



Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127324
Inspection date	01 March 2007
Inspector	Mary Van De Peer
Setting Address	Park View Recreation Centre, Field View, Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3NZ
Telephone number	01233 503843
E-mail	
Registered person	Little Acorns Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 good. 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 is committee run. It opened in 1995 and operates from an area in a purpose-built modern recreation community hall in Ashford, Kent. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09:15 to 15:00 term time only. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas. There are currently 82 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 64 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and also children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 13 staff, including an administrator. There are 10 staff, including the supervisor, who hold appropriate early years qualifications. There are two staff who are working towards a qualification. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance. They also receive support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The pre-school premises are clean and well-maintained. Staff often clear up during the session, for example sweeping up sand and using anti-bacterial sprays. This helps ensure children can play in a safe and hygienic environment. Children are able to use the toilet independently and are encouraged to wash their hands afterwards. Staff also asks them to wash their hands before eating. Children are learning about personal care. There are clear sickness, accident and medication administration procedures for staff to follow. All staff have attended recognised first aid courses and there is a well-equipped first aid kit. If children hurt themselves they are treated quickly and effectively. Physical development is good. There is an excellent outdoor play area which children can use freely throughout the sessions, all year round. They are able to develop their large muscle skills using climbing and balancing equipment. There are also trees, shrubs and areas where children can plant their own flowers or vegetables. Indoors, there are activities to help children improve their fine motor skills, such as puzzles, threading and mark-making. The role play area has a wide variety of resources to enable children to use their imagination when they play. The pre-school provides healthy and interesting snacks. The children enjoy eating fruit and French bread. They are able to have a drink of water whenever they wish and also have milk. The snack menu is displayed on the pre-school notice board. At lunch time, parents supply their children's food. Parents receive helpful advice on healthy eating options, through leaflets. An ice pack is also available for each lunch box to help keep the contents fresh and cool. Children are learning about what is essential for healthy eating and living.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The pre-school is quite self-contained, apart from a kitchen area. The play space for the children is safe and well-organised. For example, the entrance door has high bolts, sockets are covered and wash basins are located low down on the wall. Regular risk assessments are carried out to make sure areas children use stay safe. The activities and equipment are presented to the children very well. There is low storage for toys and resources, children are therefore able to help themselves. The door to the well-equipped outdoor play area can be left open for children to go in and out of. The staff deploy themselves well and always make sure children are fully and appropriately supervised. The emergency evacuation drill is practised at regular intervals during a term, to make sure all children and staff experience it and learn how to keep themselves safe. There are appropriate collection and lost children's procedures in place. A visitor's book ensures a record is made of persons not vetted at the pre-school. The register is called daily and although the children arrive and leave at set times, this information is not made clear. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child protection policy. They are also reviewing safeguarding children procedures to ensure these are up to date. Children's safety and well-being is given high priority by the pre-school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children arrive at the pre-school ready to play and are enthusiastic learners. Staff put some of the activities out on tables for the children, for example construction, mark-making and clay. The rest of the toys and resources are kept in low storage units, children then choose what else they want to play with. However, some of the focussed topic activities are adult directed and the opportunity for children to use their own imagination is sometimes limited. The layout of the room provides appropriate space in the centre for tables, which can be used constantly throughout the session. Around the edge of the room there are more permanent activities, such as the book area, role play and information and technology equipment. The children can use the outdoor area whenever they want to. This room plan and routine helps children feel secure. The children also use the book area to play matching card games as well as for registration and story times. There are several of the older, more able children playing in small groups and negotiating their play. The younger children really enjoy the creative play opportunities and produce many paintings and models. A pet hamster and goldfish are kept by the pre-school, the children take turns in being responsible for feeding, cleaning out and care at the weekends. Snack time encourages children to socialise, they use the time talking to each other and the adults about what they have been doing. The Birth to three matters framework is used effectively by the practitioners. Younger children are encouraged to complete tasks or activities, such as puzzles or models. Adults provide opportunities for children to become skilful communicators and competent learners, ready for the Foundation Stage.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff work well together and have developed an effective system for observing, assessments and planning appropriate activities for the children. Each child has a key worker and they ensure they keep children's records updated so that all staff can refer to them. This results in children's next steps being identified effectively. Children with educational needs are very well catered for. The setting's special educational needs co-ordinator is very experienced and ensures that all children have effective and age appropriate learning opportunities. Children interact well with each other and with adults. They are learning how important it is to share and take turns. They do this by playing card game activities and using the computer fairly. Their behaviour is good and they respond well to guidance and instruction from staff. The layout of the setting means they are able to make choices in their play. Children speak confidently and clearly. They use the book area well, looking at books on their own or together and listening to stories. Children are able to experience numbers and problem solving in various activities such as the card game snap and counting regularly. Children are learning about the wider world by looking at different countries, such as Africa, however some of the creative topic work is largely adult-directed. Children's work is displayed on the walls. This helps build their self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The way the setting is organised and the attention given to Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage, shows how each child is treated with equal concern. The pre-school is also

experienced in caring for children with educational and additional needs. The observations and effective planning system help ensure all children's needs are being met. Children's overall behaviour is very good, they respond to adults equally well in groups as well as individually. The accessibility of the resources and the interesting activities mean that children are always absorbed in their play. Good staff deployment also means an adult is available to provide children with the attention they need.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents confirm how pleased they are with the pre-school and that their children are always happy to come. Parents receive good quality and regular information about the setting. The complaints procedure is clear so that parents are able to refer to it if they require to. However, it is not easy for parents to access general policies and procedures and information on the Birth to three matters framework. Staff ensure they obtain the required and relevant information about each child from parents, using child record forms and contact books. Staff consult with parents on their children's development, making sure their starting points are clear. Children spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The pre-school has a strong committee with dedicated, experienced and qualified staff working for the children. The recruitment procedure and probationary period is robust and this ensures all child care staff employed are suitable. All practitioners have attended a recognised first aid course. The appraisal system encourages staff to undergo further training so that the pre-school can continue to implement current child care practices. The adult to child ratio very often exceeds National guidelines. This means that the organisation and delivery of the care and learning provided for the children is of a good quality. All required documents and paperwork are in place and available for inspection. An administrator is also employed, who ensures all record-keeping is kept up to date. The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. Everyone at the setting is committed to providing a high quality child care service for their local community. They have developed a very good relationship with the Local Authority's early years Coordinator. Children are benefiting from this as there are effective monitoring and assessment systems in place. This leads to the pre-school being able to provide consistent care and education for all the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider has followed the previous five recommendations to improve the provision.

The first recommendation was for the staff to ensure all children regularly practise fire/emergency drills.

Action taken: The fire drill record now kept shows that as the emergency evacuation procedure is practised over several days, all the children are able to participate. This is helping children learn about how to keep themselves safe.

A second recommendation was for staff to ensure that children have an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

Action taken: There is a good range of resources reflecting positive images of other cultures and disabilities. Children are able to learn about the difference in people by playing with appropriate small world figures, looking at books and the different festivals throughout the year. There are children with educational needs attending the pre-school, as well as those who speak English as an additional language. A designated member of staff is trained as the Educational Needs Coordinator. This helps ensure all the children are treated with equal concern and that their individual needs are met.

The third recommendation requested that the pre-school obtained written consent from parents for children to receive emergency medical treatment.

Action taken: The pre-school administrator has devised a form for parents to complete and sign, providing all the required written consents, including emergency medical treatment. This helps to promote children's welfare.

A fourth recommendation was for staff to provide suitable facilities for children to rest or sleep.

Action taken: There is a buggy pushchair which has a layback feature and is suitable for younger children to sleep in. Older children have small floor mattresses they can rest or sleep on if they need to. There is a quiet area which is safe for children to use.

The last recommendation was for management and staff to review the way space and resources are organised and staff deployed in order to maximise the learning opportunities for children.

Action taken: The play areas and space children use is now organised very well. The pre-school is able to leave their equipment, toys and resources out as they are sole users of the room. Low unit storage and the core activities such as the book area, role play and information and technology are located at the edge of the room. The other activities, for example creative, imaginary, puzzles and games, tables and chairs are in the middle areas. The learning opportunities for all the children are very good and the play space is utilised well.

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.

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 good. 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 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):

- consider providing parents with written information on Birth to three matters and the setting's policies and procedures
- review the information kept in the register so that it is clear on when children and staff arrive, depart and contact details

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 adult directed activities to ensure children are able to express themselves and use their imagination more in the focussed topics

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