

# Acorns Nursery School Ltd

10 Park Street, CIRENCESTER, Gloucestershire, GL7 2BN

<b>Inspection date</b>	29/07/2013
Previous inspection date	23/01/2009

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	2
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		2
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

- The senior management team know their separate roles. They encourage staff development, which helps the whole team to improve the children's experiences.
- Staff are enthusiastic about their work. They care for the children well, encouraging them to enjoy fresh air and exercise. Children eat well.
- A strong programme for children's personal, social and emotional development helps children gain high levels of personal independence in readiness for school.
- Children thoroughly enjoy learning through play, particularly outside. As they grow older, they constantly discuss their experiences with each other and with staff, making good progress in their language and communication development.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Although many older children are keen to write, they do not all gain an effective pencil grip to help their writing skills.
- Staff do not use a uniform approach to modelling writing in order to help children understand letter formation more easily.

## 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 undertook a joint observation of an activity in the pre-school room with the nursery manager.
- The inspector reviewed a selection of documentation including the nursery's safeguarding policy, staff appointment procedures and children's records.
- The inspector observed children at play and staff interaction with them in each room, outside and during lunchtime.
- The inspector spoke to parents to gather their views, talked with children, staff, (including the cook) and held discussions with the manager.

## Inspector

Rosemary Davies

## Full Report

### Information about the setting

Acorns Nursery School Ltd registered under its current ownership in 2005 having opened as a private nursery school in 1952. It is privately owned and run as a limited company. It is situated in a 17th century three-storey building in the centre of Cirencester, Gloucestershire. The nursery operates from the main house with a separate three-room baby unit. Each age group has a specific outdoor area and all children have use of a larger enclosed garden area for outdoor play.

The nursery is open each weekday between 8am and 6pm all year round with the exception of bank holidays and a week at Christmas. Before school care is also offered. The nursery is on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 125 children in the early years age group on roll aged from three months to under five years. The nursery is funded to provide free early education to children aged three and four years. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The nursery has 37 members of staff including a cook, caretaker and administrative support. The providers take an active part in the day-to-day running of the nursery. Both hold Qualified Teacher Status, one in a relevant age group and who also has Early Years Professional Status. The other also holds a Diploma in Playwork at level 6. Some 24 staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and above, including Early Years Professional Status. A bank of staff is available for cover; most lunch time cover staff being unqualified.

### What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- extend the programme for literacy to help children be better prepared for school, for example, by helping children develop an effective pencil grip and taking a united staff approach to modelling letter formation to children.

### Inspection judgements

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

Enthusiastic staff help children to learn successfully across the seven required areas. They plan interesting education programmes based on learning through play. They make the playrooms and outside areas appealing to children. Children enjoy themselves and particularly want to play outdoors. The staff team's enthusiasm is reflected by the

children, who are well motivated and keen to play.

Staff make sure play equipment and materials are ready for the children's arrival each day. Children are keen to see what is available. Staff encourage children to use resources in different ways. Older children know they can ask to have other things that may not have been set out. Staff agree to their requests. This flexible approach allows children to develop their ideas, so that they sustain imaginative play for considerable periods. Children use crates and a large reel to create 'a machine to chop food', for example, but decide it 'needs water to make it work'. Staff provide water when asked.

Staff establish what children can do when they first attend the nursery. They use this information and on-going assessment well. They build an increasingly detailed picture of each child, so they come to know them well. Planning of future activities builds on children's interests. It provides a structure to broaden experiences covering required areas through providing a wide range of equipment and special topics at different times. This approach results from staff being aware of children's changing needs. In 'baby acorns' for example, staff provide a large water tray outside. Children who do not yet walk are supported in standing to splash hands in the water for as long as they wish, developing leg strength. Others are encouraged to hold bubble-blowers to develop their grip. Staff blow bubbles that children watch delightedly. They gently allow the children to feel the air on their hands. Such interaction helps these youngest children to develop physically, to become aware of their senses and develop trust in the staff.

Great stress is placed on children's physical development across the nursery. The outside areas offer intriguing places for children's play, including the Hobbit House in the babies' area and the Tree House in the main garden. The latter offers considerable physical challenge to both the toddlers and pre-school children. They decide for themselves what steps to climb and which spaces to explore. This area encourages creative play extremely well and children talk happily to each other and staff about what they do.

Children's communication and language skills constantly increase, resulting partially from the generous staffing levels, which allow many conversations with staff. There is a buzz of chatter as older children talk among themselves about their activities. Staff support learning well. They encourage children to follow diagrams when they are trying to complete battery circuits. They make good use of training from national initiatives. They have learnt to give children time to marshal their thoughts and respond to questions. Children listen well at story times. They learn nursery rhymes by heart, saying words clearly. Eventually, they sound out letters in their names, gaining some useful skills move to school.

While the programme for literacy has many good points, staff do not pay enough attention to helping children gain an effective pencil grip to help them form letters more easily. That said, many older children are keen to write, including boys. They evidently know that print has meaning. Their positive attitude to wanting to write is a useful attribute for the move to school.

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

A major strength is the staff team's belief in the benefits of outdoor activity and exercise. Children reflect staff attitudes and play outdoors for long periods. Older children choose to participate in a 'wake up' movement time to music, proudly showing the different ways they can move their bodies. They take part in physical play as often as they wish, climbing in the Tree house or showing their skills in using a scooter competently and safely without bumping into anyone. They make their own decisions about when to have a break and eat some fresh fruit for their snack. By lunch time, which is not taken too early, all children appear hungry.

The providers employ an on-site cook. Meals are freshly prepared in the nursery kitchen. This has a five star environmental health rating. The menu includes a substantial amount of fresh fruit and vegetables. On the day of inspection, children enjoyed a pudding of 'home-made' sponge with fresh strawberries, accompanied by plain yoghurt. Most children cleared their plates and there is plenty of food for 'seconds'. Special dietary needs are catered for well. All children can eat at their own rate. Any who are too tired to eat their second course can have a nap first and eat the remainder of their meal later, so meeting children's individual care needs.

Children form strong emotional attachments to staff owing to an effective 'key person' system. Children's personal, social and emotional development is fostered well. They become independent learners, enjoy taking on responsibility and manage their personal care needs, following staff expectations. From a young age, children are encouraged to feed themselves. Toddlers learn to manipulate cutlery. Older children serve themselves. They learn to manage suitable knives and forks. They know what to do with crockery and cutlery once they have finished. Children's behaviour is extremely good across the nursery, with older children kindly helping the younger ones. All this gives children a firm basis to move from one room to the next while at nursery, and provides them with the right personal foundations for the eventual move to full-time education.

Staff make good use of the nursery's space and equipment. They organise the nursery day so children make their own decisions about when to be active and when to do something quietly. Everyone is expected to have a quiet period of either rest or sleep following lunch. Those who do not want a nap, listen to stories or browse through books quietly by themselves. This all helps children learn the basis for a healthy lifestyle.

Children move on to a number of different schools. The manager reports that all reception teachers have been to visit, but owing to the number of schools, staff can only take children to visit those close by in the town. They are unable to make accompanied visits to several village schools that are involved, to help ease the transfer process further. Nevertheless, children can bring in their new 'uniforms' to show everyone for discussion.

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

There are clear lines of responsibility in the senior management team. This means that the nursery provision is now monitored sufficiently to make sure the care and learning requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. The systems now in place show improvement following a serious incident when Ofsted needed to investigate and had to set actions for the providers to meet. Positive action has been taken. There is now a new nursery 'Safeguarding Team' in place comprising staff from each room. The team meets every six weeks to review any safeguarding and child protection issues that arise. The management team members are clear as to when to report any issues to Ofsted, having reviewed the procedure for checking the suitability and on-going suitability of staff.

The management team demonstrates a clear drive to keep improving what is provided for the children. This year the team has started using a recognised system of quality assurance other than the Ofsted self-evaluation form. A clear action plan is in place for addressing identified weaknesses drawn up by management. This shows their ability to improve without outside support, although there is some overview from the local authority. Some staff have visited a nursery classed as 'outstanding' in order to get further ideas on how to promote outdoor learning, for example. Good emphasis is placed on appointing staff with relevant qualifications and experience. Suitable induction systems are in place. There is encouragement to those who wish to start training or to gain further qualifications. In this respect the senior management team lead by example.

Senior managers, including 'department heads', monitor staff performance, the implementation of the educational programmes and the assessment system. Sampling of children's 'learning diary' records at inspection, indicates a consistent approach to assessment is taken across the nursery overall. This is not the case in regard to the way in which staff model writing to children, however. The different writing styles used cause confusion to some children who are eager to learn to write their names and other words.

Parents report that staff 'go the extra mile' to provide children with the particular care they need. Parents may contribute their views on the provision through annual questionnaires. There is a generally useful website, although it does not reflect national changes in the areas of learning that nurseries are now required to deliver; parents can read this information in their children's 'learning diaries', however. The manager describes how the nursery staff support families, including the planned recipe bags to encourage cooking at home. The nursery's special educational needs coordinator understands the role and knows where and how to obtain outside professional help for those children who need it. Partnerships with other settings that deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage are in place.

### 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY369943
<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	928825
<b>Type of provision</b>	Full-time provision
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 5
<b>Total number of places</b>	63
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	125
<b>Name of provider</b>	Acorns Nursery School Ltd
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23/01/2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01285 655 505

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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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