



## **Albury Acorns Pre School**

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	127802
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 September 2005
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Nugent
<b>Setting Address</b>	Albury Village Hall, Clapgate, Albury, Nr Ware, Hertfordshire, SG11 2JI
<b>Telephone number</b>	07754 738 129 (as of 23 sept 03)
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Kelly Brace-Day
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional 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](http://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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Albury Acorns Pre-School operates from the main room in the village hall in Albury, Hertfordshire. It is open during term time from 09:00 to 12:00 each weekday morning, with the option of a lunch club from 12:00 to 13:00. There are two afternoon sessions, from 13:00 to 15:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and these are primarily offered as an out of school facility for children at the village school.

A maximum of sixteen children between the ages of two and five, or sixteen children

between the ages of four and eight, may attend at any one time. Children come from the local community and also the nearby town and villages. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs. There are currently twenty children on roll and, of these, five children receive funding for nursery education.

The pre-school is managed by a committee and employs four staff, three of whom have appropriate early years qualifications. These include a newly appointed manager.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Staff have adequate procedures in place to promote children's health. They obtain all necessary permissions from parents so that children can be treated appropriately if needing medical attention. Staff are well qualified in first aid. They have recently introduced forms for recording accidents and these show good detail. However, they do not have a system in place to record any medication that parents may have requested. This means that parents would not be fully aware of what their children had received. Children are excluded if suffering from a contagious illness so that others are protected from infection. Therefore, children stay healthy.

Staff practise good hygiene and encourage children's awareness of hygienic practices. They use antibacterial spray on tables which are used for eating and cooking. When changing nappies they take the precaution of wearing gloves. Children wash their hands before snack, and lunch, and talk about why they need to. They are beginning to use tissues independently and know how to dispose of them afterwards. Parents help out with the cleaning of resources each term. Staff are aware of food hygiene and are particularly attentive to this when children are involved in cooking activities. Consequently, children are becoming aware of good hygiene and keep healthy.

Children have varied and healthy snacks. They particularly enjoy different fruits and also biscuits, breadsticks and raisins. They have the choice of water or milk at snack time. Staff intend to make drinking water available throughout the session. Children have the opportunity to try different foods in cooking activities, for example, porridge. Those staying for lunch bring foods that are mostly healthy. They talk with staff about which ones are good for them. Any children with allergies have their needs met as staff take care to obtain information from parents. Children are well nourished and have an increasing understanding of healthy living.

Staff provide good opportunities for children to take part in physical activities and develop physical skills. Children enjoy running and jumping games and have great fun playing with large hoops. They practise rolling balls to each other and aiming bean bags into a hoop. They join enthusiastically in action songs and ring games, such as, hokey cokey. Children like to climb, and slide, and bounce high on the trampoline. They are developing manipulative skills in cooking activities, for example, cutting fruit and threading cereals. Overall they enjoy much physical play and are

learning new skills.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in an environment that is generally safe. The many low level sockets are covered to protect children from the dangers of electricity. There are good fire precautions in place. Staff hold regular fire practices so that children are aware of what to do in an emergency. However, the system for recording these is a little haphazard and staff intend to improve it. Staff carry out regular risk assessments and daily checks of the premises, although they do not always act to minimise any risks identified. Therefore, children may be put at risk from noticeable hazards. Staff supervise children closely at all times. When using large equipment children play safely as safety mats are used to protect them if they fall. In general, they keep safe while on the premises.

Staff ensure that children are cared for in a secure environment. Children do not have access to the kitchen or walk-in storage cupboard. They are accompanied when going out to the toilets. The main door has a bell entry system and so only adults known to staff are admitted. Consequently children are kept secure. During play, children use resources that are safe and suitable. There is a wide range of toys and equipment, all of which are in good condition. Staff check the resources before and after each session. They talk with children about using them in a safe manner. Therefore children play safely.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe. They discuss any incidents that occur and the safety implications. They know that only two children are allowed on the trampoline at any one time. When taken outdoors to use the playground they know to stay together alongside staff. Therefore children are becoming aware of personal safety. They are further protected through staff's knowledge of child protection issues. All staff have attended training and know what to do if they have a concern. Their procedures help to protect children from abuse.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff provide a variety of learning experiences for children. As part of a recent topic on cereals children made flapjacks and bread. They use fruit for printing and make collages using sheep's wool. They have opportunities to explore a range of colours and materials in creative activities. They particularly enjoy music and movement sessions. On special occasions they join in social events, such as a beach party. They enjoy visits from a Health Visitor and a farmer. Therefore, children enjoy a range of interesting experiences.

Children generally show interest in the activities on offer. They enjoy imaginary play in a 'shop' and small world play with bricks and play people. They are developing positive relationships with staff. They enjoy the involvement of staff in imaginary

games, for instance, pretending to rescue people from a building on fire. They ask questions about a daddy long legs discovered in the bathroom. They are gaining confidence and talk to visitors about what they are doing. Older children show initiative in choosing resources and tidying away afterwards. During free choice time, however, younger children sometimes appear unsure of what else to do, having lost interest in the available resources. This results in them wandering around a little aimlessly until staff re-direct them. They particularly like to sit in the reading corner and share books with adults. In general children enjoy their free play.

Children are acquiring new knowledge and skills. They like mark making and learn how to hold the pencils and crayons correctly. They talk about colours when playing with sorting bears. They enjoy conversations with staff and are developing communication skills. At snack time they discuss the letters in their names as shown on place cards. Children join in discussion groups to learn about the current theme. However, the younger ones tend to get left out at times and so miss out on this learning experience. Staff have a copy of the 'Birth to three matters' framework but have not yet begun to use it. Overall children are beginning to achieve but occasionally miss out on opportunities to learn.

#### Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff interact with children effectively to promote their learning. They extend children's play and encourage them to think, for example, asking a child 'what comes next?' when counting bricks. They show interest in children's pictures, increasing a child's awareness of colour and pattern. They help children to see how jigsaw pieces match together. Children are developing literacy and numeracy skills. They listen attentively to stories and talk about letters of the alphabet on electronic toys. They learn new words associated with the theme. They are beginning to use mathematical vocabulary for size and shape. In free play activities they count objects and use scales for weighing. They join in number rhymes at circle time, using their fingers to represent objects. Children learn about their local village, using a map to find where they live. In creative activities they show increasing levels of concentration. Overall, children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

Staff plan activities around different topics in order to promote children's learning. They have recently introduced a new planning system which shows good coverage of the early learning goals. The plans for group times have not yet been implemented as time has been allowed for younger children to settle in. This means that there is a lack of opportunities for children to extend their learning in a group situation. In adult-led activities, the more able children are extended through open-ended questioning. However, at other times, staff do not always take the opportunity to extend children. Therefore, children who are more able do not have the opportunity to progress further.

Children's progress is assessed within the six learning areas but the present records do not link to the stepping stones. Staff are about to introduce a system for assessing children's progress which is in line with the stepping stones. This will enable them to take into account children's individual needs when planning activities. Children will therefore benefit from the implementation of this system.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are included in all activities. They join together in singing and action games at circle time. However, younger children sometimes feel left out of directed activities, when they watch but are not encouraged to participate. Children have access to all the available resources although younger children tend to run out of choice at times. There is a limited availability of hands-on activities where they can explore, create and begin to make connections. Children have clear choices at snack time and are developing independence. They are learning to manage their own needs when going to the toilet. They are learning respect for others and help each other out, for example, sharing paper and crayons. Overall, children show a sense of belonging but are not always able to exercise choice fully.

Staff are attentive to children's individual needs. They offer support to any children who are upset or unsettled. They become aware of any children who are not engaged in play and try to involve them. Children with special needs receive particularly good support. Staff liaise closely with parents through a link book and provide individual help when necessary. They organise activities involving other children in response to apparent social and emotional needs. Children benefit from this well-organised approach.

Children are becoming aware of diversity. They take part in activities based on different festivals and have access to various resources that reflect diversity. They are learning to share and take turns, for example, when choosing animals for a farm song. Staff praise children appropriately and distract them if behaving inappropriately. Older children respond well to a little time-out. They are aware of their boundaries and their behaviour is generally good. However, younger children are not so aware and lack positive encouragement at times. Consequently they sometimes disrupt other children. Staff are planning to implement new strategies for dealing with misbehaviour and helping children to play harmoniously together. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The quality of the partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive information about the pre-school in an attractive brochure and can view the policies at any time. They, and their children, are supported through the settling in time. Staff ensure that they have all necessary information about children. They have put a cascade system in place so that parents are informed quickly in an emergency. Parents are invited to attend open mornings when they can exchange information about their children's progress. The manager is intending to introduce home link books to further improve this exchange. She makes use of parents' skills whenever possible, for instance, they share cooking and art skills with children. Therefore, children's care is enhanced through a good working partnership.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The policies and procedures of the pre-school work in practice to promote children's

care. All the required policies are in place and are reviewed regularly. Information on children is organised clearly in files and easily accessible. Staff are well qualified and have attended basic training in the Foundation Stage. They are about to introduce a key worker system in order to improve the support for children, parents and carers. If staff are absent, a parent is called in to cover. All staff and nominated parents have been vetted. The organisation of paperwork contributes effectively to children's well-being.

Staff make good use of the available space. The hall is large and bright and staff have added several colourful displays to make it welcoming. They use half of the hall for table-top and floor activities as it is less intimidating for children. The rest of the hall is used for physical activities later in the session and this allows children plenty of space to move freely. Children have their own named pegs on which to put their belongings. They are registered on arrival, although times of arrival and collection are not always entered on the attendance sheets. This means that staff may not have an accurate record of when children were present in the event of a query. Staff organise a lunch club for children wishing to stay. Children enjoy this provision and are learning social skills. Staff supervise this, and all other activities, so that children's health, safety and enjoyment are promoted. They meet the needs of all children who attend the setting.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager is new in her post and is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-school. She has various plans for improving the provision through revised planning and assessment of nursery education and introduction of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. She is about to attend training on 'Birth to three matters' and Behaviour Management and encourages staff to go on training courses. She is organising regular staff meetings so that all staff can plan the educational provision together. She is keen to forge closer links with the local primary school. Consequently, through the implementation of these improvements children's care and education will be further enhanced.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the previous childcare inspection the pre-school was asked to appoint a deputy, record the time of any accidents and make the book corner more inviting for children. There is now a deputy in place and accidents are recorded appropriately. The book corner has been moved to a more accessible position. Children enjoy sitting on the colourful cushions and mats and often wander over to look at books. They are therefore more able to pursue any interests.

At the previous nursery education inspection, staff were asked to develop their understanding of the early learning goals. The manager and two staff have trained in this area as part of their level three childcare courses. It was also recommended that they make full use of the outdoor area in planning for physical development. The outdoor area is at present out of use due to safety issues. However, children take part in a wide range of planned physical activities indoors. Staff were also asked to develop children's personal independence skills and provide more activities for mathematical development. Children are encouraged to be independent at snack time and to choose independently from the resources on offer during free play. They

are developing mathematical skills through a variety of activities. These include counting and comparing objects, using shapes and creating patterns. At snack times, they are beginning to solve problems, for example, how many pieces of fruit are required. Children therefore have increased opportunities to develop numeracy skills.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

There are no complaints to report.

## **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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### **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 there is a system in place for recording the administration of medication
- ensure that any hazards identified on risk assessments are minimised as soon as possible so that children are safe
- ensure that children's arrival and departure times are recorded on the attendance sheets
- ensure younger children feel included by providing access to a range of appropriate activities, for example, by using the 'Birth to three' framework.

#### **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):

- implement the new planning system to provide opportunities for the more able children to be extended in their learning
- introduce the new system for assessing children's progress and use it to inform the planning of activities.



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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)