

Acorns Nursery

Smallford Campus, Oaklands, ST.ALBANS, Hertfordshire, AL4 0JA

Inspection date

03/03/2014

Previous inspection date

26/11/2009

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 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

- Practice is based on secure knowledge of children's development and learning needs. Starting points are effectively identified by parents and key people and are used well to inform further experiences for children.
- Children enjoy a broad range of learning experiences based on the individual interests and skills. As a result, all children gain the key skills they need to prepare them for their next stage of learning, such as school.
- A well-established key person system promotes secure partnerships with parents and has a positive impact on children's care and education.
- The nursery environment is very stimulating. Children are provided with a good quality and variety of resources both indoors and outdoors.
- The manager has a very good understanding of how to implement the safeguarding and welfare requirements in practice. Staff and families are aware of procedures to keep children safe and secure.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to develop strategies to involve parents of children with English as additional language, in using their home language to support children's early transitions in the nursery and support children's learning of English.
- There is capacity to develop the planning for outdoor experiences for children in order to focus more effectively on individual children's development needs.

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 activities, children's play and the interaction between children and staff in every age group.
- The inspector spoke with the nursery manager, individual staff and children at appropriate times throughout the inspection and carried out a joint observation with the nursery manager.
- The inspector examined documentation including a representative sample of children's records, policies, staff suitability, risk assessments, accident records, planning documentation, quality improvement schemes and training records.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and information from parents' written questionnaires.

Inspector

Karinna Hemerling

Full report

Information about the setting

Acorns Nursery was registered in 2003 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery operates from a converted Victorian House; there are two floors and a fully enclosed outdoor area for children. The nursery is situated in the grounds of Oaklands College, Smallford Campus, St Albans, Hertfordshire. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, 51 weeks a year, except bank holidays. There are currently 80 children on roll in the early years age group.

The nursery is accessible for community, college staff and students. The nursery receives funding for the provision of free early years education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. There are 21 members of staff working directly with the children, of whom; all have an appropriate early years qualification. This includes one staff member with Early Years Professional Status, two staff with Qualified Teacher Status and one who has a qualification at level 6. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance planning for the outdoor area to more effectively engage children in activities which help them learn new skills
- extend strategies to ensure children with English as additional language are supported in their home language, to support early transitions and their learning of English.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff have a secure understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents are effectively informed of the importance of the partnership with the nursery for the benefit of children's learning and development. The nursery securely identifies children's starting points for planning based on the contribution from parents and observations of children's learning and development needs at the nursery. The nursery routinely consults parents in relation to what their children can and enjoy doing. The nursery encourages the continuous sharing between the nursery and home to consolidate children's experiences in the setting. However, there is scope to

improve the system of gathering contributions from parents whose children speak English as additional language so that staff can support children in their home language as a foundation for learning English. The educational programme offered to children is based on children's individual interests and skills. The prime areas of learning are effectively promoted in the learning environment. Children explore the well resourced classrooms that celebrate children's learning, development stages and interests. The displays in the classrooms reflect the varied learning experiences children have at the nursery. Across the nursery, all children participate in projects, such as the hedgehog project where children learnt about hedgehogs and created a natural display about them and their natural habitat. Staff skilfully identify gaps of learning, so children are supported and make good progress. The management team work closely with staff members to ensure children are exposed to a consistent and exciting learning environment.

The quality of teaching is good. Staff allow children time to play and to be creative. Children share experiences and ideas during interactions with each other and staff members. Older children transform building models of cars in a superhero experience where transporter trucks are built to help people and to carry cars to specific locations. Children extend their play around the classroom, under the tables and on the carpets and cushions. Staff support children's engagement in activities by using effective open-ended questions to stimulate children's thinking and problem solving. Staff consistently read and sing with children throughout the day. Children attentively listen to their favourite stories and enjoy singing their favourite nursery rhymes. During their time at the nursery all children are encouraged to count, reflect on sizes, textures, colours and shapes. While making play dough with the children, staff discuss and reflect on the textures and quantities of ingredients to add to the mixture. Children and staff explore mixing the ingredients and colours to create orange play dough. During the activity, children discuss with staff why play dough sticks to their hands.

Children enjoy daily physical play in the outdoor spacious area where they run around and explore the play area equipment. Children access the rich outdoor environment on a daily basis. Staff take children for walks on outings and in the college fields. Children learn the importance of fresh air and exercise. However, there is capacity to enhance the outdoor planning with more focused activities based on children's development to help them learn new skills. Staff provide children with many opportunities to learn about the world around them. For example, children create a space shuttle with aluminium foil, buttons and models of the solar system and images of space. Children effectively explore the role-play area. They pretend to fly to space by counting down from five to one and holding to their chairs when departing in the well created spaceship. Babies enjoy playing in the indoor sandpit. They feel the texture of the sand and enjoy putting sand in and out of buckets with the support of the skilful staff. Babies engage well in role play, they try on hats and other accessories. They cuddle dolls and pretend to feed them. Staff are very caring towards babies who are encouraged to repeat words and explain what they are doing. Pre-school children are well-prepared for school. They learn mathematical concepts through a range of planned and spontaneous activities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, as staff work closely with parents and other professionals, such as speech therapists, the nursery and the local area special educational needs coordinator. This means children make good progress and are all

included in the nursery life.

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

Children are settled and have formed strong bonds with key persons, members of staff and other children. Children happily play alongside each other and with adults; they seek adults for support if needed. Staff sustain a skilful practice of keeping at children's levels; they play with children and join in the activities. Staff are happy and motivated in their roles; they are attentive and supportive towards children's needs and interests. Babies enjoy dancing to music played for them. When music stops, babies communicate to staff who attentively play again the songs. Children dance with delight in the baby room. The setting places strong emphasis on attachments, children often enjoy cuddles while playing and rest times.

Staff build strong relationships with parents from their first visit. The nursery supports children during settling-in sessions. The sessions are tailored by parents and key persons according to the needs of the children. Children are consistently praised for participating in activities, when sharing, taking turns, listening to instructions and reflecting on ideas. Children behave well and have strong sense of belonging and emotional security in the setting. Children are comfortable with the boundaries and routines set for them. Staff are attentive to children's needs and have effective personal hygiene routines. All children wash and clean their hands independently before meals and during activities. They independently eat and use the toilet. Children learn about healthy living. They are offered freshly prepared meals that meet their different dietary requirements and stages of development. Children enjoy the freedom of outdoors. They play outdoors and go out for walks in the large fields of Oakland College on a daily basis. Children have a rich outdoor environment to explore and outdoor experiences are based mainly on children's choices and celebrated themes. Children are well supported and challenged to further progress in their development. Consistent input from parents in relation to their children's care and needs enables staff to tailor practice to meet needs of children.

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

There are very effective safeguarding policies and procedures in practice. The manager understands well the importance of keeping children safe and effectively promotes the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are well supported by the management team to understand and identify safeguarding issues. All staff have safeguarding training. The premises are secure and a robust risk assessment is carried out by members of staff to ensure the environment is secure for children to play, learn and develop. Children are well supervised by members of staff who keep well organised and consistent records of the children's care routines while at the nursery. The management team ensures that adults working with children go through a detailed recruitment procedure to ensure their suitability before starting working for the nursery.

The manager and deputy manager routinely monitor the educational programme offered for children. Staff are encouraged to reflect on the effectiveness of activities and development of their key children. This information is consistently used to inform future opportunities for children to learn and develop; ensuring children are exposed to meaningful learning opportunities. Children generally develop well. However, there is scope to review outdoor experiences to provide a greater variety of learning experiences rather than only enjoying being outdoors. The planning procedures include the contribution from parents and the nursery generally uses parents input for their children's education effectively. Parents continuously participate in children's learning experiences and care. Staff extend what children can do at home in the nursery practice. The manager carries regular observations of staff practice. Staff have regular supervision and appraisals to identify areas of weaknesses in practice, so further training and support is given to enhance practice. This ensures staff are motivated and understand well their role within the nursery. Staff opportunities for professional development through training are very effective. Members of staff, whose key children speak English as additional language, have recently attended training on how to support children in their home language. The manager maintains an effective reflective practice and uses different monitoring tools to ensure children are provided with high quality care and education.

There is a very effective partnership with outside agencies to support children's development. The nursery works closely with Oaklands College Inclusion team, with local children's centres and with the local authorities, who well assist the nursery in providing for children's individual needs. There are consistent procedures in place to support children during transitions to school.

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	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	EY268301
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	860707
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	50
Number of children on roll	80
Name of provider	The Corporation of Oaklands College
Date of previous inspection	26/11/2009
Telephone number	01727 737745

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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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