

Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY281575
Inspection date	17/09/2008
Inspector	Bridget Copson / Janet Armstrong
Setting address	Acorns Playgroup, Evershot Village Hall, The Common, Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 0JY
Telephone number	07985 435958
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Little Acorns Playgroup opened in 1984 and has been registered at the current premises since 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 maximum of 26 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It is open each weekday from 09.00 - 12:00, with the option of a lunch club from 12:00 - 13:00. There are also additional sessions on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 13.00-15.30. A holiday club operates on varying days during the summer and admits children up to the age of ten.

There are currently 24 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 10 children receive funding for early education.

The playgroup is run by a parent committee which employs six members of staff, most of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Children are happy and settled and have a sound sense of identity within the group. The environment is planned and structured to promote child-led play and learning. However, systems for promoting children's learning through the Early Years Foundation Stage are not effective enough to ensure children will make good progress in all areas. Children's welfare is promoted effectively in most areas through a generally safe and secure environment and teaching them about keeping safe and healthy living. The setting has made some improvements, but has not developed successful systems of evaluating the quality of provision to promote continuous improvement of care and learning for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure children's starting points, plans and assessment systems link together to identify next steps in their learning and offer challenge to support children's progress through the early learning goals
- develop self evaluation systems to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement
- update all written policies, procedures and records to promote the safe and effective management of the provision and children's needs
- develop links with other early years providers to ensure all individual care and learning needs are promoted.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The setting maintains policies and procedures for all aspects of the provision. However, these are not all up-to-date or available to parents and staff to support them in promoting children's welfare and meeting their needs. Staff use records on a day-to-day basis to promote children's health and well-being and to provide consistent information to parents. Appropriate employment and vetting procedures ensure staff's suitability is assessed in most areas and appraisals provide training opportunities to further support them in meeting children's needs. The setting does not have an effective system of evaluating the quality of provision to highlight strengths and weaknesses to ensure improvement in children's care and learning.

The environment is well-planned to promote children's independent play and learning. Key people provide support to monitor their well-being and to ensure resources meet their developmental needs. Children are valued as individuals and their sense of identity is promoted well. For example, they find their own labelled pegs, drawers, book bags, sticker reward books, see photographs of themselves around the room and take turns as helper and to bring things in for 'show and tell' each week. Staff do not keep an up-to-date written risk assessment. Instead, they check all areas of the provision daily to identify and eliminate risks to children and make notes on the weekly staff meeting agenda. However, this system is not effective in ensuring all potential hazards are eliminated, such as loose carpets and rugs in the play room.

Staff establish sound working relationships with parents to support them in meeting children's needs consistently. Parents are kept informed through displays, newsletters and an information pack, although this is not complete or up-to-date. There are satisfactory systems in place for encouraging parents to become involved in their children's learning, such as settling in and feedback sheets and informal discussions. However, systems for communicating and working in partnership with other early years providers and agencies are not yet formed to complement, extend and provide continuity of individual children's learning and care.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Overall, children are able to access a good range and balance of activities to support their interests and keep them busy and occupied. The environment has been set up well to provide children with spacious areas to independently access the different activities available, although they do not always have opportunities for daily physical activities. Staff know the children well and offer positive reassurance to help them settle and give support in their chosen activities and care needs. An emphasis on child-led activities helps the children to focus on and benefit from what they enjoy doing. Staff encourage children's communication and literacy skills well through lots of discussion and use of books. This means that children use their developing language skills to negotiate and share ideas with increasing confidence in their activities. Children are introduced to numeracy and problem solving through some group activities, such as singing and circle time, although these are not always given sufficient emphasis to successfully challenge the children. Overall, children are well-behaved. They learn about positive attitudes and the consequences of their

behaviour on others, for example, how to share and wait for a turn with popular toys. Their positive behaviour and achievements are acknowledged through on-going encouragement and praise from staff and sticker book reward ceremonies each term. However, staff do not always fully engage the children in some group activities which means some children lose interest and become disruptive.

Current planning systems identify ideas to cover over the year, such as visitors from the community and celebrating a wide range of festivals from around the world. Staff have informal discussions with parents about where children are at in their learning and use observations made of the children and their interests to guide plans for the following week. Satisfactory assessments systems show that children are making progress through the six areas of learning. However, these, along with planning do not yet link up with the children's starting points or identify the next steps for children's individual learning. This means that whilst staff offer good levels of support to the children, they do not always offer sufficient challenge and extension in the activities to ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning.

Children's welfare is promoted effectively in most areas of the provision. Staff maintain a generally safe and secure environment in which children learn about keeping safety through staff expectations and guidance and practising the fire evacuation procedure regularly. Staff have appropriate systems in place to support children's health and well-being and to ensure their individual needs are met consistently. For example, children discuss hygienic hand washing routines and learn about healthy eating habits through enjoying fresh fruit at snack times and nutritious choices in their lunch boxes.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	Satisfactory
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	Satisfactory
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	Satisfactory

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	Satisfactory
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	Satisfactory
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	Satisfactory
How well are children safeguarded?	Satisfactory

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	Satisfactory
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	Satisfactory
How well are children helped to stay safe?	Satisfactory
How well are children helped to be healthy?	Satisfactory
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	Satisfactory
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	Satisfactory
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	Satisfactory

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met

Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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.