

Little Acorns

Little Acorns, 84 Firgrove Crescent, Yate, Bristol, Avon, BS37 7AG

Inspection date	20/05/2014
Previous inspection date	11/02/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	4
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		4
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		4
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		4

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is inadequate

- The quality of teaching overall is weak because some staff do not have a secure enough understanding of how young children learn. They do not always identify, plan or extend children's learning as well as they could.
- Practice in some rooms is stronger than others. This has led to differences in the amount of progress some children make particularly in their language and communication.
- Monitoring of staff practice and teaching is weak and has not tackled inconsistencies in teaching. There are also weaknesses in the key-person system and how some staff track children's progress and liaise with parents.
- The outdoor areas are not used well enough to provide a good range of planned activities that support children to make better progress in their learning.

It has the following strengths

- Staff have a secure understanding of the reporting procedures to follow if they have a safeguarding concern about a child in their care.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspectors observed children's play experiences, activities and interactions with staff, indoors and outside in all areas of the nursery.
- The inspector sampled a range of documentation, including evidence of suitability of staff working with children in the nursery and a range of other documentation.
- The inspector looked at children's observation, tracking and assessment records and discussed their progress with staff.
- The inspector held a meeting with the owners and senior staff members and undertook a joint observation of activities which were then discussed.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents and carers by analysing information from the parents' questionnaires and from written comments.

Inspector

Melissa Cox

Full report

Information about the setting

Little Acorns Day Nursery operates from a converted shop and has been registered under the existing management team since in 2006. The nursery is one of seven nurseries owned by a private partnership. The nursery is open each weekday from 8am until 6pm excluding Bank Holidays and a week between Christmas and New Year. Children in the toddler age range have access to a playroom, sleep room and changing facilities on the ground floor. Children aged three to five years have use of a main playroom, a smaller quiet room and toilets on the ground floor. Babies have use of a room on the first floor. The premises also include an office and a kitchen. Children have access to an enclosed rear garden. The group is registered on the Early Years Register. There are currently 62 children on roll. Staff support a number of children who speak English as an additional language. Children attend from surrounding areas. The nursery offers the provision of free early education to children aged three and four. The nursery employs 10 members of staff who work directly with the children. The majority hold relevant childcare qualifications at level 3 and above.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- improve staff's knowledge of the learning and development requirements in order to consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child and use this information to accurately identify their next steps in order to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development
- improve systems to monitor staff so they have the necessary skills and knowledge, and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that teaching practice is consistently good; to ensure children are sufficiently challenged in their learning, and accurate information is shared with parents about their children's progress and learning needs
- improve all staff's understanding of the key-person system to improve liaison with parents so all key staff have relevant information about children's individual needs and positively promote their personal, social and emotional development.

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- develop the use of the outdoors so that children can access a wider range of play opportunities to support their progress across all areas of learning.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have a poor understanding of how to support children's learning and, as a result, children do not make enough progress given their starting points. Staff gather some information from parents when children first start at the nursery and also complete a settling-in summary of each child's starting points. They make notes of any additional needs that a child may have and this is added to the child's folder to inform planning. However, once this information has been collated, staff are unsure of how to link the information they have gathered to the general interactions they have with children.

Planning is not effective in matching activities to some children's needs. This is because staff have not established a clear link between the range of activities and opportunities they offer, or how they will purposefully support children's learning. In addition, the accuracy of observations on children, and level of detail shared in the assessments is varied. This means it is difficult to share up-to-date information with parents and other staff about children's learning. This is because some staff have a weaker understanding of how to identify and track children's learning. The planned next steps in learning for some children are less focused on the most important areas of their development, such as speech and language. This means that staff are not tailoring their planning to meet children's learning needs, but instead are focussing more broadly on general development milestones.

The quality of the teaching across the nursery is variable. This is largely dependent on staff's qualifications, understanding of how to promote learning and their levels of confidence. There are examples of generally good teaching observed in some rooms and weaker teaching in others. Teaching in the pre-school and baby room is generally good. Staff are better qualified and experienced and as a result create a positive climate for learning. Consequently, children are mostly interested and engaged. For example, during a small group activity, children are encouraged to discuss what happens next in the life cycle of a butterfly. This successfully encourages each child to build on their confidence and speaking skills. Children talk about the books they have read, pass around the caterpillars in a jar and respond well to the questions posed by the staff. This activity successfully builds on children's prior learning and interest.

Babies also enjoy good levels of support from staff who are fully aware of their individual needs. Staff provide babies with a varied range of activities that are exciting and enjoyable and are organised around their individual sleep and feeding routines. This means that the youngest children are very settled, which helps them take part in what is offered. Staff know what children enjoy playing with and what they need to do next in their learning. For example, staff talk about supporting babies' understanding of the wider world as they visit local places of interest. Early communication is also well supported as staff and children communicate well using baby signing alongside positive and purposeful interactions. Staff are suitably qualified to work with babies and have a good understanding of child development for this age group. They track children's achievements well and share accurate information with parents.

The quality of teaching in the toddler room is poor. Staff in this room are not as well qualified and do not have a secure understanding of how young children learn. They fail to actively build on what children already know and can do because they do not have this information. Staff lack a sufficient knowledge of what they need to do next to support children in their learning. For example, staff put out a box of construction toys for the children to play with while some of their friends prepare snack. They sit with the children on the carpet and supervise them while they try to piece together the shapes. However, staff fail to support them appropriately as they do not help them follow the instructions on the construction cards, to build on children's understanding of numbers, shapes and colours. They are unable to adapt the activity to meet the children's abilities. A small group of children are provided with a shaving foam activity. They sit at the table and push the foam around with their hands. However, staff do little to engage or challenge the children in their play because they do not know how to interact purposefully with children to help them with their learning. There are very few additional resources because planning is poor. Staff start to demonstrate the shapes of the letters in the foam but fail to sound out the letters to promote learning. This means that children become confused as to what letter their name begins with and the sound it make because individual staff have each modelled this differently. This weak practice means that not all children make the same level of progress as others in the nursery given their starting points.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children come into the setting and settle suitably well, greeting their friends and staff as they arrive but during the day, their needs are not effectively met by staff. This is because staff do not always provide children with personal levels of support or guidance tailored to meet their specific needs. Staff gather some information from the parents to inform the settling in procedure. However, staff do not use the information sufficiently to help children develop in their learning. The lack of an assigned adult that accurately recognises their key children's specific needs means that some children do not display suitable levels of self-confidence. Some children struggle to play with purpose, unwilling to join in with group activities or using a wide range of activities. This does not help children to feel safe and develop secure emotional attachments.

Behaviour in the nursery is improving, after a number of parental complaints. However, this progress is slow because some staff still have a weaker understanding of their responsibilities than others. Throughout the sessions there are still minor incidents of poor behaviour in the toddler room because children are bored and not effectively engaged. Children struggle to communicate their needs and do not have the consistent support of an adult to help them understand about turn-taking, respecting the toys and working together. This can also be attributed to poor daily planning, which does not meet the needs of the younger children. The routine and structure of the day is not well thought out. Staff have unrealistic expectations for children, expecting them to sit for long periods or re-visit activities that are not adapted for their stage of development, such as extended song times. This also demonstrates the staff's lack of awareness of child development. As a result, these children do not acquire the skills and attitudes necessary to prepare them

for their next stage in learning and school.

Resources within the nursery are generally accessible in low-level shelves and boxes. In the pre-school and baby rooms, children can choose from a selection of toys and resources on offer. Babies enjoy playing with a natural range of materials and large treasure baskets of household objects are accessible on the floor for them to explore. Children in the pre-school room are also able to choose toys to use in their play and enjoy the opportunity to practise early writing skills or engage in imaginary play. However, in the toddler room, resources for play are very much limited by what staff provide for the children. This is because the routine of the day is very adult directed. This results in a very rigid timetable of activities, that are chosen by staff and in which children are expected to take part. For example, when children first arrive they are directed to take part in a singing group activity. While this meeting time is generally positive and children enjoy taking part, group singing time is repeated twice more in the space of the short morning. Although the children are reluctant to take part, adults expect them to participate. Staff remove children from their chosen play activity to sit on the mat and join in the singing. Later on adults make the children sit in the main hallway of the nursery while they complete their nappy changing routine. Children sit for long periods of time with a limited selection of books, while staff complete this routine task. This does not support children's enjoyment of learning or keep them safe, because children sit blocking the fire exit and are also in danger of being bumped by the door.

Access to the small outdoor space is also governed by a timetable in the day. Staff in the toddler room limit the children who can go outside in a confusing and muddled selection process. However, once the selected group of toddlers are outside, the babies are also brought down to play, doubling the number of children in the outdoor area. The failure to organise a better rota for the garden use means that some children are not always able to play outside with their friends. When they are, they are unable to enjoy free play in case they compromise the safety of the younger children. There is less of a focus on active learning outside because this time is set aside for the children to run around in the fresh air. Staff provide children with some opportunities to develop their physical skills because they use a range of climbing, balancing and pedalling activities in the fresh air. The staff in the baby room provide regular opportunities for the youngest children to go on outings and they visit the local parks and shops in the area.

Children are developing some awareness of healthy lifestyles as they have fruit snacks. Children have regular access to drinks of water, although in the toddler room staff are less vigilant in offering children drinks, although they do have sufficient to drink over the day. Staff work in partnership with parents to ensure that dietary needs are catered for. Information is gained about any allergies and dietary preferences and staff ensure that they observe these at all times. The range of meals on offer is healthy and balanced.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

Overall, the leadership of the nursery is ineffective. The owners have not met their responsibility in overseeing the delivery of educational programmes within the nursery. They have not sufficiently monitored the impact of the quality of teaching or the activities on offer, particularly in the toddler room, which is poor overall. This significant weakness has led to a number of children falling behind in their learning. The impact of this is particularly noticeable in the lack of progress that some children make. This is particularly noticeable for children who have an identified speech or language delay in the toddler room. Staff do not provide effective levels of support for them or tailor an individual programme that fosters and builds on their speaking skills. This also impacts on other areas of their learning such as personal, social and emotional development. Toddlers are unable to effectively communicate their needs or start to build friendships. Consequently, they are not well prepared for their move into the pre-school room. Staff have opportunities to attend additional training and are subject to reviews by the quality manager. However, these opportunities have not been used well enough or with the urgency required to address weak teaching or inconsistent practise. Overall, the nursery staff fail to sufficiently promote a programme of learning that reflects the needs, aptitudes and interests of the children attending. As a result, children have insufficient opportunities to acquire the skills and attitudes necessary to prepare them for their next stage in learning and school.

Safeguarding procedures are adequate. The provider has procedures to ensure that all staff who work directly with the children are subject to a suitable recruitment and induction procedure. This includes all staff undertaking a Disclosure and Barring Service check. Staff's understanding of child protection is secure. They know to declare any changes in their suitability to management. Staff are confident in the child protection procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child in their care. A robust safeguarding and whistle-blowing policy is in place. Senior staff with responsibility for child protection are well trained and keep their knowledge up to date. There is a suitable mobile 'phone and camera policy in place, which is suitably observed by staff and visitors. Staff ratios are met at all times.

Self-evaluation of the nursery is weak and does not identify the weaknesses in teaching, which have gone unnoticed by senior staff. The combination of the lack of a robust monitoring procedure and the failure to tackle identified issues with teaching has affected some children's progress and well-being. Written comments from parents express their satisfaction with the nursery. However, there have also been a high number of written and verbal parental complaints, in particular with behaviour management in the toddler room. The nursery has taken some suitable steps to address these concerns. For example, a change in procedures during sleep time means that children are now closely supervised by staff supervision. This has prevented any further incidents of poor behaviour.

Partnerships with parents are generally positive. The nursery provides information for parents in their newsletters and on display boards around the nursery. Parents are invited to share experiences from home as they are encouraged to fill in observation sheets of their child's own 'wow' moments at home. Daily verbal exchanges of information take place and staff and the senior staff team demonstrate a willingness to accommodate any requests if they can. Parents of younger children receive daily written feedback about their children's day in respects to care needs such as feeding and sleep times. Information is

also shared with parents about their child's learning. Staff complete regular and detailed observations on children in their learning journeys. However, because of the weaknesses in assessment and planning parents do not always get a true picture of where their children are in their learning. This affects how well children's further learning is supported in the setting and at home.

Partnerships with other professionals involved in the care and support of families requires some improvement. Although staff meet and share information with other professionals, the level of information they share is not always based on accurate observations of children. The information is not precise enough to inform the ongoing discussions or support plans. This lack of care does not support a meaningful joint approach to partnership working. However, staff do generally follow any advice or guidance given, such as making improvements to resourcing to support children with hearing impairments.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY336168
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	975064
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	62
Number of children on roll	44
Name of provider	Mrs Woodman And Mrs Evans Partnership
Date of previous inspection	11/02/2010
Telephone number	01454 850 122

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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