

Acorn Childcare

Community Centre, Maldon Road, Hatfield Peverel, CHELMSFORD, CM3 2HP

Inspection date	18/03/2014
Previous inspection date	11/03/2013

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Children benefit from a range of activities, both adult-led and child-initiated, which take account of their interests. Therefore, they make progress in all areas of development and acquire the skills they need for their future learning.
- Children form emotional bonds and develop the confidence they need to promote their independence in learning and self-care. They are protected from harm because staff understand safeguarding procedures.
- The provider and her strong staff team are very reflective; actions taken have had a very positive impact on improving the learning environment and helping children to make progress.

It is not yet good because

- Not all parents are fully engaged in communicating and sharing information, so some opportunities to continue children's learning at home are lost.
- Information regarding illness at the setting is inconsistently reported to parents. This has a negative impact on children's well-being.
- Some areas of the setting are in need of refurbishment in order to make them safe and suitable for children.

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 interacted with children in the playrooms and in the adjacent outside playground.
- The inspector held discussions with the provider and carried out a joint observation.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation including evidence of staff checks, some policies and children's development profiles.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to during the inspection and on surveys issued in advance of the inspection.

Inspector

Sarah Williams

Full report

Information about the setting

Acorn Childcare registered in 2012 under the present owner and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It operates from two rooms within a community centre in Hatfield Peveral, Essex, and is privately owned and managed. The pre-school and out of school club run from Monday to Friday during term time only. The setting opens from 9.15am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 66 children on roll, 36 of whom are in the early years age range. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The setting employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and the manager has a degree.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- improve cleaning routines to ensure that all areas of the premises are consistently clean, safe and suitable for children
- implement effective and robust risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards in all areas used by children; this includes unsecured internal doors, access to cupboards containing hazardous items, worn areas of flooring and exposed wiring.

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

- take steps to ensure that parents are consistently and fully informed about any instances of illness and infection so that they can take the necessary action to protect their children
- introduce further strategies to engage all parents in their child's learning and development, so that they can promote learning at home and share information about their child's achievements.

Inspection judgements

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

Children make progress in the prime areas and gain the skills they will need for future learning. They readily engage in planned and spontaneous activities, which are sometimes based on their interests and ideas. Staff listen to what children say and provide the toys

and resources they need to complete their activities. For example, the role play kitchen is very popular, so staff make sure it is available each day for children's imaginative play. Teaching methods are based on a very sound knowledge of how children learn, and staff closely observe the children to assess their levels of development. They produce regular reports and include next steps in learning, which challenge the children and help them move forwards. Children can learn in small or larger groups, or playing alongside their friends in informal groupings. Through varying the types of activity offered and the teaching methods employed, the sessions are well-paced and allow children to experience variety, keeping them enthusiastic and eager learners. Their individual learning styles are catered for because the key persons know their children well and what appeals to them. Daily outdoor sessions are factored in. Currently, the setting does not have use of an enclosed outdoor area for children, so staff make good use of an adjacent enclosed playground with exciting, safe and well-maintained equipment. Children enthusiastically climb and move about on the large climbing frame and learn to make the swings move by using their legs, chanting 'forwards, backwards' as they do so, encouraged by staff. A timer is used, helping children to understand that they sometimes need to wait and take turns.

Children go on imaginary journeys on the train and create fantasy food in the ice cream parlour they have invented under the climbing frame. Staff readily join in with children's games and play scenarios, showing them that their ideas are valued. Therefore, the daily outings to the playground allow children to develop their social skills, physical development and imagination through purposeful play. They follow staff's instructions, listening and responding when asked to line up and eagerly volunteering to carry things they have brought out. As well as the playground, staff regularly take children across the playing field to a pond. Here they can explore nature and note the changing seasons through the plants and animal life they observe. Feeding the ducks helps them learn how to care for living things and promotes excited discussion as they enjoy the ducks' antics. There are plans to provide a small area for outside play next to the newly acquired playroom, which will allow for free-flow play in future. In the main playroom, children choose from the equipment set out for them. This is varied daily and always balanced to provide choices, such as a craft activity, maths games and puzzles, construction and small world play. Children can wear costumes to enhance their role play and imaginative games. They choose and enjoy books, sometimes with a friend and sometimes with a staff member, developing a love for literature and learning new vocabulary.

Every child has a development profile containing photographs and written observations which detail their child's progress and achievements. These are carefully compiled and very well presented and include clear next steps for each child, based on what their key person has identified as needed to promote their learning. While there is space for parents to comment and contribute to these records, in practice, few do so. This means that some opportunities to share information in a two-way flow are missed.

Children are aided in becoming ready for the next stage in their education. They take responsibility for tidying up what they have been playing with and listen well when asked to do something. They learn independence as they manage their own lunch boxes and their belongings, such as coats, shoes and book bags. Children have the opportunity to take a book home and share it with their family, giving them a taste of what they can

expect when they go to school. As the final term approaches, links with the feeder schools are made and children learn about their new school through a series of visits and discussions. This ensures that when the transition occurs, anxieties are minimised and children can settle quickly. An out of school session is offered, so children can continue to attend the setting once they start formal school, if this is required.

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

Children are happy and settled at the setting, showing that they feel at ease and confident. The key person system effectively assists children in forming emotional attachments so that they can play and learn, making developmental progress. Staff gather information from parents about their child so they can ensure their needs are met. Children readily approach staff to have their needs met, whether it is to soothe a little bump, help to wash their hands or select an item of equipment they wish to use. Children behave well because staff are consistent in their behaviour management; they listen and respond to staff, showing care and consideration for one another. Parents spoken to report that staff are all approachable and they feel listened to, so that their child's needs are well met.

The key person is responsible for maintaining an accurate record of each child's development and also carrying out the progress check at age two for children in this age group. The results of this check are communicated to parents, who can in turn share these with their health visitor to secure any additional help for children who may need support to reach their milestones. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well within the setting. The manager liaises with parents and any outside professionals so that individual learning plans can be formulated and reviewed regularly. Where one to one help is required, this is sought, so every child is included and not disadvantaged in any way.

Children learn habits that promote a healthy lifestyle. They have daily fresh air and exercise in the playground, or if the weather does not permit this, physical games are provided indoors. This way, every child can develop and refine their movement skills, sometimes with music and dance. Children have fresh water available at all times, so they can help themselves to drinks. They are offered milk at snack time along with healthy choices, such as fruit and vegetables, or foods related to the topics they are following. Many children stay for a packed lunch; these are eaten at tables with staff, so children learn table manners and are in control of what and how much they eat. Staff give guidance to parents in regard to healthy options for the packed lunches, and children are beginning to understand that some foods are healthy and others are for treats. Children take and use a tissue when they need to, disposing of them appropriately in the lidded bins provided. Staff are vigilant in helping children wash and dry their hands thoroughly in order to minimise the spread of infection. Table surfaces are meticulously cleaned down before and after any messy activities and meal or snack times. A few areas of the setting are difficult to keep clean due to wear and tear on the floor surfaces, and some areas are missed during routine daily cleaning. In addition, some areas of the premises present hazards to children, such as unsecured toilet doors and cupboards containing carrier bags, to which they should not have access. This means children's safety is not fully assured.

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

This inspection was prioritised by Ofsted following concerns raised regarding lack of information about illness at the setting. The inspection found that while some attempts to keep parents informed about illness and infectious conditions are successful, information sharing is inconsistent. For example, the current incidence of chicken pox has been made clearly known to parents, so they can be vigilant and take steps to look after their children's health. The owner has even issued guidance and information sheets about managing common childhood complaints and conditions to parents who have asked for them. On other occasions, for example, instances of conjunctivitis, which is known to be very easily spread among children, was not communicated. This inconsistency means that parents are not always fully informed of matters concerning health and welfare. This minor weakness has resulted in a recommendation regarding ensuring that parents are consistently well informed about illness at the setting. Children's welfare is generally well considered and they are protected from harm and abuse. Concerns regarding cleanliness of equipment, and especially table tops, were received. The inspection found that all equipment is clean and suitable for children's use, and that appropriate hygiene procedures are in place to minimise risks of spread of infection. However, a few areas of the premises, such as some floors, are less well maintained in a clean condition, so an action is raised to address this minor weakness and ensure that welfare requirements are fully met. Current risk assessments are not effective in identifying all areas of the premises which may pose a hazard to children, such as worn flooring, exposed wiring and unsecured doors and cupboards. Again, an action has been set to ensure that welfare requirements are fully and effectively met. The provider is aware that she needs to exclude children or staff who are suffering from infectious conditions, and there is a policy and procedure in place to this effect. She follows the latest guidance as to which conditions are considered grounds for exclusion and provides up-to-date information for parents about this.

The owner, who is also the manager, has attended a higher level training course with regard to safeguarding, and takes a lead role in ensuring that all staff are empowered to respond appropriately to any concerns about a child. Robust and thorough recruitment and ongoing appraisal of staff ensure that only adults who have been checked and vetted as suitable to work with children are employed. Security and staff vigilance mean that children are safe and protected from unwanted visitors and only released to known adults at home time. Outings are risk assessed and staff are clear that children need careful supervision when out and about.

The setting has made huge strides and improvements under the current owner, who is ambitious and has a very positive vision for the future of her setting. She has worked hard to strengthen the staff team and introduce new, more rational methods of planning and delivering the range of activities needed to provide a broad and balanced educational programme for children. This has maximised the time that staff can spend working directly with the children, and as a result, all staff say they know their key children better and can plan for them as individuals. The positive changes have been achieved through thorough

evaluation and very careful reflection of practice. All aspects of the provision have been improved and there are many plans in place for future developments. One current development is the use of a second playroom which is being set up to allow more effective grouping of children. This will give the very youngest a space specially designed to promote their needs, under the guidance of a designated member of staff with responsibility for them. It will allow the older children to enjoy and benefit from their age-appropriate activities more intensely. This will also give more flexibility in managing the children on a day-to-day basis and allow for some free-flow play once the outside area is set up. All staff are enthusiastic and forward looking, and welcome advice and guidance from the local authority development team, as well as other professionals. Staff are encouraged to try out new ideas and these are thoroughly evaluated for effectiveness, along with all other planned activities.

The owner initiates regular supervision for all staff to check the quality of teaching. She also tracks the progress of every child so she can monitor the quality of the educational programme. By analysing children's movements and use of the various areas, staff are able to refine and tailor the environment to make it more effective in meeting every child's learning needs. Where any training needs are identified, or a staff member has an area of particular interest, these are addressed and followed up, pushing up the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. Many aspects of the partnership with parents work well. Parents spoken to say they find staff approachable and friendly and that they feel their children are making good progress by attending the setting. However, strategies to engage parents in contributing ideas and information about what their child does at home, or respond to the next steps in learning suggested by the key persons, are not fully successful. Surveys are issued regularly and some parents respond. Those who do are able to influence changes at the setting, for example, to the session times, which have been adjusted and now suit their needs better. Staff work in partnership with other settings children attend, and this ensures consistency in children's care and learning.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are	Met
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The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are	Met
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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	EY454277
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	955006
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	66
Name of provider	Amy Louise Savill
Date of previous inspection	11/03/2013
Telephone number	07580 834417

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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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