

Little Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	221640
Inspection date	04/11/2010
Inspector	Susan Rogers

Setting address	The Community Room, Stukeley Meadows Primary School, Wertheim Way, Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6UH
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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*.

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Description of the setting

Little Acorns Pre-school is run by a voluntary management committee. It opened in 1995 and operates from the community room in Stukeley Meadows Primary School in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 24 children aged two to five years may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 11.45am and from 12.30pm to 3pm during school term times only. The setting is registered with Ofsted on the Early Years Register. Children attend for a variety of the sessions on offer. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 65 children on roll who are within the early years age group. The pre-school is in receipt of funding for early education. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

There are five members of staff, including the manager, who all work directly with the children. All of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Of these, one has a level 5 qualification, four have a level 3 qualification and one has a level 2 qualification. The pre-school is supported by the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The pre-school provides children with a welcoming learning environment and a range of good resources that encourage discovery and exploration in most aspects of learning. Staff have a good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and use their skills successfully to further children's learning and promote their independence and well-being. Staff's commitment to inclusion and their thorough knowledge of children's differing needs ensure effective learning opportunities for each individual. Overall, documentation is well presented, regularly reviewed and together with children's detailed observations promotes their progress. A system to develop the effectiveness of the pre-school is progressing well and, together with a detailed action plan and efficient leadership, demonstrates that the pre-school has good capacity for sustained and continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further procedures so that parents have access to all written records about their children
- develop greater opportunities for children to observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live and the natural world.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff work effectively with other agencies to safeguard and protect children. All staff are aware of any aspect of a child's care that would cause concern and senior staff receive regular child protection training and updates. The premises are welcoming, with activities arranged to protect children's safety. The risk assessments are detailed and regularly reviewed, reflecting children's needs. Recruitment and vetting procedures for all of the adults who work with the children are thorough and completed promptly. All policies and procedures are well presented and accessible to parents.

Staff are well supported in their role through regular appraisals, training and opportunities for professional development. Partnerships with parents and carers are developing through regular newsletters, a comprehensive induction pack, consultation sessions and access to all policies. The system for recording children's progress is well organised and includes annotated photographs and evaluative observations that are matched to each area of learning. These identify further areas for individual children's development. Staff are exploring additional ways of involving parents in their children's continuous learning and development as currently they have limited access to their child's assessment folder.

Strong leadership and effective processes are in place to ensure that improvements to the setting are ongoing. Parents and carers, children and other early years professionals, with whom the pre-school has established good links, are regularly consulted. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported. Staff have high levels of awareness and devise innovative resources that ensure that children are provided with individual support as soon as they enter the setting. Images that reflect diversity support children's awareness of the world around them. Strong support is provided as children move from the pre-school into a number of mainstream school settings, promoting their confidence and self-esteem.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children make good progress as they access a well resourced learning environment and enjoy the support and dedication of skilled and experienced staff. Children confidently develop their independence as they pour their own drinks and help themselves to fresh fruit and vegetables at snack time. The well established routines encourage children to protect themselves against illness and infection. Staff are vigilant in their supervision of children while they play but also encourage children to be aware of the dangers around them, enabling them to enjoy challenging physical activities.

Activities include both child-led and adult-initiated activities, providing valuable learning opportunities. For example, children work together as they enjoy group and story time activities. They are encouraged to think for themselves during a

'what is missing' game and choose from indoor or outdoor activities during self-directed play. Staff provide in-depth support as children extend their problem solving skills. For example, carefully chosen resources assist children in their understanding of numbers. They count and calculate how many connecting camels they have, recognise numerals and learn that numbers can be added to or subtracted from. Children's language skills are carefully extended as they talk to each other and develop friendships. The registration system, as children have their snack, encourages them to recognise their names and understand the purpose of text. Mark-making activities are available both indoors and outdoors, encouraging children to use these materials as they enjoy imagined play scenarios. The organisation of the sessions and play spaces enables children to enjoy using the newly refurbished outdoor area for long periods of time. Children are well-motivated in using their reasoning skills to resolve problems through staff presenting well-considered questions. They are confidently supported by members of staff who offer care that reflects children's individual needs.

Children's creative skills are extended as they use paint, boxes and textured materials to create images of their own choosing. This promotes children's self-esteem as they thoroughly enjoy blending colours and textures to produce dramatic effects. Children are developing skills for the future as they include others in their play and help staff to clear away toys as the session ends. They discover how things work as they use programmable toys and tend to the flowers they have recently planted. These experiences, however, provide limited opportunities for children to observe, find out about and identify features in the place they live and the natural world. Planning is straightforward and is adapted to meet individual children's learning needs. Assessments and observations support individual children's progress and help staff to clearly plan for the next steps in their learning. Staff have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and provide many meaningful learning opportunities that are prompted by children's interests.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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