

# Little Acorns Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique reference number** 129363  
**Inspection date** 01/02/2011  
**Inspector** Sheila Harrison

**Setting address** Warners End Community Centre, Stoneycroft, Warners  
End, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, Hertfordshire, HP1 3QG  
**Telephone number** 01442 266732  
**Email**  
**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011

## 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*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

## **Description of the setting**

Little Acorns Pre School has been operating for over 35 years. It is run by The Trustees of Warners End Neighbourhood Association and operates from Warners End Community Centre, Warners End, Hemel Hempstead. The group has sole use of a large playroom with an integral kitchen, toilets, a quiet room and a secure outside play area. The playgroup serves the local and wider community.

A maximum of 24 children aged from two to five years may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 25 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The setting provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds. The group supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs five members of staff. All staff hold an appropriate early years qualifications to Level 3. The setting is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from the local authority.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are happy and are making good progress in their learning and development. Strong links with parents and carers ensure that they are kept well informed of their child's progress. The setting promotes an inclusive, safe and healthy environment, where staff are well aware of, and respond to, the individual needs and interests of the children. Staff work closely in partnership with other professionals and this ensures that the uniqueness of each child is fully recognised. The leadership and management team work well to gain an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and take effective steps to improve it.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

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

- enhance the self-evaluation systems to continually assess all aspects of the provision
- enhance the learning opportunities in the outdoor environment to support and extend the children's learning.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding children are well organised and carefully managed. Effective procedures are in place for liaising with the appropriate child protection agencies and identifying any child at risk of harm. Staff have a secure

understanding of the child protection processes. Records required for the efficient management of the early years provision and to meet children's needs are maintained and effective. A strong collection procedure is securely in place and ensures only designated adults are allowed to pick up the children. The suitability and qualifications of all adults looking after children are ensured, with robust recruitment induction procedures. The surroundings are conducive to learning, secure and well cared for. Staff take worthwhile steps to ensure that children are safe indoors and out, and that furniture, equipment and toys are suitable and safe. Daily checks on the premises are carried out and any maintenance issues are quickly dealt with. When the heating broke down a heating engineer was immediately called and the heating repaired. A well-ordered environment ensures that resources to cover six areas of learning are suitable and available for the children to freely choose from. Children independently take out from the drawer particular containers and spades they needed for the sand tray outside although there are already others to choose from. Children are taught to be safety conscious and they show a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Staff have a good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and they are well deployed to support the children's learning. They are skilled at differentiating the activities to ensure all children are involved and gain the most of what is on offer. Children are making good progress relative to their starting points and capabilities. Their progress is carefully monitored to ensure that there is no underachievement. Staff provide a welcoming environment by displaying children's names and examples of their work. They are well aware of children's likes, dislikes and current stage of development through the sensitive settling procedure including the information parents provide. This information helps the setting to provide an individualised service and have realistic expectations of the children.

Equality is promoted well within the setting and all children's individual needs are being met. Children are encouraged to feel valued and free from discrimination as the play materials reflect diversity. They use a wide range of multicultural resources to learn about other cultures and beliefs and take part in planned topics and themes celebrating festivals. Children are enjoying the role-play area as a 'Chinese take away', they are practising lifting cooked noodles with chopsticks in the messy play area. Positive images of ethnicity, gender and disability are displayed around the nursery. Staff promptly identify a child's need for additional support sharing information and records with colleagues, parents and, where appropriate, with interagency teams to ensure that each child gets the help he or she needs.

The setting has effective processes in place to monitor the quality of the provision to ensure continued advancement. The manager although newly in post communicates high expectations about securing improvement. The strengths of the setting are recognised. Management, staff and parents contribute to the settings self-evaluation process although this system is less securely developed to continually assess all aspects of the provision. The current plan for improvement is well targeted and attended to quickly promoting achievement for all children. Staff strive for improvement and to provide high quality care and education. They are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Many staff have attended short courses to update their expertise. Staff regularly discuss and evaluate the routine and activities to

improve the quality of the setting. They have recently reorganised the layout of the setting and this has improved access to the messy play and children's choice of role play materials.

The setting has highly positive and well-established relationships with parents and carers ensuring each child's needs are met. There is a well-developed two-way flow of information about their own child's achievement, well-being and development. Parents know their child's keyworker and talk daily to the staff about their development at home. They are encouraged to take part in the parents' rota and see the setting in operation. They can see their child's learning journey on request. The setting provides valuable guidance and information about ways parents and carers can support their child's learning. Children enjoy taking a library book home to share with their parents. Informative displays in the foyer shows the staff photographs, the policies and procedures and gives useful information on child development. Parents report that they are very happy with the setting and their children quickly and confidently leave their side in the mornings. Children delight in taking home the pre-school mascot 'Peanuts' with the parents writing his adventures in his diary. The setting has initiated a dialogue with the children's other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensuring the continuity of learning and care for the children.

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

Children are developing very positive attitudes to learning. They are enjoying their time at the setting and display high levels of involvement in the activities. They are making good progress in their learning and development, as the staff ensure each child is sufficiently stimulated, through a wide range of planned and child-initiated play activities. Staff listen to and expand the resources from the ideas given by the children. For example, children's interest in mending cars leads to the role play area to be turned into a garage and the water tray frame to be used as the repair bay. This helps children to become active and inquisitive learners. Staff undertake sensitive observations and assessments of each child's development and they plan for the next steps using the development matters framework.

Children are encouraged to make decisions and gain confidence as they independently access the paints and craft materials and explore the mixing of colours. Children behave very well. They are given a picture card of the resources they have played with and then they help to tidy this area at tidy up time. Staff are introducing a 'behaviour tree' that rewards children with a leaf to add to the tree for positive behaviour such as listening, helping their friends and sharing. This ensures children are very well equipped with the skills they need to secure future learning

Children are learning about the wider world as they discuss the weather and calendar during registration time. They acknowledge important events in their lives and festivals and their birthdays. Children enjoy a valuable small group activity to discuss emotions when puppets are used as part of the current theme.

Children's health is well promoted. There are secure procedures to prevent the spread of infection as children wipe their own noses and wash their hands before food and after the toilet. They enjoy nutritious snacks peeling their own fruit and pouring their own drinks. Children have many opportunities to explore the outdoor environment every day. Their physical development and co-ordination is promoted as they move around freely and manoeuvre their sit and ride toys safely and with control. They explore the properties of dry sand and use their senses by making sounds with the musical instruments. However, in the winter, the outside area is yet to be used to its full potential to fully extend all the areas of children's learning.

Children feel safe in the pre-school environment and are learning how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they associate red for stop and green for go as they direct the 'traffic' whilst outside. Children are reminded by staff of the potential dangers of running indoors in case they hurt themselves or others. They participate in regular fire drills and therefore learn how to stay safe in an emergency.

## 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

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

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

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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
--	---

### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

