



## Little Acorns Pre-School Alliance

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113582
<b>Inspection date</b>	02 February 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Steer
<b>Setting Address</b>	Kelsey Hall, Chalk Road, Ifold, Loxwood, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 0UD
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<b>Registered person</b>	Little Acorns Pre-School Alliance
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Pre-School is run by a committee. It first opened approximately 30 years ago and operates from the village hall in Ifold. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.30 to 12.15 with a lunch club from 12.15 until 13.30 and Tuesday's from 12.15 to 15.00, during term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 36 children aged from two and a half to under five years on roll. Of these 25 children receive funding for early education. Children attend from the local villages. The nursery currently supports one child with a disability.

The pre-school employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications and two staff are working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children have excellent opportunities to develop healthy bodies through daily physical exercise and play both indoors and outside. They delight in daily play in the fresh air and their physical skills are extremely well developed. For example some children celebrate their own success by punching the air as they accurately aim the ball to score in the basketball net. They revel in the freedom of daily outside play and are constantly active outside as they roll and chase hoops and skilfully manoeuvre pedal bikes whilst showing care and consideration for others at play. They demonstrate very good hand-eye coordination as they manipulate small pieces to complete puzzles and join construction blocks.

All aspects of children's health and well-being are given a high priority at the pre-school. They are protected by staff's understanding and implementation of policies and procedures designed to maintain health and promote healthy choices. Written consent from parents allows children to receive emergency medical care if needed and any minor bumps are dealt with by first aid trained staff. Any child needing medication has the dose recorded and the entry signed and staff work in consultation with parents to ensure children receive the correct treatment for their medical needs. Parents understand that children must not attend if they are ill or infectious and any that become poorly whilst at nursery are kept comfortable until they can be collected.

Some children bring a packed lunch and parents are asked to provide cool packs to preserve the food until eaten. Information about providing a healthy lunch box is given to parents and children enjoy contents such as brown bread, smoothies and fresh fruit. Children sit at a table with staff as they all eat together and staff discuss the food with the children and encourage them to eat. This way healthy eating habits and good table manners are encouraged and reinforced by example. Children's dietary needs are well known to staff who ensure that children are not given, or exposed to, any unsuitable foods. All children are offered a mid morning snack of seasonal fruit and vegetables along with a drink of either water or milk. Other healthy choices such as cheese, toast and breadsticks are also available. Children participate in the preparation and choice of snack, spreading their toast and pouring their own drinks.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very safe and secure environment where staff carry out risk assessments before and during each session, making sure the indoor and outside areas are safe and free from hazards before children begin to use them. Fire drills are regularly practised so children are aware of how to leave the building safely. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance between setting safe limits and allowing children the freedom to learn through practical discovery. For example, they show children how to safely carry their chairs with the legs pointing down to prevent poking anyone. Staff closely supervise equipment with higher risk such as climbing apparatus, but allow children to use equipment such as bikes, which they quickly learn to manoeuvre around one another safely. Children's welfare is enhanced as staff understand their role with regard to child protection.

Children are very happy and settle quickly in the familiar surroundings of the pre-school. They are familiar with the routine of finding their name to self register and putting their lunch boxes by the kitchen before eagerly rushing to engage in activities. Children play purposefully in the stimulating environment where staff make effective use of the indoor and outdoor environment to provide them with excellent opportunities for independent and group play. Children move freely and safely around the setting and settle to play with table top activities, role play and floor activities. Children use good quality equipment which is appropriate to their age and stage of development.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy and relaxed at the pre-school where high levels of staff supervision ensure children can explore and learn within a safe, secure environment. Children receive sensitive staff support until they are ready to independently face new challenges. They are given time for independent discovery and staff set realistic and achievable targets for children's learning. For example a child gleefully rolls cars down a plastic drainpipe outside, he carefully puts them in and when one does not go down he says 'I can see it!' He then squeals delightedly 'I did it!' as he decides to lift the drain pipe and they finally roll down.

Staff plan a very wide range of highly interesting activities which provide children with excellent opportunities to progress in all skill areas. Plans show links to both the Foundation Stage curriculum and the Birth to three matters framework and activities are differentiated to ensure children receive appropriate levels of support. Younger children have the same opportunities to become involved in activities at their own level, staff adjust their expectations accordingly but are alert for spontaneous learning opportunities, observing and recording the children's achievements to form a personal development profile.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have an extremely sound knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the Foundation Stage, including how children learn. They plan and deliver a wide range of extremely interesting activities and learning opportunities based on the stepping stones of the early learning goals, enabling children to make excellent progress.

There is a basis of core activities available at all times and frequently varied to prevent over familiarity and boredom. From this foundation challenging, planned focus activities are provided for children to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the world around them. These activities are assessed and evaluated in depth to ensure that the learning intentions are achieved. From there, key workers can plan the next stages of learning for individual children.

Children are proud of their achievements and show an excellent understanding of fairness as they amicably share resources. They are extremely happy and giggle and laugh with their friends as they make dough cakes in the home corner. Children are confident speakers and staff encourage children to repeat new words to reinforce their learning, such as deciduous and

evergreen trees. Children's mathematical development is excellent. They recognise and can name different shapes and enjoy using the large abacus to reinforce and further develop their counting skills and awareness of shape as they create a square shape by filling all the holes. They are developing a good understanding of simple calculation as they add up the cost of the flowers in the shop and charge 80p. Children learn about the wider and natural world through outings and through digging and growing plants. They solve problems when designing and making objects as they try different size pieces of construction until they find the right fit for their model. They notice changes in the weather and daily activities develop their understanding of the passage of time.

Children investigate and explore a wide range of materials, textures and objects, both man made and natural as they freely play in the garden and playroom. A sense of achievement is evident as a child fills a plant pot with compost, adds seeds and a label and proudly announces 'I did it all myself'. Children can observe the changing seasons as they enjoy nature walks in the village, collecting specimens to examine closely on return. Using a magnifying glass a child examines the objects stating 'it's enormous' as he stands on tiptoe to clarify the meaning. Feeding the birds each day with food they have made encourages children to think about the care needs of living things.

Children have access to a range of play technology items in the nursery, such as a till and telephones. They use keyboards and calculators, torches and a computer to promote learning in all areas. A digital camera produces pictures which are displayed on the computer for all to see.

Music and singing play a part in day-to-day activities and can set the tone with a rousing chorus, or calm and reflective tune, sometimes accompanied by movement and dance. Children enjoy small world play with dolls houses and figures, animals and vehicles or a fire station. They develop sustained imaginative scenarios in the home corner and shop, getting into character and exploring roles and relationships through play. Staff are aware of the learning potential of imaginative and role play and actively engage with the children, without dominating the play.

Staff effectively use a range of teaching skills to extend children's knowledge and skills. They clearly explain activities to children and plan a very good range of interesting, worthwhile activities to stimulate children's learning. Children learn at their own pace and staff use highly effective systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and to plan the next steps in their learning.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Relationships within the pre-school are excellent. Children are familiar with the daily routines and are warmly welcomed into the group by smiling, friendly staff. They settle well, are at ease and feel a sense of belonging and ownership of their environment. All children play a full part in pre-school life because staff value and respect their individuality. Circle time effectively brings all children together to form a positive start to the daily session. Children show patience during play and a sense of responsibility for their environment as they help tidy away resources during sessions. They have excellent self-esteem as a result of the praise and encouragement

they receive from staff and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately. They develop an excellent understanding of the wider world through planned activities and outings.

Excellent systems are in place to allow children to develop high self-esteem and build their confidence. This is evident in even the youngest children attending, who are seen to be independent in self-care and able to express their wishes and ask for help when needed. Children feel a sense of belonging as they self register at the start of sessions when they find their name card. They know where to hang their coats and stow their lunchboxes, and are aware of the routine at different times of the day. Children's attitudes to learning are very positive, they eagerly attempt activities and move confidently around the environment. They are open and friendly, chatting comfortably to their peers and the adults around them.

The nursery ethos strongly values every child and all efforts are made to secure outside professional help and advice where it is thought that this will benefit a child and help in their development. Any child needing additional support, whether educationally, emotionally or behaviourally, is given a great deal of input and thoughtful attention. The result is that children make excellent progress and feel able to relax and express themselves freely. Staff are able to develop individual learning programmes with realistic targets and by working closely with parents and outside professionals, children make very good progress. Their achievements are always celebrated and shared with parents.

The pre-school's partnership with parents is outstanding and this contributes significantly to children's well-being in the pre-school. Parents' views about their child are actively sought before the child starts at the setting and a regular exchange of information keeps parents well-informed about their child's progress. Parents are extremely positive in their praise of the pre-school and the care and education offered to their children.

Parents' opinions are valued and acted upon if it is felt that a change would be beneficial. For example, following a new parent commenting on not knowing who everyone was, a picture board of staff photos was displayed for identification. Parents are included when possible and invited to stay for sessions. They willingly respond to requests for resources to help with topic work and modelling.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by staff who have been checked and vetted to ensure their suitability to work with them. There are robust procedures in place for the recruitment and appointment of staff, although these are not in a written policy. Staff in place are all suitably qualified or experienced and attend training courses whenever possible to continue to update and extend their knowledge.

Children are cared for in one group, which can be split if necessary for circle time and story time, to allow all children to have maximum benefit from the activity. A key worker system is in place, providing parents with a point of contact for enquiries and concerns. The key workers

also complete the children's developmental profiles, providing a picture of their achievements and progress.

All documentation and paperwork needed to support children is in place, mostly produced to a very high standard. Documents are clear to understand, well presented and accessible to staff and parents alike. Details which require confidentiality are kept securely. An operational plan sets out the main day to day aspects of the setting as well as containing all policies and procedures, parents' information and examples of registration forms. However, some of the policies lack the required detail to fully comply with current guidelines and details of visitors are not fully recorded.

The leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding. The management are committed to maintaining high standards and further improving their provision through constantly evaluating and monitoring. The pre-school are aware of their strengths and have identified areas for future development, for example they plan to further develop the outside area for children. Management is dedicated and committed to developing a strong staff team who are extremely enthusiastic about contributing ideas and implementing a full and challenging curriculum for young children. Professional development is ongoing for staff to reinforce and further their skills. Documentation is in place to support all areas of practice and is very well maintained. The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

#### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the pre-school were asked to ensure that an effective induction programme is available for new staff members and to ensure that procedures are in place in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer.

Evidence is now available to demonstrate how the pre-school are implementing an induction programme for new staff. However, the child protection procedure has not been amended to include a procedure in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff, therefore the recommendation is re-applied.

#### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection 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 outstanding.

## 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):

- update policies and documentation in line with current guidance

### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)