

Acorns Day Nursery Unit

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	106289
Inspection date	23 October 2007
Inspector	Joyce Bowler
Setting Address	Old Sticklepath Hill, Sticklepath, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 2BQ
Telephone number	(01271) 329936
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Registered person	Coral Dawn Cray
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 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?

Acorns Nursery is a privately owned day care facility situated at the North Devon College in Barnstaple. The nursery was first registered in 1996. It cares for children of staff and students at the college and serves families from the surrounding areas of Barnstaple. The premises comprise of a single storey building with a fully enclosed and level outside play area. Children are cared for in two main play rooms, and other facilities include an office, kitchen, sleep-room for babies, and toilets for children and staff. The nursery is registered for 30 children and is open for 51 weeks a year from 08:30 until 17:30 on weekdays. There are currently 49 children on roll, 29 of whom receive funding for nursery education. Children with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and English as an additional language are welcomed and supported. There are nine members of staff who all hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a further qualification. The nursery is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning about good health through well established practices. Older children routinely wash their hands after messy play, using the toilet and before eating. Younger children who are able to walk to the bathroom are guided through hand washing routines by staff who ensure that they understand why they need to use soap and to dry their hands well on the individual paper towels. Children are helped to become toilet trained and staff guide them in the use of potties, which are cleaned after each use with sanitiser. Babies are protected well from cross contamination as the changing mats are cleaned after each use and staff wear disposable gloves when changing nappies or dealing with bodily spills. Children's health is protected through the appropriate recording of accidents and medication. All records are shared with parents who countersign books, including giving consent before the administration of medicines as well as after to confirm that they have been informed. An immunisation policy is implemented to ensure that children are protected from cross infection. All members of staff hold first aid qualifications and these are updated every three years.

Children benefit from a variety of nutritious foods which are provided at snack, lunch and tea time. Parents may choose to provide packed lunches or opt for meals cooked on the premises. Staff hold food hygiene qualifications and have regular kitchen checks from the local Environmental Health department. A food thermometer is used to ensure that all prepared food is at the correct temperature and hygienic methods are used to cool meals. Children's dietary requirements are adhered to and parents are supplied with menus in advance. Babies have their emotional needs met during bottle feeding as staff ensure a happy feed by making eye contact, interacting well and holding babies appropriately. All children enjoy the social interaction of mealtimes where they are allowed to finish at their own rates.

All children have daily opportunities to access the outside area and to develop their physical skills both indoors and out. They have a well equipped garden area which allows them opportunities to climb, balance, ride on and push along toys with increasing skill. The college field provides extra space for them to run around under supervision. Planned activities include music and movement, and dance. Children are able to access drinking water after energetic play. Babies and toddlers are provided with drinks in their own beakers and bottles. Children of all ages benefit from a good range of resources which promote physical development. Babies and toddlers are helped to develop their mobility. They have access to suitable sized cutlery, brushes, construction toys and sturdy baby books. Older children are learning to use scissors with increasing skill, to build with more sophisticated construction tools, such as Lego, and to use pens for mark making.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are kept safe in the nursery as staff are vigilant in implementing risk assessment procedures effectively. They maintain a daily written risk assessment of the premises and all areas used. Children are protected by measures that are in place to reduce risks and these include good door security, recording of visitors, guards on radiators and keeping cleaning and hazardous materials out of reach. Children's safety is ensured as staff consider this at all times, for example, throwing away any spilt sand after play and recording checks on the bathroom area during use as well as every hour. Sleeping babies are monitored using a radio baby monitor

and via good visual access through the playroom interior window. Babies sleep records are maintained and shared with parents. Staff use clean linen for each child and individual sleep patterns are followed. Children are learning to keep themselves safe by helpful reminders from staff not to run and the need to wait before they go outside while staff check the garden. Steeped access to the changing mat ensures that toddlers are not lifted unnecessarily and this also protects staff's backs. Resources may be accessed safely from low storage around both playrooms. The emergency evacuation procedure is displayed and fire drills are recorded appropriately. All children are included in the drills and there are clear procedures for staff to remove non-walking children from the building. Safe collection procedures are in place to protect children and additional photographic identification is required before staff will release a child to a nominated person.

Children's welfare is safeguarded as the nursery has a clear statement to follow in the event of a child protection issue and this includes procedures to follow in case of an allegation against a member of staff. All staff are aware of the signs and symptoms of a child protection concern and of their responsibilities. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board handbook is displayed along with the flowchart for procedures in the office. All allied documents are available to parents in the nursery foyer.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled at the nursery. They enjoy the friendly welcome that they receive on arrival and they beam with pleasure when hearing their names. Babies and toddlers have bonded well with staff and respond to appropriate levels of affectionate care. They benefit from staff's attention to their individual needs with plenty of cuddles and relaxed chat and play. The provision for children aged under three years is very good. Children benefit from the staff's evident knowledge and understanding of child development as well as each child's individual needs. Staff use the Birth to three matters framework well and have devised an appropriate set of activities and routines which meets babies and toddlers developmental needs. Staff assess children's progress effectively and use their observations to introduce the next step for each child, for example, when creating opportunities for a toddler to explore an interest in climbing in and out of things. Staff collect vital information from parents to ensure continuity between home and nursery so that their individual routines are maintained, for example, mobiles and comforters are used at sleep times. Displays in both playrooms are bright and welcoming. Children's individual and group art and craft work covers the walls and ceilings, and provides imaginative visual reminders of themes which children have completed or are involved in.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children have a positive attitude to learning and finding out about things. They respond well to staff encouragement and engage in activities with enthusiasm. This is largely due to the genuine interest that staff show for the children and the planned topics. Children enjoy seeing their own work displayed. Staff make excellent use of the space available to ensure good opportunities for floor and table top play as well as areas to spread out in imaginative free play. Planning and assessment are very good and show that staff use all observations and evaluations to inform the next set of plans and activities. They inform their practice by following guidance which prompts them to ask themselves how they can extend children's knowledge and understanding, what they would change in the future and how they can build in extension or simplification activities for the next time. Staff create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere for children to learn as they play. Planning shows a good

balance across the six areas of learning via a stimulating range of topics over a two year rolling programme. Assessments and individual play plans show that activities are tailored for children's specific developmental needs. The current assessment system is being changed to reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage which will be introduced across early years settings in 2008. The new assessment system is in it's infancy and is not yet fully established. Staff deploy well between activities and demonstrate that they know when to intervene in a game and when to stand back and let the play develop. Children benefit from these opportunities to enjoy free play. They are growing in self esteem as they enjoy making choices and seeing their work being valued and displayed. They are developing independence as they learn to put on their coats before outdoor play and choose songs to sing before lunch. As a direct result of the educational programme children are learning to recognise their own names, to gain good pencil control and to begin to write their own names. They enjoy discussion time and staff encourage them to contribute their own ideas and thoughts, for example, when holding a pumpkin and describing, in their own words, how it feels. Maths language and counting are integrated throughout the day routinely. Children have opportunities to weigh, measure and compare through planned activities with identified learning outcomes. Children are familiar with the concept of number and are helped to use it, for example, when looking at the sign showing how many children are allowed in the play house at any one time. Children's creative development is fostered well as they are provided with a good variety of art and craft media as displays show. The planned curriculum includes regular opportunities to sing, dance, move to music and to engage in imaginative and small world play. Children are learning about the world about them via well planned topics which relate to the seasons, places and people that they can relate to. These topics enable them to understand how things change, for example, when planting, growing and harvesting their own vegetables. They have good access to resources to support their learning and these include computer software programmes, dressing up clothes, pictures, books, magnifiers, videos and artefacts.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and welcomed at the nursery due to sensitive settling in procedures and an emphasis on helping them to grow in self esteem. Staff ask parents to fill in a section entitled 'All about me' on the registration form and this forms the basis of initial staff assessment and planning for each child. The nursery's equal opportunities policy is implemented in practice by respecting children's individual needs, family backgrounds and specific interests. Babies develop a strong sense of self and belonging as they are able to see themselves in the large wall mirror and to recognise themselves on the photographs which are displayed at their level. Older children recognise their pictures and written names on cards, coat pegs and work trays. Staff are aware that children learn most effectively when they feel secure and comfortable in their surroundings. They encourage parents to bring in children's comforters to help continuity between home and nursery. Children's diversity is appreciated and they are beginning to learn about social and cultural differences by playing with a range of resources which support planned topics and festivals throughout the year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children with learning difficulties or physical disabilities have their needs met as staff liaise closely with parents and any support agencies and provide appropriate support. The nursery SENCO (special needs coordinator) ensures that all staff are aware of children's specific needs and individual educational plans are drawn up as necessary.

Children behave well as staff provide an atmosphere which is conducive to cooperative play. Older children are able to share and to take turns. Staff use positive praise at all times and

children respond well. Babies and toddlers are helped to play alongside each other and staff are aware of the need to role model good behaviour and to offer consistent guidance which is sensitive and age appropriate.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The staff team show a clear commitment to following their parent and carer relationship written policy. It is evident that they value highly the contributions and feedback, both written and verbal, made by parents. All policies and procedures are shared with parents in the entrance foyer of the nursery. Comprehensive information regarding the care and education for each age group is displayed on three notice boards. The nursery provides regular newsletters, holds parents evenings, operates an open door policy for parents to visit and discuss their children with staff and ensures that up to date assessments are available. Staff maintain 'Home books' and toddler diaries which relay vital information between home and nursery. For babies and toddlers this contains information regarding eating, sleeping and nappy changes as well as information about activities, progress and behaviour. Parents are invited to contribute news of achievements or home events. Following the last inspection parent feedback was sought, and acted on, in order to ensure that issues were addressed effectively. Parents of children engaged in the Foundation Stage are supplied with information on a wipe board which is updated daily. This includes what they are going to play with, look at and learn about, for example, looking at pumpkins and making an autumn display. Parental permissions are held for outings, use of sun cream and seeking emergency medical advice and treatment. Additional permissions and exchanges of information ensure that children are cared for in line with parents wishes, for example, asking parents to confirm that their children can take part in a project about the fun side of Halloween and making pumpkin faces. Excellent quality information is supplied to parents regarding the nursery education curriculum. This is provided in the nursery prospectus and on the notice boards in the foyer. Parents are able to examine long, medium and short term plans, are given clear explanations of the Foundation Stage and how their children will be helped to progress across the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Extra information for families is supplied and this includes details of local baby signing classes, parenting groups and health information for young children. Staff have established a very good programme for younger children and parents are supplied with highly informative information regarding the Birth to three matters framework which staff use very well to inform their practice. The nursery staff team have decided to begin to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage which is due to be introduced nationwide in September 2008. They are beginning to plan and to assess in line with this framework and are supplying parents with information about this which is clear and comprehensive.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit from the nursery's good organisation. The written documentation is presented as the operational plan and is shared with parents and carers. All policies and procedures required by legislation are in place. These have been reviewed regularly since the last inspection, however, the contact details for Ofsted are not correct on all documents. There are effective procedures in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Full details of staff employment procedures, checks and qualifications are shared with parents. Staff demonstrate their continued suitability by updating their knowledge and sharing good practice via attending local cluster group meetings and reading early years publications, such as the Early Years Educator. All students are monitored appropriately and have a staff member as their mentor. Staff make

effective use of the space and time available and display good deployment between organising activities and carrying out housekeeping tasks in order to ensure the smooth running of the nursery. Registers are maintained and these show the times of arrival and departure for all children and adults at the nursery.

The leadership and management is good. The nursery manager and her staff have established close working relationships. This is demonstrated as the deputy manages the nursery effectively in the managers absence and good teamwork is evident. Staff maintain very good working procedures and routines at all times. In this way they can be seen to implement the overall mission and aim of the nursery as stated in the prospectus. Children benefit from being cared for by staff who endeavour to ensure that children are happy, secure and stimulated in a caring environment where the partnership with parents is valued. There is a strong focus on self-evaluation throughout the nursery and they are working towards accreditation by the National Day Nurseries Association. Staff are monitored via the appraisal system and room leaders oversee the implementation of the planned programme. Formal staff meetings are held to evaluate work and staff use a daily exchange of information and discussion to ensure that standards are being maintained.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection one issue was raised regarding documentation. The nursery now has a procedure in place to ensure that appropriate steps will be taken in the case of a child protection allegation against a member of staff. The policy and all procedures for child protection are now in line with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board guidance and ensure children's welfare will be safeguarded effectively.

At the last nursery education inspection the nursery was asked to improve systems for observing children's achievements and assessing their progress, so that parents could see clearly how their child was making progress towards the early learning goals. An action plan was drawn up to expand the system and ensure that evidence was available to parents in a clear and workable format. They consulted with parents to see what kind of information they would like before devising a new system which they then monitored. Staff used further parent feedback which confirmed that the new assessments were valuable and easy to understand together with their own evaluations before adopting it fully. It is evident that action taken has been of benefit to children as assessments for each child are useful to parents and fully implemented when staff plan the curriculum. This system is currently under review again as the nursery begins to establish the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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.

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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 contact details for Ofsted are up to date and correct on all documentation

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):

- review and evaluate the newly introduced assessment system as it is established.

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