

The Acorn Children's Centre

RAF Cosford, Albrighton, WOLVERHAMPTON, West Midlands, WV7 3EX

Inspection date

20/11/2013

Previous inspection date

03/02/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

1

Previous inspection:

1

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 1

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because practitioners make excellent use of accurate assessments of children's progress to plan activities that enable children to achieve exceptionally well given their starting points and capabilities.
- The management team fosters a culture of self-belief as staff are empowered to maintain high levels of professional development. The staff receive excellent support and supervision which enhances their skills and knowledge exceedingly well.
- The extremely successful partnerships with parents and other professionals encourages full involvement at all levels and across all aspects of children's care and learning. Children are supported to make significant progress towards the early learning goals.
- Transitions within the nursery and strategies used to support children's readiness for school ensures children's confidence and resilience is built up over time.
- Children show high levels of confidence within the nursery which is fostered through warm, caring and successful attachments and bonding strategies used by confident knowledgeable staff.

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.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in all base rooms and the outside learning environment including the forest school.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector held meetings with the manager, the deputy, members of the committee and a selection of the childcare staff.
- The inspector scrutinised children's assessment records and planning documentation.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation; risk assessments and safeguarding procedures, staff suitability, qualifications and training, policies and procedures and the providers self-evaluation form and improvement plan.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and their children spoken to on the day and from information included in the settings own parent survey.

Inspector

Mary Henderson

Full report

Information about the setting

Acorn Childcare Centre was registered in 2003 and is on the Early Years. It is situated in a single storey building on the grounds of the Royal Air Force Cosford airbase, near Albrighton in Shropshire and is managed by a committee of trustees. The nursery mainly serves Royal Air Base personnel, but children from the surrounding areas may also attend. It operates from eight rooms and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The nursery employs 24 members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 4, 21 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and one member of staff holds a level 2. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.45am until 5.15pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 72 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- ensure visitors to the setting are introduced to the children to ensure they understand the visitor's intentions and to help them understand what they are doing.

Inspection judgements

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

The quality of teaching within the nursery is highly successful because the staff are qualified and highly motivated to undertake further training and professional development. Their enthusiasm to provide optimum challenge for children enhances all aspects of this sharply focused provision. The management committee, manager and the staff have an excellent understanding of, and implement fully, the learning and development and the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have consistently high expectations of themselves and the children they care for. Consequently, all children are safe, happy and their progress towards the early learning goals is rapid given their starting points. Purposeful teaching strategies and the provision of a rich, varied and imaginative environment enhances children's physical and communication skills alongside their personal, social and emotional skills very well. For example, qualified forest school staff ensure all children access the forest school section of the outdoors every day. Here successful teaching occurs which supports children's learning about the world around them as they look on in awe as unexpected rain and hail falls on the trees and bounces off their boots and rainwear. Children poke the ground with sticks seeking out worms and insects to look at under their magnifying glasses and compare colours and shapes of their findings to the insect cards they carry around with them. Other children like to collect mud in buckets to brush-paint the trees making a range of interesting marks. The staff ask

children open-questions to enhance their thinking skills, such as, 'what do you think is under there' and 'what have you found'. Babies and very young children also enjoy this outdoor space in all seasons. They toddle about with the staff kicking and collecting fallen leaves as they notice the colours and shapes of nature and use their sense of touch to feel the logs and trees around them. This engages all children's interest in the outdoors and actively contributes to an extensive range of learning outcomes which supports children's progress towards the early learning goals exceptionally well. The staff provide a wealth of opportunities for children to learn through outings to places of interest. For instance, the children enjoy regular visits to the air museum where they explore and talk about all the aeroplanes, helicopters and historical artefacts with the staff. This is relevant to many of the children's family backgrounds and thereby supports their interests very well. This is expertly supported by the staff who provide opportunities to talk, read stories and be involved in relevant activities back at the nursery, thereby extending the children's interests further. Other interests, such as children's interest in animals, are fostered exceptionally well by the staff because the children are taken to farms to learn about farm life and how to care for and feed the lambs, cows and pigs. Here the children talk about small animals including their pets and how they care for them at home. As a result of visiting such places and exciting discussions with the children, they now have their own small animals to care for at the nursery, including guinea pigs, rabbits and African snails that they can also take home for weekend breaks.

Older children enjoy opportunities to show off their skills in talking French as the teacher uses hand gestures, French words and sentences with them. They have excellent skills in using French for counting from one up to ten and beyond and they enjoy saying hello and goodbye and are beginning to string words together. They show pride in their abilities and are praised by the staff which inspires them to learn. The staff provide a range of media to extend all children's interests. Babies and younger toddlers look on in awe as they push their hands and fingers through the gloop and try to grab it or manoeuvre it around the table. Staff use such opportunities to provide new words, such as, 'dribble', 'slithery' and 'sticky' to build on children's communication and language skills. This supports children's imagination and skills in manipulation exceptionally well. There is a consistently high level of involvement by staff as children choose what they want to play with. For example, as older children choose to use the electronic computer white board, the staff ask them what their pictures represent and extend their discussions when they identify their family or pets in their pictures.

The assessment of children's learning at all ages is precise and sharply focussed because all staff have an extensive understanding of the importance of observing and assessing children and identifying the next steps in their learning and development. The staff provide the important resource of time, spending much of the day working directly with the children supporting them with their adult-guided and child-initiated activities. There is a key focus on building older children's literacy skills. For example, all indoor and outdoor areas are rich in print and the staff make excellent reference to these as children play. All children show a love of books and enjoy an extensive range of opportunities to paint pictures, draw with crayons and sometimes draw by dragging their fingers across the sand tray, talking about the marks they make. Children come together for circle time and are supported by the staff to talk with confidence about the activities they have enjoyed and what they would like to do next. This provides excellent opportunities for children to listen,

understand and extend their communication and social skills during such times.

There are excellent strategies in place to engage parents in their child's learning and development. For instance, the nursery provides home visits for families so that they can get to know the child in their own environment, find out their interests at first hand and talk to the parents about the child's individual needs and requirements. This makes an excellent starting point and ensures that the key person is ready and knowledgeable about the child and can welcome them into the nursery setting. There is also a nursery-to-home link diary which encourages parents to add comments regarding their own observations of their child's learning at home. Parents add comments and photographs of their child's activities and outings with the family which supports the key person's knowledge of the individual child and the child's interests over time. There are open-sessions for parents to come in and talk to their child's key person and to look through and discuss their learning journal documents. This supports the excellent two-way communication so that parents and staff are working together to support the individual child's developmental progress both at the setting and at home. Staff caring for toddlers within the nursery discuss with parents the most suitable time to provide a comprehensive summary of their child's learning and development in time for their health visitor check at age two.

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

The staff expertly support children's well-being by providing a warm and sensitive environment for all children thereby fostering their emotional well-being exceedingly well. The key person systems ensure high levels of individual care and attention for every child within the nursery. The staff actively contribute to children's excellent self-awareness and confidence. They recognise the significance of fostering children's bonding and attachments and know this is the key to children's learning and development. For example, babies and children are held and cuddled by their key persons and comforted when they become upset. As a result, children develop emotionally over time and build on their confidence, which ensures they are resilient and able to deal with their emotions as they grow and develop. This supports their readiness for school exceptionally well. The staff work very hard to support all children during times of transition. For example, as children move up to the next room, their new key person spends quality one-to-one time with them, talks to the other key person and discusses the child's progress to ensure a quality insight and identification of the child's needs for care and learning. This ensures the child is fully supported when they move up to the next room within the nursery. There are also transition meetings between key persons and parents prior to the move up. Babies, toddlers and pre-school children all spend time with older and younger peers in the base rooms to provide support and ensure familiarity between all children and staff at the nursery. This also ensures children's confidence is fostered so they can all settle with as little disruption as possible.

The staff work very hard to support older pre-school with their readiness to move onto school. For instance, they actively contribute to children's understanding of this important aspect of their life by arranging visits for them to their school and inviting teachers into the nursery to tell stories and talk to the children and to the key persons about the individual child and their care and learning needs. Discussions are held with parents about

the strategies used at the nursery to support their child with this very important transitional phase. This ensures all parties are working together to ensure children's needs are identified and met. The children show high levels of positive behaviour and resilience. Children show empathy for one another and play cooperatively during activities both indoors and outdoors. They have excellent sharing and turn taking skills and work very well to tidy up their environment, working on their own and in pairs taking an active role in keeping their own areas very well organised. The staff make excellent use all possible opportunities to support children's independence. For example, get themselves ready for the outdoors, putting on their own coats and boots. During meal times older children serve themselves. They harvest their own vegetables to make their own soup supported by the staff and they pour their own drinks. This supports children's growing knowledge about a healthy lifestyle.

Children are physically active every day because they all access the outdoor areas during all weathers. Babies too are play outdoors each day. All children enjoy using the equipment to practice their very good physical skills as they ride trikes, take risks as they climb and balance and they like to run around in the fresh air chasing their friends. The staff join in with children encouraging their physical development and supporting their risk taking as they begin to challenge themselves and climb up and over obstacles showing excitement and pride in their achievements. The staff provide a broad range of activities to support children's growing awareness of their personal safety. This includes inviting people who help us, such as, fire officers and the police, who come in to talk to the children about how to keep themselves safe. When such visitors arrive at the setting they are introduced to the children. However, during changes to the children's routines, such as the unexpected arrival of an inspector, children are not always introduced to them by the staff to ensure they understand the visitors intentions and help them understand what they are doing there.

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

The leadership and management of the nursery is dynamic. The management and staff work consistently to ensure high levels of care, learning, well-being and safety for all children on role. There is an uncompromising drive for continuous improvement at all levels. For example, the management and staff ensure that parents and carers and their children are all included throughout the whole process of self-evaluation. All stakeholders work together to identify and implement well focussed targets for future improvement on an ongoing basis. This ensures the children are the key focus at all times. Leaders and managers have an excellent understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. They are vigilantly ensure the learning and development, safeguarding and welfare requirements are met at all times. Leaders and managers ensure all staff have a secure understanding of and implement the safeguarding policies and procedures of the nursery. Safeguarding children at all times is a high priority within the nursery at all times. All staff regularly update their child protection training which ensures they are able to identify and report any concerns about the children in their care. The committee also all undertake safeguarding training as part of their contractual agreements. To protect children further all staff know about the whistle blowing

procedures of the nursery should there be any concerns with anyone working at or visiting the nursery. This ensures children are kept safe at all times. The recruitment procedures of the nursery is excellent and includes checking staff suitability to work with children. In addition, the staff work tirelessly to ensure all indoor and outdoor areas are risk assessed daily to ensure the safety and security of all children attending. All outings are also risk assessed by the staff before the children are taken to any venue.

There is a strong focus on monitoring the teaching and learning programmes within the nursery curriculum. For example, the quality of teaching by the staff is monitored through observation of practice within the rooms by leaders and managers, and this is fed back to the staff through the high quality supervision sessions that are in place to support the staff and thereby benefit the children. There is a continuing targeted programme for the professional development of all staff to ensure they consistently improve their early years knowledge and understanding over time. For example, recent forest school training has enabled two key trained staff to work with all staff to further improve the provision through access to the developed forest school accessible to all children in their outdoor play area. Staff encourage innovative use of natural resources to support all areas of children's learning and development. This includes opportunities for children to be in the fresh air every day in all weathers. Here the staff significantly enhance children's learning through talking about the rain, snow and during spring time the budding plants and trees around them. They use their expert skills to support children through open-questions to overturn logs to find mini-beasts, paint mud pictures, take bark rubbings and dig in the mud to make pies. The staff use their expert knowledge to encourage children's learning across all areas of their development. Some of the staff have undertaken team leader training. This has supported room leaders to be able to support key persons with providing high quality care and learning with their key children. Others have completed maths training and letters and sounds training. As a result, all children are supported exceptionally well with this area of their learning and development which also enhances their readiness to move on to school. The local authority works closely with the nursery and supports them in line with the rating scales used to assess children's well-being, engagement and involvement. Through the use of such indicators, the nursery is able to identify and implement ongoing improvements in the environment so that children of all ages are fully supported to develop across all areas of their learning.

Partnerships with parents and other providers and professionals is very strong and lies at the heart of the nursery. Highly effective relationships between all parties ensures anyone working with the individual child is included so that each child's needs are fully identified and met at all times. Parents comment on the excellent care and learning their child receives at the nursery and also that nothing is too much trouble. There is an array of information provided to parents to keep them informed and up-to-date at all times about the nursery and their child's progress over time. There are displays, newsletters and access to all policies and procedures for the running of the nursery.

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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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	EY270525
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	943765
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	100
Number of children on roll	72
Name of provider	Highflyers Day Nursery (RAF Cosford) Committee
Date of previous inspection	03/02/2011
Telephone number	01902 377221

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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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