

Little Acorns

Acorns Playgroup, Evershot Village Hall, The Common, Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 0JY

Inspection date	20/06/2013
Previous inspection date	17/09/2008

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Children greatly benefit from rich play opportunities in the playgroup's garden, adjoining woodlands and when using the swimming pool in the local school. These help children to develop a love of the outdoors and to be active and curious learners.
- Staff support children who speak English as an additional language very well. All children demonstrate that they feel safe and happy and are making good progress.
- Partnerships with parents are very good. They receive a wealth of information from the playgroup and say they feel fully involved in their children's learning and development.
- The management continuously reflect on the quality of the playgroup, seeking the views of parents, staff and children, to make positive improvements that focus on providing the best possible experiences for the children.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Staff do not always consistently support children's listening skills, for example, by encouraging them to listen to their friends during discussions and activities.
- On occasions, staff miss some opportunities to extend children's learning and concentration, particularly during group activity times.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the playgroup manager.
- The inspector observed activities in the hall, gardens and a swimming session.
- The inspector spoke with parents, staff and children.
- The inspector spoke with the manager and the committee chairperson.
- The inspector sampled a range of documentation including children's learning journeys and staff records of suitability.

Inspector

Josette Dyer

Full Report

Information about the setting

Little Acorns first opened in 1984 and re-registered at the current premises in 2004. It operates from the village hall at Evershot, a rural location near to Dorchester, Dorset. It serves the local area and surrounding villages. A parent committee is responsible for managing the playgroup. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 17 children on roll in the early years age group. The playgroup operates each weekday from 9am to 3.30pm, except on Thursdays, when the session finishes at 1pm. It generally runs term time only, with the option of a holiday club if the demand is there. The playgroup receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. It supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language. The parent committee employs four members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications. The manager is a qualified teacher and has Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). The playgroup receives support from the local authority.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- develop children's listening skills further to enhance their communication and language skills, for example, by encouraging children to listen and respond to each other

- enhance and further extend children's learning and their concentration skills particularly during larger group activities, for example, by offering rich and varied experiences to encourage children to become more deeply involved.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children eagerly enter the playgroup to a warm welcome by the staff. The children clearly enjoy learning through active play and quickly become absorbed in an activity of their choosing. Staff plan a wide range of stimulating activities, both indoors and outdoors that cover all areas of learning, and provide a good environment for rich play opportunities. For example, they organise the resources and space for children to stretch out on the floor to draw and paint or to work from nearby tables. This effectively helps children to plan and make decisions about how to do things.

Staff skilfully join in with children's play often giving them individual attention to extend their communication and language skills effectively. For example, staff model new vocabulary, describing what children are doing as they play. They explain the meanings of words, such as 'tally' as they record how many dinosaurs the children find in the sand pit. However, during group activities staff do not always consistently support children's listening and attention skills or extend children's learning and concentration fully. Nevertheless, children develop these skills at other times, for example, as they listen to stories and rhymes and through the full range of play activities.

The children delight in being outdoors in the playgroup garden and joining in with the exciting trips the staff plan. Children are involved in a wide range gardening projects, which help children to develop an interest in the natural world. Children set themselves challenges as they climb equipment outdoors, developing their physical skills well. Children enjoy their swimming session, which enhances these skills further. Children benefit from weekly forest days, which help them to be active and curious learners. Parents appreciate the staff's commitment to providing interesting and stimulating outdoor play all year round.

Staff provide a strong programme for children's early literacy skills and plan many opportunities for children to develop these skills. For example, children see a wide range of written labels both indoors and outside, many of which are in dual languages. This helps all children to become familiar with different scripts. Children use their name labels throughout the different routines of the day, such as to indicate they have eaten snack. Staff ensure a wide range of factual, story and dual language books are available in all areas of the playgroup, including outdoors. Consequently, children frequently look at books and ask adults to read to them. These practices support children effectively, enabling them to develop early literacy skills for their future learning, as they begin to recognise print has meaning and acquire a love of books.

The key person accurately assesses the children's development and closely monitors their progress. Staff quickly identify any gaps in development and put plans in place to help all children reach their potential. This includes completing the two-year-old progress check with the parents, which they share with health professionals. Overall children are progressing well in all areas of their development. Staff prepare children effectively for their next stage in learning, and children are building the skills and attitudes to support them strongly in the next stage of their learning. Staff actively share information with the reception teachers of the schools children are due to attend. Children become familiar with general aspects of school life when they visit the local school for activities. This all helps children to feel confident and self-assured about what to expect on their eventual move school.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The well-established key person system effectively helps children to feel safe and secure, and provides a strong base for their developing independence and exploration. Wherever

possible the key person supports the child throughout their time in the playgroup. This helps to establish strong relationships between staff, parents and children from their first day. Staff understand children's emotional needs well. They organise a 'back up' key person to help ensure there is always someone in the playgroup that the children have a special relationship with. Staff tailor the settling-in process to meet the individual needs of the children. Parents say the staff work very closely with them to help children to feel happy and confident throughout their time at the playgroup.

Children enthusiastically enter the playgroup and are obviously delighted to see their key person. Some children run over for a hug and others talk with staff excitedly, telling them their news, before deciding where to play. Children are forming good relationships with adults and each other. Staff promote the positive relationships further by organising dedicated 'key person time' and activities that encourage children to play together. Staff support the emotional needs of children who are learning English as an additional language particularly well. For example, parents record themselves carrying out activities, whilst speaking the children's home language. This helps children understand the activity and builds their confidence and self-esteem as they hear their language valued.

Staff use consistent messages about behaviour so generally children understand what is expected of them and their behaviour is good. There are very few squabbles because staff provide a wide choice of interesting and stimulating resources and activities that support children's all round development. As a result, most children play cooperatively and take turns well. Staff discuss feelings during activities, which helps children to consider their own feelings and those of others. For example staff say, 'Your face looks like a cross face.....are you feeling cross?' Staff use every opportunity to discuss safety issues with children through general routines and activities. Children know to pick up toys that drop on the floor and can tell staff some basic road safety rules on their trip to the swimming pool.

Children are learning well about healthy lifestyles. Children gain a good understanding of where food comes from as they grow and care for their own vegetables in the playgroup garden. Staff talk about the fruit being good for them and encourage children to eat healthier foods first from their lunch boxes. Staff provide useful information to parents to support healthy eating practices for children. Children are developing healthy attitudes towards exercise and playing outdoors. Practitioners sensitively support children to judge risk for themselves, such as allowing them to experiment with different ways of sliding down the slide. Children ably manage their own personal needs, and are developing good independent skills through their general play and routines of the playgroup.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

Arrangements for safeguarding children are strong and embedded well. All the necessary written policies and procedures to support the safe running of the playgroup are in place and regular reviews keep them up-to-date. Management and staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements. They confidently

describe their policies and the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about the welfare of the children in their care. All staff attend and refresh their training for first aid and safeguarding children routinely. The management team support their staff further by providing guidance during staff meetings, appraisals and supervision meetings. There is a robust recruitment process in place, which helps to ensure staff are suitable, experienced and qualified to work with children. Children's safety is a clear priority to staff. The staff complete a risk assessment, which includes all areas of the playgroup and update it regularly. They carry out safety checks before the children enter in the morning and remain alert to hazards as the children play. This helps to minimise any risk to children.

The management constantly reflect on and monitor the quality of the playgroup, seeking the views of the parents, staff and children. They embrace and follow any advice and support offered from the local authority. As a result, many positive improvements are evident since the last inspection. For example, staff now gather a range of information with parents to establish clear starting points for children. Well-developed planning and assessment systems clearly support children to make good progress. The management team accurately identify the main strengths and weaknesses. They continuously strive to improve the quality of the playgroup to provide the best possible experiences for children. The management support staff to develop their practice through regular supervision and appraisal meetings. The Management team lead by example, having Early Years Professional Status and studying towards further qualifications, such as Forest School training. Staff are highly motivated to attend further training to learn and extend their skills.

Partnerships with parents are good. Parents receive a wealth of information about the playgroup and they feel fully involved in their children's learning. They appreciate the staff's friendly and supportive approach, and are pleased their children are happy, confident and progressing well in their learning. The management team have good systems in place to link with other settings children attend, and with other professionals. For example, staff share planning and other relevant information to establish a consistent approach towards meeting children's needs. This helps to ensure all children receive the support they need to reach their full potential.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY281575
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	843618
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	17
Name of provider	Little Acorns Committee
Date of previous inspection	17/09/2008
Telephone number	07985 435958

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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