

The Acorns Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511205
Inspection date	11 January 2008
Inspector	Caroline Hearn
Setting Address	11 Wittenham Avenue, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 5LN
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Registered person	Janet Wilson
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 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?

The Acorns Nursery School is a privately owned provision which opened in 1984. It operates from domestic premises situated in a residential area of Tilehurst in Berkshire. Children have access to all areas on the ground floor of the home. A maximum of 21 children between two and five years of age may attend at any one time. The nursery opens five days a week during term time only and offers sessional care. Morning sessions are from 09.30 to 12.30 Monday to Friday and cater for children aged four to five years of age. Afternoon sessions are held from 13.30 to 16.00 (Monday to Friday) for children aged three and a half years. Sessions for three year olds are offered on Tuesday and Friday afternoons from 14.00 - 16.00. A fully enclosed garden is available for outside play. The nursery school serves families from the local community and surrounding areas.

There are currently 40 children, aged from two and half to four years on roll. Of these, 34 receive funding for nursery education. Children may attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports some children with special needs and also makes provision for children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 10 members of staff. Of these four are qualified teachers and one is a qualified nursery nurse. They have one member of staff working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to wash their hands before snack time and after using the toilet. They understand the reasons for these simple effective routines and comment that they are washing off the germs. Children are well protected from the spread of infection. Good procedures are in place to support this, such as each child having their own hand towel and staff reminding them to wash their hands when they forget. Children receive appropriate treatment for any minor accidents as staff who have undertaken first aid training and know how to put this knowledge into practice.

Children have a good understanding of healthy eating they enjoy trying different fruits and discussing tastes and textures of these. Children bring a piece of fruit in during the afternoon session and take it in turns to prepare this for snack time. This gives their parents a good opportunity to discuss healthy eating and related topics at home when they select which fruit they will take in. The children with allergies have these recorded and staff have good access to this information to ensure children are always offered appropriate snacks or drinks. Children are offered a drink at snack time and can request further drinks at any time during the session.

Children make good use of the outdoor space during both planned and free play sessions. During free play they have access to bikes and tricycles. Older children use these confidently negotiating space and other tricycles well. Children are given plenty of good opportunities to practice their hand eye coordination during art and craft activities, such as cutting out, using staplers or painting.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and their families are made to feel welcome at the nursery school. Staff make time to discuss any concerns or issues with the parents as they arise. Children's art work is well displayed showing that staff value their efforts. Children are provided with a huge range of resources. A selection of these are at child height allowing them to freely select what they want to play with. All of these toy and resource boxes are clearly labelled to help children know where everything goes. Children treat the resources with respect and carefully tidy them away at the end of the session.

Children's safety is well thought through at all times. Staff constantly consider their surroundings and make any changes such as moving play equipment placed on the floor by the children in walkways. Risk assessments are recorded and acted upon. Children are aware of what to do in an emergency as the staff regularly practise the drill for this with them. Staff do not, however, record all of the information which is required by the fire officer following these practises.

Children are safeguarded as all staff have undertaken appropriate training. They clearly understand how to put it into practice to ensure the children's wellbeing.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy and benefit from a broad and interesting range of activities and experiences. The same activities are offered to all funded and non-funded children. Staff know how to tailor the activities to the age and stage of the children involved. During a number activity younger children may be asked to name the numbers and older more able children begin to look at concepts, such as addition. This clear differentiation ensures all children are sufficiently challenged.

Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The planning is closely monitored and fully evaluated. It effectively covers all of the six areas of learning to ensure children develop quickly across these. The activities clearly reflect the needs of children who learn at a different pace thus ensuring all children are offered activities tailored to their individual needs. Clear development records are maintained for all children making it easy to plot each child's stage of development. The nursery school has a huge volume of resources in all areas, these can overwhelm the children and make them less likely to explore new items due to the wealth of choice.

Children learn to sit and listen while others are talking during group activities. To help them gain confidence the staff organise activities, such as each child bringing in their favourite toy to show their friends. They then take it in turns to talk about their toy and why they like it. Staff support them very well during these activities and encourage quieter children to talk by asking them open ended questions. Children clearly understand that print carries meaning. They know that the signs and writing on the weather board convey messages about that days weather. Should the weather change during a session children are keen to ensure this is kept up to date. They notice when the sun has gone in and staff encourage them to describe what the weather has changed to. They are aware that if the weather is dull then the sign for this begins with a 'd'.

Children are developing an understanding of size and shape. They are able to sort objects into size order or group similar shapes. Staff give them time to reflect on their achievements and to ensure they feel they have got the order right. This time for reflection allows the children to consolidate new concepts and think through solutions to problems for themselves. Children learn how to use programmable equipment, such as the computer or remote controlled toys. When using the remote control toys they discuss how they can get it to travel across ridges in the doorways. They discuss why the toy can not get across the ridge in the doorway and how they could work around this.

Children have many opportunities to undertake art and craft activities. They enjoy freely mixing several colours to see what results they will get. A member of staff is permanently in the art room so they have a constant and appropriate level of support. Children are able to follow their interests and may choose to make spaghetti shapes with the play dough or a collage picture. This free flow approach ensures children enjoy and become absorbed in the activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff clearly take time to find out about each child and their family. Children learn about both their own and other cultures during topic work about other countries. They are aware that people celebrate different festivals and special occasions, such as Chinese New Year or Shrove Tuesday. In addition to learning about others, children are taught about right and wrong and discuss how others would feel in different situations. As a result children's, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children with a special need have high levels of support, allowing them to achieve their full potential while at the nursery. The staff work closely with both the families and outside agencies to ensure children receive the appropriate level of support. This support covers the range of needs children may have, such as speech and language support or obtaining additional equipment.

Children learn to negotiate and resolve small disputes by themselves. They are supported in this by the staff who intervene if this does not work. Staff encourage them to consider how their behaviour is making others feel or give them ideas as to how they can resolve these disputes. Children clearly understand these discussions and as a result are considerate to the needs of others and are generally well behaved.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. To further support parents the nursery school offers parenting classes during which they cover topic, such as behaviour. This ensures parents are highly supported and greatly increases the continuity of care between home and the nursery school. Parents state that they have regular opportunities to discuss their children's educational progress and that they are always presented with a highly detailed picture of their children's level of attainment. Parents also note that they are regularly given information about current topic work so they can continue this at home with the children should they wish. This level of information exchange ensures the children receive excellent continuity of care between home and the nursery school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of the leadership and management of nursery education is good. The staff are committed to developing their existing childcare knowledge and they regularly attend relevant training. Staff who have attended training feed any practice issues back to the rest of the team during their regular meetings. They look at different ways of doing this, such as a quiz. This develops their existing good practice which in turn raises the standard of childcare and education.

Children receive high levels of one to one support due to the careful deployment and high ratios of staff.

Documents relating to the children are comprehensive and contain all of the required information. The staff fully understand their responsibilities for investigating any complaints parents and carers may have. They do not have all of the most recent amendments to the National Standards and other Ofsted publications, although, without this information they still have a good understanding of children's needs and promote positive outcomes for children. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following their last care inspection the group was set one recommendation. This was to, develop the existing risk assessment further to ensure that it is sufficiently detailed and undertake regular checks to ensure staff identify potential hazards and take steps to address these. The nursery school have developed their risk assessment procedures and these are thorough and cover all areas used by the children. Staff are quick to spot and rectify any hazards thus ensuring children can safely explore their environment.

Following their last inspection of nursery education the group was set two recommendations. Firstly they were asked to consider ways children can be given more choice in independently selecting from the wide range of resources. The nursery school has a selection of resources at child height in clearly labelled storage trays. These allow children some freedom of choice and encourage them to become independent learners. The second recommendation was to develop activity plans to show more detail of how children will be grouped. The nursery school encourages free flow of movement between activities. Due to this children are not put in to set groups. Due to high staff ratios they are able to ensure that all children have equal opportunity to take part in the range of activities on offer.

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.

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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):

- ensure the emergency evacuation practice records contain all the information required by the Fire Safety Officer
- ensure procedures are in place to enable staff to be fully aware of changes to 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):

- consider the volume of resources on display to ensure these do not overwhelm the children.

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