

Acorn At The Willows

The Willows School & Early Learning Centre, Newlyn Place, Fishermead, MILTON KEYNES, MK6 2LP

Inspection date	09/04/2013
Previous inspection date	18/05/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	2
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Children are very happy and content in the welcoming and inclusive environment of the nursery. They eagerly play indoors and outside throughout the day and therefore actively learn.
- The very well resourced nursery provides excellent opportunities for children to progress well across all seven areas of learning in relation to their starting points.
- There are very good systems for staff to work with parents and other agencies. The fully embedded practice for supporting and promoting children's home languages and children's communication and understanding of English is strong.
- Staff are good role models to children and build positive relationships with them. As a result, children's behaviour is very good and they feel secure.

It is not yet outstanding because

- While staff use appropriate open questions to enhance children's play, they miss opportunities to use 'how' and 'why' questions to further enhance children's curiosity and critical thinking.
- Staff do not always ensure that children understand which parts of the premises they may enter at different times.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children in their play and in their interaction with staff.
- The inspector engaged in conversation with children, staff and parents.
- The inspector sampled the nursery's documentation and children's development records.
- The inspector took part in a joint observation with the nursery manager.
- The inspector read and took into account the nursery's self-evaluation form.

Inspector

Aileen Finan

Full Report

Information about the setting

Acorn at The Willows Nursery registered in 2010. The nursery is part of Acorn Childcare group which operates a total of nine nurseries along with other childcare facilities including out of school clubs in Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire. The nursery operates from purpose-built premises attached to The Willows School and Early Years Centre in the Fishermead area of Milton Keynes. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 62 children on roll in the early years age group. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6pm for 51 weeks of the year. It offers a variety of sessions including 'wrap-around' care for children who attend the school and early years centre, including before and after school and school holidays. Children attend from the local and surrounding communities. They have access to an enclosed outdoor play area, which is shared with the school. Staff support a number of children who are learning English as an additional language. There are currently 12 full time staff working with the children. Of these, 11 hold recognised early years qualifications. The nursery also employs a chef and an administrator.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- promote the more frequent use of 'how' and 'why' questions to further encourage children's language and critical thinking skills.
- improve the arrangements for helping all children, especially those receiving wrap-around care, to understand which parts of the premises they can enter at different times.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have an excellent understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They plan extremely effectively to support children's individual needs and learning by using accurate planning and precise assessments on the children. Staff base these assessments securely on children's starting points and interests. Timely interventions ensure that all children receive the support they require. Staff have an outstanding knowledge of children's backgrounds. Children are very happy and content at the nursery and are eager to join in with their activities. They enjoy an extremely wide

range of interesting and stimulating resources and activities. These make a significant impact on children's learning across all areas and provide rich and imaginative experiences to promote children's curiosity. However sometimes staff are less consistent in using open 'how' or 'why' questions to broaden children's critical thinking and imagination.

Staff are highly motivational in helping children to learn independently. They encourage children to acquire their physical, personal, social and emotional skills through showing respect for one another and listening to what others say. Children sit together in the large sand pit outside, watching others bouncing balls or flying paper planes. They chat about the castles they make in the sand and the pretend calls they receive on the toy phones. The very relaxing environment allows children to be confident in their thoughts and promotes their self-awareness. Younger children share their family books with others and get excited about seeing their family members. They watch each other explore in paint and pasta and be curious in the meanings they give to the marks they make. There are excellent systems to promote children's transitions between age rooms, so that they settle well and are happy and content to continue in the learning. Consequently, children make rapid progress throughout their time at nursery and are confident and ready to commence to the next stage in their learning.

The nursery has engaged effectively with parents to promote highly successful strategies to support them in their understanding of children's learning at home. As a result, most parents are sharing their observations with staff through written notes and discussions. Additionally, parents visit the nursery to share in writing poems, cooking and in telling stories, often in children's home languages or in promoting home cultures. The nursery is highly productive at using strategies to monitor children's communication and understanding of language through the Every Child a Talker programme. Therefore, staff have an extremely accurate picture of how children are progressing and how to support those needing additional help. Consequently, all children are making very good progress in their language in relation to their starting points. There is excellent support for children speaking English as an additional language. Staff proactively learn key words and phrases to support children's needs while at the same time valuing children's home language. The nursery has compiled delightful home books that children regularly access throughout the day. These display photos of children's family, friends, pets and words familiar to them, which helps them to develop an extremely good sense of belonging.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The nursery is a very welcoming and inclusive environment. The effective key person system means that staff know the children well and understand their routines. Children form warm relationships with the staff who look after them and with one another. They respect each other's similarities and differences. Children's behaviour is very good. Babies and toddlers have secure attachments with their carers. They happily snuggle up for cuddles and cooperate willingly at nappy changes for example; therefore, demonstrating their security in the staff care.

Staff are good role models. Supervision of children is good overall and staff are generally

deployed well. On one recent occasion children were able to take themselves into the school playground unnoticed. Children could not leave the playground and the children were familiar with the area that they often use when attending school or during joint activities. Therefore the impact on their safety was kept to a minimum. Children access indoor-outdoor play throughout most of the day and therefore have regular opportunities to engage in stimulating and interesting activities and resources both outside and in their classrooms. Children consequently benefit from plenty of fresh air and physical exercise. Outdoors children explore in the sand, count together as they swing in the tyres, construct ramps and balance on these as they travel forwards and back. Children chat together as they walk about with their dolls and prams in make believe play or ride their bikes up and down the carefully constructed hills within the all-weather imitation grass. As a result, children's social and physical development is consistent and well planned for.

Children learn about their own safety awareness through playing independently outdoors and in their activities inside. However, staff do not always make sure that all children receiving wrap-around care are clear about where they are permitted to play outdoors to help ensure their safety. Children and toddlers are very confident in serving themselves at snack and meal times. They carefully serve themselves with their potatoes, parsnip and cabbage and understand to be careful when pouring the gravy as it may be hot. Children carefully pour water from jugs into cups and are careful about any spillages. They confidently recognise their names and photos on placemats and sit down happily to eat their meals. Children thoroughly enjoy the nutritious food provided for them, which is freshly prepared each day. Staff adhere to children's dietary needs and allergies. Older children put on coats with minimal support prior to going outdoors and understand the need to replace these on their pegs as they come in. Children and toddlers are encouraged to be independent in their self-care. They understand about blowing noses and disposing of tissues and washing their hands after using the toilet or before eating. Babies and toddlers sleep according to the individual routines and many take an afternoon nap, therefore waking happily to resume their play. Children are developing securely in their physical, emotional and social well-being. Staff provide them with appropriate support to develop the important skills they need to be ready for the next stage in their learning.

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

Staff at the nursery effectively understand the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The arrangements for safeguarding children are strong in many ways. Staff acknowledge their responsibilities to and understand the procedures to take should they have a concern about a child in their care. Staff complete safeguarding children awareness training as part of their induction. All staff hold a current first aid qualification. Robust procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff mean that the adults who work with children are suitable to do so. There are robust induction practices, staff supervision and training, which mean that staff are supported well in their professional development and the outcomes for children are promoted securely. Consequently, staff moral is high. The inspection was brought forward

following a notification from the provider about an incident. It is clear that the provider understood their responsibilities to make the notification and a full investigation took place to identify why children were able to leave the outdoor play area unsupervised. Risk assessment, security measures and staff deployment have been rigorously reviewed. As a result, staff are now deployed effectively throughout the day, which means they can tend to children's individual needs and understand their interests. Robust risk assessments and daily checks on the environment promote children's safety and therefore allow them to play safely indoors and outside. Staff act appropriately when identifying any hazards, issues or risks to enhance children's safety and raise children's awareness of where they can play and how to keep safe. Policies are adhered to well by staff, and therefore their practice promotes children's safety and health. These policies are shared with parents so that they understand the procedures that support their children's well-being.

The manager of the nursery leads by example and is highly reflective on the care provided to children. The nursery has evaluated their practice effectively through staff input and parental views and suggestions. Focussed plans are in place for their future improvement, which include providing copies of the nursery prospectus in different languages to meet the needs of parents in the local community. Consequently, the nursery is able to reflect confidently on the strengths of their provision. Relationships with parents are highly effective and well developed. Parents are positive about the care their children receive and are very much part of their children's learning. Partnerships with external agencies such as the local authority, local schools, the local children centre and speech therapists are well established. Therefore, children receive timely intervention when it is required and their transitions on to school are effective. The nursery offers highly stimulating activities across all seven areas of the learning and development requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. These exciting experiences promote children's physical, emotional and social development and children engage actively in their play. Staff complete regular observations, assessments and evaluations of children's progress, which they share with parents. Systems to promote children's language and communication are consistent and highly embedded within day-to-day activities. There are very effective arrangements to support those children speaking English as an additional language. Therefore, overall, all children are making impressive progress in relation to their starting points.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are	Met
The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are	Met

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY416503
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	912153
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	67
Number of children on roll	62
Name of provider	Acorn Childcare Ltd
Date of previous inspection	18/05/2011
Telephone number	01908690582

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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