



Little Acorns

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY281575
Inspection date	22 September 2005
Inspector	Dinah Round
Setting Address	The Village Hall, The Common, Evershot, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 0JY
Telephone number	07949 806877
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Registered person	Little Acorns Committee
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Acorns Playgroup, previously operating under the name of Ladybird playgroup, opened in 1984. It operates from the village hall, in the village of Evershot, in Dorset. Children have access to the outdoor play equipment and playing field at the adjacent Stickland Primary School. It is a committee run group, which serves the local area and surrounding villages.

There are currently 16 children on roll. This includes 12 funded three-year-olds. The

group supports children with special needs.

The group operates five days a week, during school term time. Sessions run from 09:00 to 12:00, with a daily lunch club from 12.00 to 13.00 where part-time school aged children attend during the autumn term. There is an additional session one day a week from 13:00 to 15:30 during the summer term, for children leaving to go to school. A holiday club operates for two weeks during the summer, and caters for children from two to eight years.

There is a team of four staff working with the children. Two members of staff have an early year's qualification, with another staff member currently undertaking training. The group receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from the risk of cross infection due to the regular routines and procedures followed by staff. This includes, wiping the tables before snack, and the provision of disposable paper towels and tissues. Children learn about personal hygiene through the daily routines, such as, washing their hands before snack time and wiping their nose with disposable tissue. Parents are made aware of the policy regarding exclusion of children with infectious illnesses, which makes sure the risk of cross-infection is minimised and safeguards children's health.

Children's health is well promoted by the variety of snacks provided. Parents contribute fruit, and children enjoy fresh and dried fruits, such as, apple, banana, orange, carrot and raisins, followed by a biscuit. They have access to drinks at snack and lunch times. Children are developing an understanding about following a healthy diet, due to explanations by staff about the importance of eating their fruit and yoghurts in their lunch boxes before any biscuits. The group take account of the children's individual dietary needs to ensure children remain healthy.

Children benefit from the extensive outdoor play facilities shared with the adjacent school, which gives them good opportunities for physical play. They show very good control as they climb, balance, and negotiate the different aspects of the wooden play equipment, with many children gaining confidence as they develop new skills. Children have regular opportunities to go on local walks and take part in swimming activities, which helps them to keep fit and healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a safe environment. They remain secure due to the effective security arrangements and procedures in place. For example, a bell is fitted to the door, and staff closely supervise the exit during arrival and collection times. This ensures that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised, and that they

are only collected by an authorised person. Children are learning to keep themselves safe, for example, staff maintain close supervision by the outside play equipment, offering support and giving children gentle reminders to hold on carefully. However, at times, children are not made aware of the importance of moving around safely when indoors.

Children have access to a satisfactory range of resources. These are sufficiently well organised in

low level cupboards, and enable children to access some of the resources independently to make their own choices. For example, one child confidently selected his own sponges from the shelf during a printing activity.

Staff have a clear knowledge of child protection procedures which support them in their role of keeping children safe. The detailed child protection policy ensures staff are clear of their responsibilities, and clear records are kept of any visitors to the group.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, settled, and enjoy coming to the group. They are confident to leave parents and carers, and have positive relationships with staff and with their peers. Children who are new, or less confident, are helped to settle by staff, who are sensitive to their individual needs. Staff are friendly and caring and show an interest in what children do and say, which helps build children's self-esteem. Children have access to a suitable balance of activities and play experiences, which are sufficiently well laid out to provide an interesting and welcoming environment. However, there are limited play opportunities offered to children attending the lunch club, consequently after lunch the school aged children become a little boisterous.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage Curriculum, and provide children with a varied range of activities and learning experiences. Relationships between adults and children are good, and staff question children on occasions to encourage them to think. Children's progress is monitored and recorded under the stepping stones. However, these are not used to inform planning, provide sufficient challenges for more able children and help them build on existing skills. Children respond well to the staff's regular praise and encouragement, for example, they happily co-operate in tidying away the toys during the session.

Overall children are making satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. They are confident, and independently select and put on their own aprons before messy activities. Children willingly speak out in registration time, as they proudly talk about items from home. However, they do not always sit quietly and listen to the others. Children are developing an enjoyment of books, they select them independently, and handle the books with care. Staff support children in linking the initial letter sound of

their name at snack time and self-registration, and many are able to recognise their own names.

Children count confidently to nine and are beginning to understand simple mathematical problems. Such as, counting how many boys and girls are present, and successfully working out if there are more boys or girls. However, children do not often use numbers in their play. They learn about the wider world through interesting topics, for example, when covering a topic about the world, children made Chinese dragons and experienced using chopsticks to taste noodles. Children have opportunities to explore and investigate objects and learn about living things, such as, learning about pond life and the different stages of a frog. They confidently build and construct as they enjoy making models from the duplo, such as, a house, a water pistol.

Children explore colour, texture and shape through a range of activities including painting, play dough, gloop, and modelling. They use their imagination well through independent role play, although opportunities to maximise use of the role play area to extend children's learning is not always fully explored.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and caring environment, which gives them a sense of belonging. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs, and liaise closely with parents to make sure their needs are met. Children are valued and respected as individuals, and staff offer additional support to the less confident children to encourage them to join in the activities. The resources and topics covered help raise children's awareness of diversity and gain an understanding of others, such as, during the topic about 'the world'.

Staff provide a calm and sensitive approach to managing children's behaviour, and children are learning to share and take turns. For example, a member of staff explains to two boys that there are enough lego bricks for them both, and helps them to find the colours they want. Children are generally well behaved, although some group activities are not effectively managed to help children learn what is expected of them. For example, during registration time two children crawl around the circle while others are talking. Children benefit from the staff's regular praise and encouragement, which helps develop their self-esteem.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. They receive comprehensive information about the setting, and are kept well informed through regular newsletters and information displayed on the notice board. The daily discussions between staff and parents at the beginning and end of the sessions, contributes to the children's needs being met. There are effective systems in place to keep parents well informed about their child's learning. For example, open mornings are organised where the children's individual achievements and developmental progress is shared with parents. Staff actively encourage parents to become involved in their child's learning, for example, books are sent home on a regular basis for parents to share with their children.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are settled in the welcoming and friendly environment. The room is sufficiently well organised to provide separate areas for physical and structured activities. Resources are effectively laid out with low shelves to encourage children to become independent. Although at times during the session, the organisation of some group times and activities is not effectively managed. Overall, the playgroup meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. There are clear policies and procedures in place to support the smooth running of the group. Different areas of responsibilities are delegated to the staff and committee which ensures they are clear of their roles. The good team work, key worker system, and regular sharing of information between the staff contributes to children feeling settled and secure. Staff show a commitment to updating their skills and knowledge by attending training. There is little evaluation of the sessions or activities, to identify where improvements can be made to help children build on existing skills.

Most aspects of documentation is in place, however the parental consents to seek emergency medical treatment or advice have not been requested. Medication records have the relevant information detailed, but the records are not organised to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group agreed to ensure the premises are secure; that all staff are familiar with the policies; good hygiene practices were maintained and parental permission to seek emergency medical treatment was obtained.

Systems have now been put in place to make sure the premises are secure, and includes a high chain and bell fitted on the external door. The door is always kept secure, which ensures children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. All staff now have copies of the policies and procedures of the group, and any changes are discussed at staff meetings to keep them informed and up to date.

There has been improvements in the hygiene procedures followed by the group, with the introduction of disposable towels to minimise the risks of cross-infection for children. No parental permission to seek emergency medical treatment or advice has yet been obtained.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- develop strategies that are effective in managing children's behaviour during group times and activities.
- review the organisation of the session and staff deployment, to make sure activities are effective in meeting the needs of all children, with particular reference to lunchtime.
- develop documentation further to include parental permission to seek emergency medical treatment or advice, and ensure that medication records maintain confidentiality.

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):

- develop systems to make sure that children's assessments are used to inform planning, and offer learning opportunities that provide sufficient challenge and help children build on existing skills.
- improve the structure of group activities and story time, to help children develop their listening skills

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