



Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	141104
Inspection date	09 February 2007
Inspector	Carole Argles
Setting Address	Shaftesbury Christian Centre, Christys Lane, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8PH
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Registered person	New Covenant Church
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Pre-school opened in 2000 in the Shaftesbury Christian Centre, which is situated close to the centre of Shaftesbury in Dorset. The pre-school is operated by the trustees of the New Covenant Church. The children use three playrooms, with associated facilities, and a sports hall. There is an enclosed garden for outside play.

The pre-school is registered to provide sessional care for 20 children aged between two and four years and usually accepts children from the age of two years nine months. Morning and afternoon sessions of variable lengths run on weekdays during school term times. Currently there are 41 children on roll of whom 34 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school supports children who have learning difficulties or disabilities, and for whom English is an additional language.

There are seven staff who work with the children, of whom four hold an appropriate early years qualification. The other members of staff are currently undertaking training.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The children's good health is suitably supported by the action taken by the staff. The premises, toys and equipment are kept clean and hygienic. Suitable policies are in place to minimise the spread of infection between children and they are not cared for if they are ill or infectious. Parents receive information about common childhood illnesses so they know when to keep their child at home. The cloakrooms have appropriate hand washing facilities for the children and they clean their hands on a disposable wipe before they eat their snack. They begin to find out how to keep themselves healthy. For example, they are reminded about the importance of stopping germs spreading by using tissues and by covering their mouths when they cough.

There are appropriate procedures in place to promote children's health and safety if they have an accident or require medication. All members of staff hold a suitable first aid certificate and well-stocked first aid kits are readily available. Details of any allergies or dietary requirements are displayed so that all staff are fully aware and able to ensure that the children's individual needs are respected. The children receive a suitable mid-session snack which always includes pieces of fresh fruit. They have cartons of milk or water to drink and are reminded that drinks are always available if they are thirsty. The children talk with staff about the importance of healthy eating. They learn about good dental hygiene and take part in cooking activities, sometimes making cakes, biscuits or pizzas.

The children have daily opportunities for exercise and this helps to keep them fit. There is a large gym available where they can use a wide range of equipment. They show a developing awareness of space as they negotiate a course using wheeled toys and as they run, play and sit together. The children were enjoying completing an obstacle course. This helps them to develop good control and coordination of their movements. For example, they balance as they walk along apparatus, crawl through small openings, and jump and skip. The staff help them to learn new skills and talk with them about how to move safely, for instance, explaining that it is important to bend their legs when they land after jumping off equipment. The children can choose to use the outdoor area where they play with wheeled toys and dig in the garden or sand. They have appropriate clothes for wet weather and this allows them to go outside frequently and encourages them to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are spacious and well maintained and staff use the space effectively to meet the children's needs. For example, the cloakrooms and garden lead directly from the indoor playrooms allowing the children to access them independently. The large gym provides ample room for them to move freely and engage in vigorous exercise. The children feel comfortable and settle quickly because the playrooms are decorated with many posters and displays of their

artwork. A range of toys and activities are prepared ready before they arrive. This creates a welcoming environment. There is an extensive range of resources and activities to support all areas of the children's development. These are of good quality and staff check regularly to ensure they remain safe and suitable for use. The children are able to access some items from low storage units allowing them to make choices about what they play with.

The risk of accidental injury to the children is reduced because the staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of safety issues and take appropriate action to minimise any identified risks to their safety. For example, fixed fireguards surround the heaters and the kitchen and stairs are gated. The premises are kept secure and the children are well supervised at all times. There are appropriate procedures to ensure that children are only collected by authorised adults and to keep them safe when out. Suitable fire safety precautions are in place and the children practise the evacuation procedure regularly. This helps them to understand how to act in the event of an emergency. The children begin to think about their own safety. They talk about how to cross the road safely when they are out, and staff remind them of the consequences of their actions, for example, why they should take care when using equipment so they do not hurt themselves or others.

The children are never left unsupervised with people who have not been vetted and this contributes towards keeping them safe. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of what may indicate that a child is being abused or neglected. However, they do not have a secure understanding of how they should act if they have concerns about a child in their care. The statement of the child protection procedures is brief and does not include all the required information. This poses the risk that children are not fully safeguarded from harm and neglect.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children enter the pre-school happily, where they are greeted individually by the staff so they feel welcome. They have a warm and friendly relationship with staff who know them well and value their individuality. The children receive praise and recognition for their achievements and this promotes their confidence and esteem. The children develop very good communication skills due to the high levels of conversation and interaction with the staff. Most children speak readily in a large group, for example, describing a toy or book they have brought from home to show the others. They are encouraged to become independent, putting on their own coats and boots before playing outside and managing their own personal care. The children play cooperatively together and show respect for each other. The staff plan and provide a wide range of activities which support all areas of the children's development, making use of the Birth to three matters framework when considering the younger children. They carry out frequent observations so they know what the children can do and use this to inform their planning. The children are lively and interested in the activities; they are keen to take part usually concentrating well on what they are doing.

Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and children's learning is good and the children are progressing well towards the early learning goals. They relate well to others, with many children showing

established friendships. They know that sometimes they should sit quietly, for example, at snack, story or 'show and tell' times. They listen attentively, patiently waiting their turn, and showing respect for what others say.

Most children speak clearly and confidently, talking about real and imaginary ideas. They describe what they are doing, and ask and respond readily to questions. The children are developing a genuine love of books and stories. This is fostered well by the staff who frequently read to individuals or small groups, encouraging them to talk about what they think may happen next in the story. There is an extensive range of books available and many 'story sacks' which contain resources to capture the children's interest and encourage them to be involved in story telling. Many children are beginning to read familiar words such as their own and others' names. They are beginning to link sounds to the initial letter of words and again staff use collections of resources such as 'sound bags' to support their learning. The children are developing good hand-eye coordination through many activities. They join construction pieces, complete puzzles, and take part in mark making activities such as chalking, drawing and painting. Some children are beginning to form recognisable letters and to write their names.

The children are interested in numbers and many are beginning to count correctly and to link numbers to numerals. They enjoy number songs and rhymes which are often used to help them understand how many will be left if one is taken away from a given number. Sometimes the staff plan specific activities to support the children's understanding of number but these are not always included in the week's programme. The staff do not consistently take advantage of practical situations to encourage the children to think and solve problems. The children are beginning to consider and name shapes and to learn the correct vocabulary to describe and compare objects. They use computers to support their learning, completing simple tasks such as matching shapes or linking sounds to pictures.

There are many opportunities for the children to find out about the world around them. They consider how things work and change, experimenting to see what will float, and observing how ingredients have changed when they are cooked. Staff take advantage of unexpected events to widen the children's experiences, for instance, taking them outside to throw snowballs and see the snow melting. The children are encouraged to examine objects and talk about what they see and describe the textures they feel. They use their imaginations well in pretend play, cooperating with others and sometimes introducing a narrative to their games. They often take part in creative art and craft activities such as collage. They use a variety of methods to join materials, for example, using tape, glue and modelling clay when making a boat. Staff allow them time to manage this without help.

The routine of the sessions allows children time to make choices about what they do as well as taking part in adult-led and group activities. They use a well-resourced and stimulating environment where they can operate independently. The staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and have devised a series of charts to aid them when planning, monitoring and recording what the children can do. They organise a varied programme of activities that support most areas of the children's learning effectively. They adapt their plans each week to take account of what the children have already achieved. The plans contain few details about the intended outcomes for the activities. At times, some staff do not have a clear understanding of how to implement the activity effectively to maximise

the learning and build on the skills of the more able children. However, some sessions are held exclusively for the older children who will be soon be going to school and here the activities are more challenging for them. At all times the children enjoy what they do and are motivated to learn, and overall they are making good progress.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Generally the children behave well and share fairly and take turns. Staff are good role models for the children who follow this example, treating each other with respect and kindness. The children have helped staff draw some basic rules for the pre-school and they frequently talk about them together at circle times. They begin to learn strategies to resolve conflicts. For instance, they talk about what to do if two children want to play with the same toy. The children receive praise and recognition both for their achievements and when they are behaving well which increases their self-esteem. This approach helps them have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

The children's individual needs are well met by the staff because they establish effective communication with parents from the outset and they talk about the children's care daily. There is a thorough induction meeting with new parents. Here the policies and procedures of the pre-school and the activities and routines the children will follow are carefully explained to them. Detailed information about their child is requested so that staff know what they like and can do so they can help them to settle quickly. Each child has a named key-worker who has a special interest in the child and who is available to liaise with their parents. Any children who speak English as an additional language receive appropriate support from staff. For example, they seek support from outside agencies; they ask parents for basic vocabulary so that they can communicate with their child, ensuring that their care needs are met and they feel comfortable and secure. Sound procedures are in place to identify any children who have learning difficulties or disabilities, and again staff work closely with parents and others to plan and provide a package of care and activities to help them reach their potential.

There are many images displayed in the rooms which depict positive images of diversity. The children begin to find out about the culture and traditions of others by using a range of resources, including dressing up clothes and books. They talk with staff about festivals, such as Christmas and Japanese children's day. This approach encourages them to develop an accepting and tolerant attitude towards others in society. The children learn about their local community. They look at photographs of building and go on outings to the nearby town centre where they go to the library or to visit the opticians to find out what they do.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and this supports the children's learning effectively. Parents receive good quality of information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the pre-school through a prospectus, newsletters, posters and discussions with staff. They are kept well informed about what their children will be doing. There are notices reminding them that they can talk with their child's key-worker about their progress and see their records at any time. The children often go home with a note giving details of an activity they have taken part in and how this supports their development. This allows parents to talk about it with their child thereby continuing their learning. Each week the children take a library book home

to share with their parents. There is also a wide range of information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and other childcare issues for parents to borrow. This helps them understand more about children's learning and education encourages them to give their child good support.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The organisation of the pre-school is satisfactory and this benefits the children. The staff keep the required records to promote the children's safety and welfare and many of the necessary policies and procedures are in place. Suitable checks are taken up on new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with the children. However, the provider does not have a sound understanding of how to address any written complaints from parents and the procedure does not comply with current regulations. Although there is a brief statement of the procedures in place for the protection of children but it does not include all the required information.

The children receive plenty of attention and support because a high ratio of staff to children is maintained. Staff are committed to their professional development and many are currently undertaking training to gain or extend their child care qualification. The sessions run smoothly for the children because staff are well organised and work cooperatively together. They plan a suitable routine for the session and share the responsibilities for record keeping and planning between them. They make effective use of the premises and resources to ensure that the children are well cared for and that their developmental needs are met.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good and this supports the children's learning well. Systems are in place to monitor the quality of the teaching and the children's learning and to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are covered. Staff continually evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and use this information to adapt the following weeks' plans to take account of the children's individual needs. The staff are positive and dedicated to improvement and have addressed issues highlighted at the previous inspection. They have conducted an evaluation of the nursery provision and identified some areas for further development. This includes extending use of the outdoor area to enhance the children's learning and experiences, and currently staff are putting these plans into effect.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the provider agreed to extend opportunities for parents to record information about their child's individual needs and to review the accessibility of resources to encourage the children to make independent choices.

Since then, the provider has revised the registration forms and introduced 'All about me' booklets which new parents complete. These give detailed information about what the child can do, their individual needs, and any particular likes or fears. This information allows the key-worker to ensure that these requirements are respected so the child is comfortable and settles quickly.

Children are now able to select from a range of toys and resources, such as construction activities, which are stored in boxes on low units in the play area. These boxes are labelled with pictures so the children know what is inside and can make more choices about what they do and initiate their own play.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004, there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- extend and review the procedures for safeguarding children from harm and ensure that all staff are able to put these procedures into practice
- review the procedure for addressing any complaints from parents to ensure that it complies with current legislation

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review the system for planning activities to ensure that there are clear outcomes for learning so that all staff understand how to support the children effectively
- plan and provide more opportunities for children to solve problems and use numbers in practical activities

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk