



Acorn Day Nursery (Castlethorpe)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	141751
Inspection date	14 September 2005
Inspector	Maxine Coulson
Setting Address	17 South Street, Castlethorpe, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK19 7EL
Telephone number	01908 510309
E-mail	zoe@acornchildcare.co.uk
Registered person	Acorn Childcare Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Acorn Day Nursery at Castlethorpe has been registered since 1987 and is part of a private chain operating several other nurseries in the surrounding area. It takes children under five years in the day nursery and operates an out of school club for older children using additional premises in the neighbouring first school. On this occasion, the nursery was inspected. The main nursery uses the ground floor of a

converted chapel with offices, staff and training rooms above. All are linked to the nearby school by gardens and the school playground. All areas are fully enclosed.

Children who attend come from a wide geographical area.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 07:30 until 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. At present, there are 68 children on roll, 51 of these being under 5 years. This includes 14 children in receipt of funded nursery education. The nursery currently supports children with special needs.

There is a large team of staff who have suitable qualifications and a range of experience. The nursery is a member of the Effective Early Learning Programme Quality Assurance Scheme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are healthy through the staff's good hygiene practices, which help reduce the risk of infection. For example, visitors to the baby room are asked to remove shoes when entering the room. Staff within the baby room consistently wear disposable gloves and aprons during nappy changing helping to prevent the spread of infection. Babies and toddlers are able to rest according to their own needs and routines. All children are beginning to develop an understanding that appropriate hand washing stops germs from spreading and making you unwell.

Children benefit from a healthy and well balanced diet, which meets all their dietary needs. They have regular snacks such as toast and fruit both morning and afternoon, with cooked meals available midday. Children have drinks at snack and meal times; however, they do not have access to fresh drinking water throughout the rest of the day. This may result in some children becoming thirsty.

Children have regular access to a large outside play area. Children under the age of three freely choose from a good range of toys and equipment that is appropriate to their ages and abilities. They are beginning to learn skills such as riding scooters and kicking balls helping to develop their large physical skills and hand/eye co-ordination. Outside play enables them to freely run around allowing them to learn about spatial awareness. Older children do not have access to equipment such as slides and climbing frames that help them in their physical development of control and co-ordination. They show awareness of their own and others space. An insufficient range of suitable outside toys and equipment results in a lack of purposeful play and development of large physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enter happily and confidently into a warm and welcoming environment where they settle easily and play in a relaxed atmosphere. Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised wherever possible through the staff being consistently vigilant during the children's inside and outside play. For example, when younger children play on the slide staff guide them up the steps. Children play safely within a secure setting and through safety measures being in place, such as security doors and stair gates.

Babies benefit from a wide range of appropriate toys and resources. All other children move around the rooms during the day to experience a good range of activities, such as art and craft and imaginative play. Children under the age of three have easy access to a good variety of appropriate toys and equipment and play in a comfortable environment in their base rooms. Older children enjoy selecting and playing with toys and activities when in the main nursery room, but are only able to choose from activities selected by staff when in their base room. Staff safeguard and promote children's welfare well through their sound understanding and knowledge of child protection issues and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, settle well and are confident within the nursery. They have a high sense of self worth and self-esteem through staff knowing and meeting children's individual needs. However, there are major differences between the quality of learning for children under three and the small number of children who are in receipt of nursery education. Children under three participate eagerly and enthusiastically in well thought out activities. Staff provide a variety of stimulating resources and experiences to help them progress and develop in all areas. Staff knowledge and use of the Birth to Three Matters framework is improving children's achievements. They give children regular opportunities to play together and to join in musical activities. For example, singing along to tapes and using a book to reinforce enjoying and learning with pictures and words.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Children are not making satisfactory progress in some areas of learning. Staff plan suitable weekly activities for the children, however, these activities are sometimes cancelled and priority given to younger children. Staff are not currently using observations to identify children's achievements or to evaluate and plan the next steps in each child's learning. This results in key areas of children's learning being missed.

Children are beginning to develop a sense of time and place as they talk about what happens when they are away from the nursery. They are confident in selecting activities and toys and assume responsibility for personal care. For example, they wash hands before and after eating. Children speak confidently to share their experiences with both peers and staff. They have opportunities to learn about culture, diversity and the wider community.

Children enjoy listening to stories but staff do not always plan these well and children quickly become disinterested. They lack experiences allowing them to learn and develop reading and writing skills. Staff miss opportunities to help children extend their understanding of linking sounds and letters and that print carries meaning. There is not any labelling in their base room to help children to begin to recognise simple words and few opportunities for children to recognise their name. Children confidently count to 10 and beyond and they are beginning to use language to describe quantity. However, staff do not provide enough focus on maths activities to allow children to develop their understanding of calculation, measure and problem solving.

Children show good imagination and use role play to enact what they know, extend communication skills and initiate play. However, they are not able to access toys and equipment to allow free and spontaneous play when in their base room. Children are not encouraged to explore creativity and their senses during art activities and they do not have regular opportunities to experience music and dance. Children are beginning to develop good levels of hand/eye co-ordination through various indoor activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are developing good self-esteem and a sense of self worth through staff knowing and meeting their individual needs well. For example, where children may have special dietary requirements such as vegetarian, there are always alternatives available. They play happily with other children of the same age helping to develop social skills. Children are beginning to learn and understand the need to share. Children under three behave well through staff's clear understanding of appropriate methods for dealing with behaviour. Overall, children know when they have done well through staff's acknowledgment and praise.

Children have regular access to a wide range of activities and resources that help them learn about differing lifestyles and cultural events and celebrations. Toys and equipment reflect positive images and diversity. Children are learning to consider and value others through discussions and activities with their peers and staff. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from the positive and friendly partnership staff have with parents. Children receive consistent care because staff work closely with parents to ensure they follow their home routine. The daily sharing of information, regular newsletters and parents' notice board helps staff and parents work together to meet children's individual needs. The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is satisfactory. Staff provide information about planned activities and share the observation and development records with parents, but these records are not kept up to date and staff do not always follow the planned activities. Consequently, this limits opportunities for parents to be involved in children's learning to help them make progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children enter confidently into a welcoming environment with sufficient staff to ensure children are safe and secure. Staff make and record observations for children under three through use of the Birth to Three Matters framework. They share these records with parents and use them to help plan children's development. Staff offer a variety of fun activities to help build children's confidence and develop new skills. Induction training and appropriate written policies and procedures ensure staff are able to safeguard children's welfare. Staff share information with parents and keep clear up to date records to ensure all children receive consistent care and their individual needs are met.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is inadequate. Staff working with children in receipt of nursery education have sufficient knowledge of the Foundation Stage to help children achieve. However, the recent changes in the staff and premises and no systematic monitoring of the teaching, learning and organisation of rooms, has resulted in gaps in children's learning.

Therefore, the provision is not meeting the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last care inspection the nursery have made good progress in ensuring a daily record is maintained of the days and times children attend. Through regular monitoring of children in attendance this ensures correct staffing ratios are in place at all times. This results in staff being able to promote and safeguard children's welfare and safety.

Since the last nursery education inspection the nursery have made good progress in providing a greater range of activities that extend children's knowledge of differing cultures. Staff plan activities and offer resources and experiences that encourage and extend children's learning of different ways of living, cultural events and festivals.

However, there has not been any progress made to improve observation and record keeping of children's progress. This results in staff being unaware of each child's individual progress. Therefore, children are not sufficiently learning across some areas of the curriculum.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 there has been one complaint relating to National Standard 9: Special Needs. The provider was asked to investigate the issues raised by conducting an internal investigation and to report back to Ofsted within 10 days. The provider sent a detailed account of how they handled the issues. Ofsted were satisfied that appropriate steps were taken.

The provider remains qualified for registration.

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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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 children have access to fresh drinking water at all times.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- devise and implement an effective system of planning and evaluating activities to ensure all children make progress across all areas of learning.
- organise rooms to ensure children are not constantly disrupted during planned and focused activities.
- implement a vigorous system to monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk