The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

Nursery report on
Little Acorns
Fforddlas
Rhyl

Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Martin Cray
Date of inspection: 12 – 13 May 2008 (mornings)
Contract number: T/084/07N

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Report on the inspection of nursery settings in the non-maintained sector

Name of nursery: Little Acorns
Address: Oaktree Centre
        Fforddlias
        Rhyl
        Denbighshire
Post code: LL18 2DY
Telephone: 01745 360129
Person responsible for day-to-day management: Joanne Teal
Position: Supervisor

About the inspection

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

Grade 1  good with outstanding features
Grade 2  good features and no major shortcomings
Grade 3  good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4  some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5  many important shortcomings
1.0 Context of the setting

Context of the nursery setting
This English medium setting, which is a member of Wales Pre-school Playgroup
Association, is held in the new purpose-built Oaktree Centre, serving the West End
area of Rhyl, Denbighshire. This is within a ‘Flying Start’ zone that is regarded as
being particularly disadvantaged. The setting is run by a management committee
which acts as the steering group for all the Centre’s activities.

At the time of the inspection, there was a total of 79 two to four-year old children on
the register attending morning or afternoon sessions Monday to Friday. Twenty-two
are four-year olds and also attend school on a part-time basis. The 25 who are three-
year olds receive funded provision. The setting provides for children with additional
learning needs and at the time of the inspection 11 such children were on the register.

English is the language spoken in the homes of nearly all of the children, a number
having moved to Rhyl from various inner city areas. The setting also provides for
children from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Two, good sized rooms are used for activities, together with a secure, enclosed
outdoor play area. There is a separate kitchen and toilets. The setting also has
timetabled use of a spacious hall.

Children are taught by a well qualified supervisor and up to seven other staff
members.

The setting has not been previously inspected by Estyn and was last inspected by the
Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales in July 2007. It is an Early Years
education provider as a member of the Denbighshire Early Years Development and
Child Care Partnership.

The inspection was held on the mornings of the 12th and 13th of May 2008.

2.0 Main findings of the report

2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision and whether or
not the provision successfully promotes the goals for children’s learning

The quality and standards of the educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate
and successfully promote the desirable outcomes for children’s learning.
2.2 Standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

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2.2 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

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<td>The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report</td>
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3.0 The standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds

3.1 Language, literacy and communication skills

The development of children’s language, literacy and communication skills has good features and no major shortcomings.

Good features
Overall, children are good listeners of each other and of adults. They communicate their needs well; receive good opportunities to develop their oral language by learning various songs and rhymes, and come to use an increasing range of new vocabulary introduced to them. Children enjoy the opportunities they receive to relax and browse through storybooks, and learn how to handle them correctly. They come to be able to effectively interpret and follow the contents of stories such as 'Bear on a Bike' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', and recognise some of the characters in their favourite stories. Basic writing skills are developing well using a variety of resources which are constantly in use in the setting’s graphics corner and, at times, out of doors. Children’s recent work includes shopping lists for a very hungry caterpillar. Some older children come to recognise their own names correctly from the labels displayed for self-registering at the beginning of the session.

**Shortcomings**
There are no important shortcomings.

### 3.2 Personal and social development

Children’s personal and social development has good features and no major shortcomings.

**Good features**
Children work and play happily together and have familiarised themselves with setting procedures. Overall, behaviour is good; children are caring and are happy to wait their turn. They display an increasing ability to concentrate and persevere with their tasks. They take responsibility for personal hygiene and come to be able to dress themselves with increasing independence. Children know that they are responsible for tidying up after themselves, for example, washing their own plates after finishing their snacks and helping to put resources away before moving on to the next activity. They respond positively to different cultural experiences. Living things in the setting's care – the snake Ringo, frog, snail and goldfish, are treated with respect, care and concern.

**Shortcomings**
There are occasional examples of not exercising sufficient self-control.

### 3.3 Mathematical development

Children’s mathematical development has good features and no major shortcomings.

**Good features**
Children enjoy singing number rhymes, playing number games and completing jigsaws. They count confidently up to 10 and come to be able to sort and classify objects such as model frogs, marbles and various balls according to colour and size. They recognise a good range of two-dimensional shapes. They develop their vocabulary and their understanding of capacity and mass through cooking activities...
and by playing with sand and water. Children’s appreciation of the mathematics of money is developing well through activities related to buying and selling in the setting’s shop or market.

Shortcomings
There are no important shortcomings.

3.4 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Children’s knowledge and understanding of the world has good features that outweigh shortcomings.

Good features
Children come to be able to describe their homes and some of the features of their locality, such as the location of the nearby school and supermarket. Activities such as planting seeds and caring for tomatoes, beans and onions, help them come to realise the importance of the environment and the conditions needed for healthy growth. They have collected a variety of materials to build a habitat for their own insects and are familiar with handling the setting’s snake and caring for snails, frogs and goldfish. Good understanding of the concept of time is promoted in the context of the setting’s day-to-day procedures and learning songs which have a time theme to them. Children’s problem solving skills are developing well through activities such as finding ways to ‘help’ a spider move up and down a drainpipe, and building a cave for a bear. They have a good understanding of materials; they learn to mix their own ‘concrete’ from wet sand and mould it into bricks, and appreciate the differences in the strength of the materials used in building houses for the Three Little Pigs. Children are beginning to gain an understanding of different foods and where they come from. They can name a number of different fruits.

Shortcomings
Children’s appreciation of the world of work is not sufficiently well developed.

Access to information technology as a source of learning is limited.

3.5 Physical development

Children’s physical development has good features and no major shortcomings.

Good features
Children have a good developing awareness of their own bodies and growth, and are beginning to appreciate the importance of a healthy diet. Good hand-eye coordination is evident and children display increasingly good skills in their use of paintbrushes, scissors when cutting string, pencils, crayons, glue and knives when buttering crackers. Overall, confident use is made of equipment such as the climbing frame and large toys are used skilfully out of doors to develop pedalling, controlling
and steering skills. Children respond well to commands when undertaking floor-work, using space safely and effectively.

**Shortcomings**
There are no important shortcomings.

### 3.6 Creative development

Children’s creative development has good features and no major shortcomings.

**Good features**
Children have a good understanding of a range of songs and rhymes in English, and increasingly so in Welsh, making appropriate gestures and movements as they follow the teaching. They display an ability to sing tunefully. They have learned to listen to and appreciate music, taking great pleasure in selecting and playing their own instruments to accompany various songs and rhymes, keeping a good beat. Children are eager and confident when experimenting and creating, using a wide range of media. They enjoy and are well-informed about what happens when mixing paint. Observational skills are well developed and imaginative and interesting paintings, print work and collages are produced reflecting the current theme. Dressing up and role-play experiences are enjoyed, with individuals make good use of their imagination.

**Shortcomings**
There are no important shortcomings.

### 4.0 The quality of educational provision

**4.1 The quality of provision for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

The quality of provision for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has good features and no major shortcomings.

**Good features**
The setting’s day-to-day activities promote children’s understanding of important values such as honesty and showing respect for others, very effectively. Children are taught to work well together and are encouraged to be courteous and polite at all times. They are introduced to Welsh traditions and culture through an appropriate range of activities, including celebrating special events such as St David’s Day. Labels in Welsh are evident throughout the setting and this helps children to familiarise themselves with the Language and develop their vocabulary. They are taught songs in Welsh and are expected to respond in Welsh to basic commands.
and enquiries. There are good opportunities to learn about diversity in the context of other peoples who live beyond Wales. Overall, there is good emphasis within the setting on children’s spiritual development and they celebrate some of the main Christian, and other festivals that belong to world religions.

**Shortcomings**
There are no important shortcomings.

### 4.2 The quality of planning for children’s learning

The quality of planning for children’s learning has good features that outweigh shortcomings.

**Good features**
The planning is based on the six areas of the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning. Staff work well together in order to ensure that every child, including those instances where there are additional learning needs, receive equal access to an interesting and varied programme of work which takes full account of developing children’s respect for diversity. The work is presented through a series of short themes, firmly anchored around a particular book such as ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’. This provides a firm context with which children can relate. Arrangements are sufficiently flexible to allow for longer or shorter themes depending on the amount of interest shown by children.

**Shortcomings**
Planning does not provide sufficient guidance for developing skills and continuity and progression in learning.

Planning does not note clearly enough the expected balance between learning through child initiated activities and those for which there is direction and focus by adults.

Individual planning for children with additional learning needs is not sufficiently prominent.

### 4.3 The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has good features and no major shortcomings.

**Good features**
The teaching provides a wide range of experiences for children that are organised effectively and reflect the staff’s sound knowledge and understanding of the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning. Learning areas are well defined. Staff are very well qualified and children receive good care, support and guidance, with equality being promoted for all through an inclusive ethos. Staff encourage children by providing a welcoming, stimulating and pleasant learning environment. They use a
range of teaching strategies and initiatives in order to challenge and encourage children to work purposefully and confidently, building up their self-esteem. Staff are adept at creating their own resources as well as those purchased commercially. They are used effectively and good use is made of the setting’s outdoor learning area and immediate environment. Visits from the link teacher of the local Partnership have been particularly helpful to the setting.

Shortcomings
There are no important shortcomings.

4.4 The quality of assessment and recording of children’s progress and reports to parents and carers

The quality of assessment and recording of children’s progress and reports to parents and carers has good features that outweigh shortcomings.

Good features
Clear and manageable procedures are in place. The setting’s staff know the children well and parents and carers are encouraged to enquire about progress at any time. Staff members are always available to meet parents, confidentially if necessary, before and after sessions. Completed work is regularly sent home and displayed around the setting to be celebrated. Staff consistently observe children at work and any significant achievements or aspects of their development which require further attention are noted. This information is duly transferred to booklets entitled ‘Playing to Learn/ Learning to Play’, thereby building up a clear picture of achievement in the areas of learning. The booklets are made available to parents to inspect when they attend the various open evenings to which they are invited and also to the local school to see prior to being given to parents to keep when their children leave the setting.

Shortcomings
Currently setting does not provide written reports to parents on children’s progress against each of the learning areas.

4.5 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community

The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community has good features that outweigh shortcomings.

Good features
The relationship between staff and the children’s parents and carers is good and it was seen that parents and carers receive a warm welcome. During discussions with the inspector, appreciation was expressed of the work of the setting and its contribution to the children’s development. A regular flow of information is ensured through the newsletters and the comprehensive information in the Parents’
Handbook, together with that displayed on the notice board. There are plans in hand to strengthen the links with parents through establishing a formal committee to help with fundraising and social events. The setting has a particularly good relationship with the local school and meetings are held regularly between the teaching staff of each establishment. Good use is made of support agencies linked to the Centre. The immediate environment is used effectively as part of the learning programme.

**Shortcomings**
There is room to make greater use of the local community and the contributions of individuals and groups to children’s learning.

### 4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children’s wellbeing

The setting’s contribution to children’s wellbeing is good with outstanding features.

**Outstanding features**
Staff are very vigilant. The concern they display for children and the way in which they ensure an environment in which children feel happy and safe, and are given every opportunity to thrive is an outstanding feature of provision.

**Good features**
The setting has adopted a number of appropriate policies and procedures that make a very effective contribution towards promoting children’s well being. There are particularly good procedures in place for managing behaviour. Careful attention is paid to simple health and safety rules and children are regularly reminded of possible dangers such as running rather than walking. Risk assessments are conducted in great detail and any accidents or similar incidents are recorded meticulously. The setting makes an effective contribution to raising children’s awareness of healthy eating and establishing a healthy lifestyle. There is good co-operation with children’s homes with regard to any issue relating to health. Staff are very much aware of the correct procedures in relation to child protection matters and work very effectively with other agencies when called upon.

**Shortcomings**
There are no important shortcomings.

### 4.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting

The quality of the leadership and management of the setting has good features and no major shortcomings.

**Good features**
Members of staff are experienced, aware of their responsibilities and work very well as a team. Expectations are high. There is a good working relationship with the Management of the umbrella Oak Tree Centre. Between them, they succeed in offering a sense of direction and purpose to the work of the setting, and up to date
policies and day-to-day practices promote good standards and equal opportunities for all. Staff appraisals are undertaken according to the requirements and outcomes are clearly linked with the training programmes of individuals. Staff are very supportive of training opportunities and are eager to develop professionally. The setting is receptive when advice and guidance is given by Denbighshire Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership. Self-evaluation procedures, although in their infancy, are already influencing the setting’s work.

**Shortcomings**
There are no important shortcomings.

### 4.8 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report

This is the first inspection of the setting by Estyn.

### 5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

Address the few shortcomings identified in standards.

Strengthen its planning arrangements for learning.

Make greater use of the local community and the contributions of individuals and groups to children’s learning.

Provide written reports to parents reflecting their children’s progress in each of the areas of learning.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to Estyn. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.