of any unrecognised discriminatory practices and are happy to adapt their routines or practice to accommodate any individual requirements. Children learn about their own culture and the beliefs and cultures of other people because the nursery actively gathers information about the cultural background of the children attending, ensuring that relevant festivals and celebrations are acknowledged and shared. The nursery has a wide range of resources and artefacts which represent positive images and a wide range of cultures, religions, disabilities and ethnic backgrounds.

The manager receives enthusiastic support from her dedicated and loyal staff.

They deploy themselves in a highly effective manner to ensure that children are constantly well supervised and cared for. Free-flow movement between the indoor and outdoor environment has already been identified by senior management as an area for development. Continuing staff development is strongly encouraged and the resulting enhancement of staff skills and knowledge contributes substantially towards the good progress the children make. Staff demonstrate a very good level of knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage, thereby securing good learning and development outcomes for children. The nursery makes good use of the space available and ensures that the six areas of learning are reflected equally outside and as well as indoors. A recent enhancement includes the creation of a 'willow arbour' in the garden and children plant and grow vegetables in the allotment patch. Several visiting professional teachers share dance and physical exercise skills with the children.

Partnership working is reflected in the genuine efforts to strengthen links with other providers and in working with other professionals outside the setting to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities when appropriate. The nursery makes every effort to work in partnership with parents and carers, who value this personal care, support and attention, which is praised and recorded in the many letters and cards of thanks and good wishes when children leave the nursery. The organisation of the daily routine ensures that staff are always available to give daily feedback to parents and carers about children's activities and progress. A broad range of useful information is available in the entrance porch for parents and this is effectively supplemented by daily discussions on delivery or collection, parents consultation meetings and written reports.

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

Acorn Day Nursery is a warm, welcoming place. Children leave their parents with confidence and behaviour is very good. Children are beginning to learn how to share, cooperate and work together, supported by the staff's skilful behaviour management. Staff interact effectively with children, listening to what they have to say and building respectful and caring relationships. They are positive role models and the genuine warmth and kindness from staff helps children develop good self-esteem and a sense of security and belonging. The staff have a good understanding of the early learning goals and weekly plans are displayed for parents to see. They show a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities covering the six areas of learning. Staff acknowledge children's achievements with praise and actively promote children's independence.

Staff have appropriately high expectations of the children, who make good progress towards the early learning goals, given their starting points. Good quality planning is in place which takes good account of children's interests, ensuring that each child receives an enjoyable and challenging experience across the areas of learning. Staff evaluate activities effectively and give good priority to promoting children's progress. They support children's learning with gentle questioning and develop learning appropriately.

Children are encouraged to take an active part in circle time and learn the skills of turn taking and listening. They speak clearly and confidently and join in enthusiastically with singing and discussions about the weather, their families and friends and the current topics. Children are eager to see what is in the bag brought back from a staff holiday in Venice. Staff explain that people in Venice wear masks to parties and dress up in lovely clothes. The children share the glittery masks amongst themselves during the morning and staff provide lengths of material and the dressing up clothes. Staff maximise the learning opportunities presented by the children's construction with large wooden bricks, encouraging them to count how many dinosaurs are on the bridge. The subsequent roar and growl to scare the troll promotes high levels of participation and secures children's interest and enjoyment in the building project.

Children develop their creativity through a good range of imaginative activities and the use of a sand and water tray. Younger children explore the world through experiences. For example, they explore ice, cornflour and jelly through play and record their enjoyment in artwork displayed on the walls. They are able to represent caterpillars and butterflies in art activities linked to the life cycle of the butterfly and explore their senses in a tasting activity involving sweetened water and lemon juice. Children become engrossed in the activities and because of this learn quickly and make good progress. As they play they chat with adults, learning new words and phrases. The frequent opportunities to count mean that children make good progress in this area and can confidently count beyond 10. Children have regular access to an outside play area where they can access a wide range of additional equipment to promote their physical development well. Children recognise their name cards and attach them to a photograph of the toy or resource they want staff to put out in the garden. A computer is available every day for children to learn how to operate simple programmes and they also have access to an 'interactive table' and other resources, such as digital cameras and programmable toys, to promote early information technology skills.

Well-organised snack and meal times enable children to serve themselves independently and provide some excellent opportunities for children and staff to interact and talk about healthy eating in small groups. Children are encouraged to adopt healthy habits. They are familiar with the routine of hand washing and help themselves to tissues to wipe their own noses, putting the used tissues in the bins provided. This is managed by gentle and supportive encouragement, increasing the children's independence and highlighting why these things are important. Good standards of hygiene are maintained throughout the nursery and staff engage young children in conversation and song while changing nappies and supervising visits to the toilet area. Drinks are freely accessible at all times to ensure that they remain suitably hydrated. Children develop good habits, become independent learners, develop collaborative skills, problem solving abilities, creativity and creative thinking because they are happy, relaxed, supported and challenged by this stimulating, age-appropriate environment.

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	1

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	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
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	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	1
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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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