

# Acorn Under Fives

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 148637  
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**Inspector** Bernice Magson

**Setting address** Oakland Infant School, Butler Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire,  
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**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

## 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).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

## Description of the setting

Acorn Under Fives opened in 1986 and is managed by a voluntary committee of parents. It is registered to provide nursery education and childcare for children aged from two to under five years of age. It operates from a purpose-built building on the same site as Oaklands Infant School. Children have access to two classrooms, an outdoor area, cloakroom and toilet facilities. The setting is open each weekday during term time, and on limited days during the school holidays. Sessions are from 9.00 until 12.00 and from 13.00 until 15.30. A lunch club operates on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and is open to all children.

Acorn Under Fives is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 23 children may attend at any one time. There are 61 children on roll. This includes 47 children aged three and four years who are in receipt of nursery funding. Children attend a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

Seven staff work with the children. Two have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Early Years Care and Education, three a Diploma in Pre-School Practice, and two have undertaken local training. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership of the local authority.

## Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory. Acorn Under Fives offers good pastoral care and provides satisfactorily for the learning and development needs of the children. Staff know children well and adult-led activities are effective in involving all children equally, regardless of their background. Children make satisfactory progress in all areas of their learning, though in independent and exploratory play learning experiences are not matched sufficiently to the needs of children, particularly the more able. Nevertheless children are happy to attend the pre-school and feel safe and secure. They have good relationships with adults, who know them well and give good guidance and support. The recently appointed manager has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the learning and development opportunities of children, but has had limited time to influence the curriculum. She is supported well by a newly formed parents' committee. As leaders and managers are still developing their roles, the pre-school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

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

- increase the challenge in exploratory play activities, particularly for the more able children

- develop further the systems to assess children's progress and identify their next steps in learning

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Currently, the manager and parents' committee, who are all recently appointed, are providing a satisfactory direction to this pre-school setting. Although they have identified strengths and weaknesses in the provision, actions to develop further are still evolving. Nevertheless, there are well-established and effective systems in place to ensure the safety and care of children and policies are reviewed regularly. Policies for the safeguarding of children, health and safety, and risk assessments meet requirements and are extremely comprehensive. The recommendations of the last inspection have been addressed and the management of groups and organisation of snack times are now operating smoothly. The manager has recognised that staff need more comprehensive information about the progress of children if they are to challenge them appropriately and identify their next steps in learning. Documentation has been introduced to address this weakness. However, at this early stage, systems are not yet sufficiently embedded to have an impact.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are working to increase their professional skills. Teamwork among the staff is good and makes an effective contribution to meeting the individual needs of children. Roles are delegated efficiently. Brochures and newsletters provide good information to parents about daily administration of the setting. Although the pre-school operates an open door policy, parents are given limited information about the curriculum, or how they can help their children. Nevertheless, parents give good support to the setting; they are invited to help in daily sessions, on visits, and with some resourcing. Strong links exist with the Infant school ensuring that children make a smooth transition to their next stage of learning.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision**

Children are inquisitive and confident learners. Because of the good induction programme, they are happily settled and show positive attitudes to learning. Children play well together, take turns willingly and share toys amicably. Most children are able to access their own equipment and explain their ideas. They have a good understanding of rules and routines and behave well. Children are gaining an understanding of how to take care of themselves, eat healthily and participate enthusiastically in physical exercise. They show a keen interest in gardening, and are watching intently the growth of their strawberries, potatoes and other vegetables, identifying reasons for the differences in height and foliage.

All children have access to the curriculum because staff are deployed effectively. Links with businesses are good and enhance the curriculum. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has increased extensively through the very good links with a local business organisation. As a result, children

have access to good quality equipment, promoting rapid progress in their ICT skills, and supporting the development of skills necessary for their future economic well-being. Careful observation of children's play ensures that individual pastoral needs are identified and addressed successfully. Some assessment of learning takes place, but this is insufficient and at early stages. Currently, staff do not identify well enough children's next steps in learning. Planning of the curriculum gives satisfactory information about activities, but is not always linked sufficiently to the learning intentions for the more able children. Some activities lack challenge and interest, particularly for more able children, or do not sustain concentration levels well enough.

Daily activities are provided for children to work with staff. Teaching in these adult-led activities varies in quality but is at least satisfactory. In an excellent session, children made outstanding use of an interactive whiteboard to illustrate a story and predict story plots. The teacher had developed excellent relationships with the children, and questioned them skilfully. Children listened to her extremely well, described their ideas clearly and created detailed pictures.

Children make satisfactory progress overall from their average starting points, and reach expected goals by the time they leave the pre-school setting.

## 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*

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

### Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	3
How well are children safeguarded?	2

### Quality and standards

<b>How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?</b>	3
<b>How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?</b>	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met