

Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	309767
Inspection date	24 January 2008
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Setting Address	Mawdesley C of E School, Hurst Green, Mawdesley, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 2QT
Telephone number	01704 822657
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Registered person	Little Acorns Pre School Committee
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Little Acorns Pre-School is run by a committee. It has been registered since December 1998 and operates from a purpose built annex within Mawdesley St. Peters CE Primary School in the village of Mawdesley, Lancashire. A maximum of 12 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each week day during term time from 12 noon until 15.30 and from 09.00 to 15.30 on Wednesdays. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 13 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of these, 13 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local catchment area where they live.

The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. There are currently no children attending for whom this is the case.

The pre-school employs four members of staff, of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay very healthy because staff teach children to take responsibility for their health from an early age and provide a session style full of healthy choices. The continuous provision of activities available both outside and indoors enables children to be physically active whether outside or indoors. Children also take themselves to the toilets across the school hall and use soap, hand towels, tissues and wipes to keep their hands and noses clean. Staff prompt, remind, demonstrate and explain why good personal hygiene is important, so that children are independent and understand the importance of these routines. Food preparation and eating and drinking areas are limited and are mixed with messy areas and washing up and hand washing facilities. Staff manage these areas adequately and are successful in including children in all aspects of keeping the environment clean, for example, by wiping the tables or cleaning up the sand in the play ground.

Good attention to individual children's health needs means that toileting and dietary needs are appropriately catered for according to each child's needs and their parents' wishes. Most staff have first aid qualifications and consent is obtained for the seeking of any necessary emergency medical treatment. Accident records are well maintained but there is no clear policy or procedure for the recording of any necessary medication administration. This jeopardises children's health if parents and staff are unsure of the procedure and do not give necessary medication using the correct consents and records. There are no children currently on roll who require medication.

Children enjoy excellent levels of physical activity and challenge both indoors and outdoors, taking part in climbing, balancing, ball skills, group games and riding activities in the hall or playground. In addition, the outdoor area is set out with construction, role play, experimental and creative resources, so that children can continue their learning experience for extended periods outside, enjoying the fresh air. They also regularly walk locally to use shops, farms and community facilities for exploring nature and getting to know their environment on foot. All this activity supports their physical health very well. Children's emotional health is outstanding in the setting because staff are consistent and move easily about between activities supporting all the children's choices and facilitating their play. Staff are warm and responsive to all children, ensuring that children have independence but are never isolated.

Children are very well nourished and enjoy a healthy diet through snacks, such as sugar and salt- free pop corn, crackers, cheese, banana, carrot and apple, which they are sometimes involved in preparing. Water or milk is offered to drink and water is easily available throughout sessions. Children enjoy activities related to healthy eating and during their picnic lunch discuss and divide their foods into healthy and unhealthy items, sticking the wrappers and cartons on a poster. This consolidates their already good knowledge about healthy foods being the natural, least processed ones without artificially added sugars, salt, preservatives and chemicals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children are cared for in an exceptionally welcoming, bright and stimulating environment with a happy and purposeful atmosphere. The limited spaces are invitingly set out to maximise children's choices and provide cosy spaces to set up and use the ample resources. Children's

coats and bags are stored on a rack which is easy to reach and walls are covered with displays of children's work, photos of them at play and useful items to interact with, such as mirrors, a self-registration name tree, a clock and a measuring poster to note their heights. Most of the low wall space is taken up with a first class range of stimulating resources which contribute enormously to children's enjoyment and achievement. Books, computers, mark making, craft, construction and experimental materials are all stored neatly and obviously for children to help themselves to and use. As a result, children settle to play exceedingly well, finding challenges all around the room as well as knowing where to find their favourite things. They are superbly confident in their surroundings and feel that it is truly theirs because they are allowed to explore and use everything within it.

Security is balanced with considered risks and independence for the children. The pre-school door is not usually locked during sessions because children can move freely indoors and out, but staff are highly vigilant and ensure that they know where each child is at all times. Careful arrangements using passwords and enrolment information are made to ensure that staff know exactly who is collecting a child and who is permitted to do so if this is not the usual parent or designated carer. Regular fire drills are held in conjunction with the whole school and records are kept of these. Electrical appliances, wiring and fire equipment are checked and documentation about what to do in the event of any emergency is posted. Risk assessments are undertaken to manage all planned trips safely as well as the play environment and identified hazards are promptly fixed.

Children are successfully learning how to keep themselves safe because staff's ability to teach children how to keep themselves safe through considered risks is exemplary. Many children are escorted on foot each day from the play group in the village to their pre-school. They learn how to walk safely, looking for traffic, crossing safely and watching out for one another. They role play traffic and road crossing scenarios regularly as they play outside on the bikes, using the zebra crossing and road markings, or making their own traffic lights and filling stations. Staff show them how to manage tools, such as cutlery, sticky tape dispensers and scissors as they make things or prepare snacks. They enjoy role playing with tools and diggers, scooping up sand and moving it or putting bolts into their wooden sand boat. They take considered risks as they use the ropes and trapeze on the climbing bars in the hall, going high with staff support and then helping to pack away the large mats and wheeling the frame away, being watchful not to roll it over their toes. They are taught to avoid accidents, for example, by putting their feet on the floor when sitting on chairs and by helping to stack the chairs away when they want the floor space. They are enthusiastically taking responsibility for their environment because they are so involved in setting out and cleaning and clearing away their own activities, supported by staff who give them time to complete tasks and respect their wishes to continue things and keep them ready for the next day.

Children are well protected from abuse because all staff have a good understanding of their role in child protection and safeguarding procedures. Staff work together with other agencies to support children who are at risk and have procedures in place in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The named person for child protection has been on recent safeguarding children training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children's enjoyment and achievements are outstanding. They immediately settle to play, discover and experiment because the environment and staff offer them optimal challenge,

choice and independence, for example, children create mixtures, using powders, seeds, lentils and coloured water which they select and stir for themselves. They watch how different colours are created as they mix paints and innovate to make their own variously coloured traffic lights and animal face paints. Staff offer ideas and question and challenge children to discuss what they are doing and thinking so that they can extend and develop this in appropriate ways. As a result, children persist in activities and seamlessly move to related activities developing excellent social and communication skills as they go. Children enjoy a story, for example, about the three little pigs and then join in with role playing and acting the story. Then they decide to paint their faces as animals of their choice or choose other story books while others go outside to use the bikes, sand digger, basketball or doctor's house set. Staff are led by children's choices and they come alongside and play with them, constructing, role playing, reading, using the paint, play dough, sand and water and coming outside with them. They respond to all children's demands and also notice and attend to those that happily play alone. Children therefore, have excellent levels of self-confidence because purposeful staff always talk and listen to them and have high expectations of what they can all achieve for themselves. They help children to extend their knowledge and develop their natural curiosity through real experiences, for example, as they mix with their older friends in school or visit local shops, farms and older people in their community. Throughout sessions, children are confident, concentrate well and enjoy playing alongside one another and adults.

The session routine is simple and group times are skilfully used by the staff to tell stories and link ideas to the general themes of the term. Children are not forced to come and sit down or leave their chosen activities. Instead they complete what they are doing and come to the group when the attractiveness of the story being told captures their attention. When it is time for snacks and clearing up, ample time is allowed for children to do as much for themselves as possible, with full adult help and support. As a result, children actively contribute to their own setting, sorting and clearing up, cooperating together to clean tables and put away bikes, fetch milk from the main school and put the books and construction things back into their places. Each child's preferences and achievements are sensitively noticed and praised, photographed, noted as evidence, displayed or taken home. In this way each child feels highly valued and confident to show staff what they can do and talk about their ideas, for example, a child's use of the computer mouse to select icons, another child's play dough snowman and another child's shiny telescope construction are praised and enthused over.

Nursery education:

The quality of the teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are inspiring in their ability to provide a nurturing atmosphere and foster enormous self-confidence and good social behaviour. A vibrant, well planned, child centred play environment, simple themes on which to base some activities and above all an individualised approach, ensure that all the areas of learning are seamlessly covered. Staff's superior skills and exceptional levels of knowledge about each individual child enable them to promote each one's development in all areas through choices that the child themselves have made. As a result, children are extremely eager to learn because they feel in control and can follow their interests. Children who enjoy outdoor and construction play, for example, develop their knowledge and understanding of how things work and their social, creative and physical skills. They steer the bike around from the shed to the front play area, link and fix the trailer to the bike, give a ride to their friend and put together obstacles and a ramp. All the while, staff are helping them to communicate, question and try things for themselves, talking about number and letters in a relevant way to help children solve problems and explain their thoughts. Similarly, children's early reading and writing skills are significantly enhanced by free access to numerous mark making media, using paint, chalk, water, brushes,

pencils, computers, to 'write' in support of their role, physical or creative play. They paint the walls with water marks in the shape of the letters that start with their names and they chalk the number of bounces they do with the basketball.

Children are making excellent progress in all the areas of learning. Staff are enormously successful in providing for their personal, social and emotional development, providing a basis from which the other areas of learning follow. Children are actively listened to and given time to make choices and talk about their wishes and feelings. They are supported and shown kindly how to think about one another and to feel part of the school and wider community, for example, simple negotiations help them to take turns and share the use of the computer or favourite books. Staff have a superior understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. They observe, individually plan and know their key children very well. They celebrate children's achievements immediately and display and show their work on the walls and in photographic form. They regularly make observation notes during sessions about what they see children can do and they make meaningful, understandable entries of photo and written evidence into children's progress profiles to illustrate how each child's play is leading to learning in each of the six areas.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are inspired to be extremely independent, confident and considerate learners because staff design the environment to maximise its welcome and children's sense of belonging. They use photos and label work with notes of praise about children's achievements, so that children look around and know that they are a valued part of their pre-school. They have their names on the chairs and they put one another's names onto the tree if they are present, or onto the 'at home' section if it is a day when they don't attend. This supports children in understanding exactly where all their friends are. In addition, children are strongly identified with the school of which their setting is a part and they regularly see and consider their older friends when they are using the adjacent hall. Parents and children are warmly welcomed by their key staff who communicate clearly and openly at the beginning and end of sessions, exchanging information about children's particular needs, so that sensitivity and due regard is given to children's present circumstances and feelings. Children are helped to consider and value diversity because there are some books, dressing up costumes, dolls, play figures, puzzles, posters and games which show positive images of various cultures and disabilities. There are also some topic activities, visitors and project work undertaken to bring other countries and cultures alive for children. Children are also involved in raising monies for their equipment and toys and for children in need around the world.

Children with physical disabilities and behaviour or learning needs are included fully in the life of the setting because the setting is on one level and staff are both committed to inclusion and skilled to identify emerging concerns. They liaise sensitively with parents and relevant professionals to ensure that they plan and work together using recognised and consistent techniques which benefit children with emerging learning difficulties. Staff are exceptionally skilled and successful in giving children a rich and varied choice of activities, offering both one to one time and encouragement to join in with group activities. Children behave extremely well and are able to share and cooperate because staff model appropriate play skills, ask children to help them to resolve conflicts themselves and offer easy ways for children to respect, consider, praise and apologise to one another without losing face or feeling humbled. Sticker rewards and timers are occasionally used as negotiating tools, but usually staff's consistently applied

positive behaviour management works because children feel valued and in control. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of partnership with parents and carers is good. Children receive consistency of care between all elements of their life because key staff communicate extremely well with parents and obtain good quality consents and child details from the outset. Parents can read a detailed handbook about the policies and procedures of the setting including excellently explained details of the Foundation Stage. There are regular newsletters incorporating information from pre-school and useful ideas about how to be involved in children's learning at home. There are open days for prospective new starters and settling in processes are very flexible. Parents are encouraged to take home books each week to use with their child, have daily access to good information about what their child has been doing in pre-school and can see up to date developmental scrapbook evidence of their child's progress at any time. The complaints system is notified to parents through the policy document and a poster. Parents know how to contact Ofsted and their levels of satisfaction are very high. Parents seen on the day of inspection say that they are very happy with how well their children are progressing and how skilled and supportive staff are.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The supervisor provides meaningful daily and weekly support to all staff and is herself well supported by the management group. She acts as an excellent role model and is highly committed to promoting an inclusive environment where every child matters. Up to date policies, procedures and handbooks show how the setting works to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. The manager works together well with staff to plan and evaluate the education provision. She is committed to training for all staff, particularly in areas which directly influence child care practice and as a result, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. She is aware that evidence of staff career paths and appraisals are not yet clearly available, although there is no discernable impact of this upon children unless it is affecting staff retention. The staff group is well informed and responsibilities to be the named person for child protection, behaviour, equal opportunities and disabilities are shared.

Staff deployment contributes well to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff ratios are good and the highly motivated staff know exactly what their roles are throughout each session, concentrating solely upon the choices and requirements of each individual child. Policies and procedures mostly work well in practice to promote good outcomes for children. Accident, incident and complaint procedures work well, but the medication and sickness policy does not explain what the setting does about any required medication. All child details, daily registers, safety checklists and risk assessments support children's welfare and safety well. These are well organised and available to staff and parents, but no space in the setting is given to files at the expense of accessible toys and resources for the children. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two recommendations made at the last inspection in 2004. The documentation for accident recording required improved confidentiality, so that each record would be viewed alone by the signing parent. This is now done by using a single page for each entry.

For nursery education, the point to consider was how to improve children's access to the resources so that they could initiate their own spontaneous play more. This has been successfully achieved by arranging the environment so that most resources are easy to see, reach and set out for use by children. As a result, they are confident in their play environment to choose all kinds of things to use spontaneously.

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 good.

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 that there is a clear policy and procedure regarding the administration of medication.

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):

- further develop staff appraisal and career development programmes to extend professional development.

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