

Acorn at Kents Hill

Wadhurst Lane, Kents Hill, MILTON KEYNES, MK7 6JF

Inspection date	25/06/2014
Previous inspection date	22/08/2013

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	4
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 experience learning that is securely based on the seven areas of learning; this helps them to make suitable progress in their learning and development.
- Staff use outdoor play effectively to promote children's learning across all areas. Most children use these opportunities to set personal challenges and to consolidate their understanding of safety.
- Overall, practices in the nursery are helping children to learn the importance of healthy lifestyles through the daily activities that are core parts of their experiences.
- The nursery is safe and welcoming and children are settled and contented.

It is not yet good because

- The quality of teaching and learning is variable in the nursery. As result, older children do not benefit from the same good quality personal interactions and planning as the youngest ones.
- Staff who work with the older children do not always use observations effectively. Consequently, they miss some opportunities to support, extend and enhance children's learning in some areas.
- Staff do not always maintain all areas of the premises to good standards of cleanliness throughout the day.
- The nursery's self-evaluation does not capture all areas for improvement to foster a

culture of continuous improvement.

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 compulsory part of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children's activities in all areas of the nursery, including outdoors.
- The inspector reviewed qualifications, recruitment and suitability with the manager.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the nursery manager.
- The inspector spoke to children and parents and took note of their comments.
- The inspector reviewed documentation and discussed self-evaluation plans with the nursery manager.
- The inspector had a meeting with the childcare manager, the early years manager and the nursery manager.

Inspector

Cordalee Harrison

Full report

Information about the setting

Acorn at Kents Hill re-registered in 2012. Acorn Childcare manages the nursery. They are a non-profit organisation that operates nurseries and out-of-school provisions in Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire. The nursery is situated in purpose built premises in the residential area of Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. The premises are comprised of six interlinking rooms for children's use, an atrium, kitchen, toilet and washing facilities, an office, a staff room, a sleep area and outdoor play space. This nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The nursery employs 14 staff. One member of staff is an Early Years Professional, two are qualified to degree level, including the manager, and a further six staff hold qualification at level 3. Other staff are training and working towards gaining qualifications in childcare and education. There are currently 65 children on roll. The nursery receive free early educational funding for three- and four-year-olds. The nursery supports children with special educational need and/or disabilities. The nursery opens weekdays from 7.30am to 6pm for 51 weeks of the year.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- develop consistency in the quality of teaching, by ensuring all staff are sufficiently skilled to engage with children purposefully, to support and motivate their learning with meaningful dialogue, open questioning and shared interest with them at all times, particularly for the older children in the nursery
- ensure staff are able to recognise the most important points when observing children and develop their skills to use the information to support planning for individual and groups of children, particularly for staff who teach and care for the older children in the nursery
- review the standards of cleanliness, particularly in the toilet area for the pre-school aged children, by making sure that it is maintained to a good standard of hygiene throughout the day.

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

- improve the system for self-evaluation to ensure it continually evaluates all aspects of practice to consistently identify strengths and areas for development, taking into account staff performance to foster a culture of continuous improvement in staff's daily practice.

Inspection judgements

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

There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Some staff interact well with children and extend their learning effectively. Others are less skilled and do not engage sufficiently well with children to help them make good or better progress. Staff who work directly with the older groups of children do not always prioritise the most important points when they observe children. Therefore, they are not making the most effective use of their observations of children, or the information from tracking. For example, observations show some children are reluctant to play outdoors and tracking shows that not all children make good progress in making friendships. However, this information does not follow through into the planning for children's next steps in learning. This demonstrates planning for individual children is not precise. Staff support older children's learning appropriately with some focused activities. However, they do not always use the most effective resources to meet the learning intentions. Therefore, while children joined with the activity, the delivery of the activity does not meet the identified aim well. Additionally, staff do not always challenge children well with open questioning to find out what they know. The activity is too basic for some children in the group. Staff lack confidence to adapt their plans to provide a good learning experience for all of the children that are involved in the activity. Staff do not always engage children deeply to extend or consolidate their learning. They do not always give the children time to think and respond, and the construction of more complex sentences. Children play games and learn to use numbers in context. They further experiment with water, filling and emptying containers, and they use recycled resources to express their creativity making three-dimensional shapes. Older children demonstrate very good free style drawing skills; however, staff miss opportunities to extend their learning. For example, staff do not routinely encourage these children to begin to form letters and write their names to label their work, and to start to write for other purposes. Staff are not consistently challenging these children to do more. This does not prepare children well for the next stage of their learning and readiness for school. Even so, children show enjoyment in books and stories. They listen attentively to favourite stories and some children retell their favourites, while relating their words to the pictures. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently strong to keep all children moving forward in their learning. Therefore, while children make suitable progress in their all round development, staff do not plan consistently to help them consolidate their learning and move forward at a good or better pace in ways that are individual to them. Many of the children in the toddler age group have a lovely time learning through play in and outdoors. They have fun getting messy, riding, climbing, dancing and learning about nature and insects in the garden. They enjoy books and stories and most children show great curiosity and interest in people and the things around them, such as finding out about slugs and snails in the garden. Some of these children show competence and good fine movements. For example, they develop their eye and hand coordination as they use their fingers to drag and drop items on the interactive board, demonstrating they are very familiar with the technology. However, staff do not plan precisely for all of the children in this group and this lessens the opportunities for all of these children to make good use of the wealth of resources. For example, they do not always plan well to support children who are more reluctant to play outdoors. This means

that children miss some opportunities to enjoy the fresh air to experience some physical challenges, and do not always learn to assess risks as well the other children. The youngest children have enjoyable learning and beneficial experiences. For example, staff who work with these children make good use of the resources available. Children independently explore their environment, because staff do not restrict their movements. For example, children increase their mobility as they move freely between indoor and outdoor activities. Staff use information from their observations to create a learning environment that is specifically of interest to individual children. This increases opportunities for the youngest children to learn independently and through exploration. Staff who care for younger children demonstrate good quality teaching skills and they interact positively with babies, sustaining their interest. For example, they use one to one interactions to engage with the children to share their learning experiences and this help to develop their attention span. Staff encourage children to make choices, explore and develop their own ideas. Staff show genuine interest in what the children say; they use words and gestures and show them what to do as they play. For example, staff keep sufficient water in the tray to make it easy for the babies to copy their movements with fingers and brushes. Staff who are working with the youngest children confidently promote their personal, social and emotional skills, as well as their communication and language, and physical development. They talk, listen and use good questioning techniques to engage children in communication and extend their vocabulary. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good enough to support young children to make good or better progress from their starting points. This fosters their enthusiasm to learn. There is lots of outdoor play for all groups of children. The very well resourced outdoor provision makes it easy for children who like to learn outside to do so. This helps many children start to set their own challenges, For example, as they climb and jump, balance and run they learn to assess some risks for themselves. However, weakness in planning for children who are more reluctant to learn outdoors means that there are fewer opportunities for them to learn to assess risk in the same way.

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

The key-person system serves children well overall; children are happy and contented. The ease with which children interact with staff shows that the support that staff give them is helping them to make secure attachments. For example, staff know the babies very well. They allow them to use their comforters and they are very careful to follow their individual routines. For example, staff sense when these young children are becoming upset and act very quickly to reassure them with kind words and a gentle touch. Staff respond positively and calmly to the children and offer them comfort and attention when they need it. As a result, children get the support they need to build trusting relations with their carers from the earliest stage. Children settle well in the nursery and happily engage with staff, showing that they feel secure. Staff actively welcome all parents and children and take positive steps to promote inclusion. They make the necessary provision for children with special education needs and/or disabilities. Staff are experienced at working with educational professionals to identify and develop strategies to meet the needs of these children. For example, some staff have completed the special educational needs coordinator training. Additionally, the nursery staff welcome input from professionals who

are involved with the children's education and welfare. Staff make some use of individual educational plans and follow the guidance of professionals, such as speech therapists, to improve children's communication and language. There are systems in place that the special needs coordinators, parents and educational professionals use to monitor, target and review these children's progress. This ensures that staff, parents and professionals work together to implement the strategies that keep these children moving forward. This helps to close gaps in their learning at a pace that is in keeping with professional guidance for individual children. Overall, staff have a positive attitude to equality; they know that it is important to make children feel that they belong in the nursery. For example, children's photographs on their coat peg help to convey this feeling to children. Along with the equal opportunities policy, a welcome notice in different scripts sets the expectation of inclusion for parents. Staff work closely with parents from the start to find out about children's backgrounds, their starting points and parents preference for their children. Resources which positively reflect diversity help children to begin to value differences from an early age. Children eat a balance diet of nutritious foods, and staff provide all children with fresh drinking water throughout the day. Staff are aware of children's dietary needs and they are clear about the procedures that are in place to safeguard the health of children with special dietary conditions. In addition to healthy food, most children get fresh plenty of fresh air and exercise daily. Staff are supporting children to start to develop their care needs, for example, some older children are able to explain the types of food they are not able to eat and why. Staff manage children's hygiene needs well in most areas. They meet the hygiene needs of babies and toddlers promptly, and these children are clean and comfortable. However, the staff who care for older children are at times overly reliant on all of these children managing their hygiene needs. Additionally, this affects the standard of hygiene in their toilet area. Nevertheless, children are learning to use the toilet independently and they are learning about different aspects of hygiene practices that promote healthy lifestyles. For example, staff help the children to remember to wash they hands before eating. Additionally, staff remind and help children to wear hats and use sun cream, explaining why this is important. All children are able to sit comfortably to eat and to sleep safely to meet their individual needs. There is a wide range of good quality resources to support the learning of children who are at different stages of their development, indoors and outside. The premises are safe and secure. Children are not able to leave unsupervised and most areas are clean and properly maintained. Staff are consistent in implementing suitable behaviour management strategies. They set high expectations for children to behave well. Overall, staff model good behaviour for children and help them to learn right from wrong. Children are learning to listen and respond positively to adults who are caring for them. These are useful skills for them now and in readiness for school.

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

Overall, the leadership team make suitable arrangements for children's learning and development, and safeguarding their welfare. However, systems to achieve good or better outcomes for all children are not fully developed. This is due to the varying quality of teaching in the nursery. For example, the staff do not always plan precisely for every

child's next step in their learning and development. This means that although children enjoy their time at nursery, staff do not always enhance their learning to close gaps in learning quickly. Although staff are confident in the areas of learning, children's learning is not always well tailored to children's individual needs and this affects children's progress overall. The systems for tracking and monitoring children's progress are not fully developed for the leadership team to make good use of the information to consistently drive every child's learning and development fully effectively. This does not enable children to get the best start in readiness for school. Additionally, the leadership team is not using the information from the tracking and monitoring systems to properly assess the overall effectiveness of the quality of teaching and learning in all areas of the nursery. Robust recruitment measures help to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children. The induction procedure is effective to help staff get to know their duties and responsibilities in the nursery. The leadership team use staff supervision, information from the previous inspection and appraisals to identify some training needs for staff, and they use information to develop the training plan. Staff are familiar with nursery's safeguarding policies and procedures and most aspects of safeguarding and welfare practices are managed well. For example, staff know what to do if concerns arise about children's well-being. Staff make effective use of risk assessments and routinely check for hazards. They work well together to supervise children and to create and maintain a safe and secure environment for them. This sets good examples to help children learn about the importance of personal safety. The provider maintains the required adult-to-child ratios and a high number of qualified staff work directly with children. However, there are times when staff caring for the older children allow some areas of practice pertaining to hygiene matters to slip. Overall parents praise the nursery provision and they state that their children are happy and settled. They feel that their children are progressing well overall. They know their children's key person and feel that staff are approachable. However, some parents comment on hygiene matters. They welcome the opportunity for children to develop self-care skills, but do not feel that children always get all the support they need. The outcome judgement of requires improvement shows that there are weaknesses in the nursery's process of self-evaluation. Even so, the leadership team shows capacity to make improvement. They have addressed all of the actions that were raised at the previous inspection. For example, they have taken effective steps to ensure that all matters relating to suitability meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have also ensured that the policy for reporting to Ofsted and the local authority is full and clear. The leadership team have worked closely with the early years developmental team to make sure that the staff work effectively with parents to complete the progress check for two-year-old children. Through full engagement with the local authority consultants, the leadership team has worked to complete most actions properly and this has improved the provision for children. Even so, the leadership recognises that there is more for them to do to achieve good outcome judgement and gain consistency for children in the nursery. To drive improvement they have very recently employed a manager who has achieved outstanding elements of practice in her previous setting. There is a clear focus to drive up the standard of learning and development through improved quality of teaching and safeguarding for the benefit of all of the children.

The requirements for the compulsory 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	EY447040
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	963494
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	52
Number of children on roll	65
Name of provider	Acorn Childcare 2
Date of previous inspection	22/08/2013
Telephone number	01908 200 281

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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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