

# The Little Acorns Preschool (Chelmsford)

St. Luke's Church Hall, Gloucester Avenue, CHELMSFORD, Essex, CM2 9LG

<b>Inspection date</b>	13/11/2014
Previous inspection date	09/12/2011

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>2</b>
	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

- Children are well protected in a safe, caring environment because management and staff have a good understanding of how to safeguard children and the procedures to follow if they are concerned about a child's welfare.
- Teaching and learning are strong so all groups of children make good progress in their learning and development.
- Children are particularly well prepared for the move on to school, because of the excellent transition arrangements that are in place and the strong relationships with the school.
- Partnerships with parents and external agencies are highly effective in ensuring that appropriate interventions are secured, so that children receive the support that they need to make progress.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Staff do not always provide opportunities outdoors for children to develop and build on their creative and early mathematical skills to further enhance their good progress.

## 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 held discussions with the manager and conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector observed learning activities indoors and in the outdoor learning environment and interacted with children and staff.
- The inspector sampled documentation relating to safeguarding, children's learning and development records and planning and assessment.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of practitioners and the providers' self-evaluation.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day and from information included in the pre-school's own parent survey.

**Inspector**  
Vicky Turner

## Full report

### Information about the setting

Little Acorns Preschool (Chelmsford) was registered in 2011 on the Early Years Register. It is situated in St. Luke's Church Hall in the Moulsham lodge area of Chelmsford and is managed by a parent committee. The pre-school serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from two rooms and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The pre-school employs 12 members of staff, 11 of whom are childcare staff and one administrator. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The pre-school opens each weekday, during term time only. The setting offers sessions each weekday, from 9.15am until 12.15pm and optional sessions on Monday and Friday, from 9.15am until 3.30pm and/or from 1pm until 3.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 67 children on roll who are in the early years age group. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

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

- enhance the outdoor provision to provide more learning opportunities for children to express their creativity and build on their already good early mathematical skills.

### Inspection judgements

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

Teaching and learning are good, so children make good progress from their respective starting points. Effective systems for observation and assessment enable staff to accurately identify children's next steps. Staff use this information to plan interesting learning experiences for children. The provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Weekly planned sessions provide effective opportunities for staff to reinforce basic skills identified on children's individual education plans. For example, staff plan well-organised sessions to support certain children's listening and attention skills or counting and number recognition. Children's progress is carefully tracked, so key persons have an accurate understanding of children's skills, knowledge and abilities. This enables staff to identify those children who are working with skills below that typical for their age and to put in appropriate support. Children's learning journey records are well documented and show that children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. Staff complete the progress check for children between the ages of two and three years and share it with parents to promote a consistent approach to supporting children's learning.

The pre-school is well resourced with good quality toys and equipment that support

children's learning well. Children are well motivated, move around the hall confidently and happily engage in a range of purposeful activities of their choice. Children choose and share books in the book corner and are taught how to handle books carefully. Staff monitor children's engagement in activities and know when to sensitively intervene in order to extend and support children's learning. Children's language and communication skills are well supported. Staff use role play, puppets and story sessions to provide good opportunities to promote conversation. As a result, children are confident to join in with stories and rhymes. Staff model language well and take every opportunity to extend children's vocabulary throughout the day. Makaton sign language is used well to support children with language and communication difficulties as well as children who speak English as an additional language. An additional room is used for small group work, such as to support language skills and sessions to prepare older children for school. Older children demonstrate high levels of engagement during an interactive story session and predict what might happen in the story. They show a good understanding of the events in the story, discuss characters' feelings and join in with predictable phrases. Younger children are eager to contribute during a session on word opposites and engage in purposeful conversation. Children visit the mobile library every fortnight, which serves the pre-school, to look at a wider range of books. There are good opportunities for children to draw and practise their early writing skills. As a result, children are developing the key skills to support their future move to school.

Children's mathematical development is well promoted indoors, with staff providing good opportunities for counting, number recognition and shape recognition. Younger children enthusiastically join in with number rhymes and learn to subtract numbers as they sing and perform popular rhymes. Older children borrow games to take home to reinforce their basic mathematical skills. Despite this good provision, there are limited opportunities to reinforce children's mathematical skills in the outdoor area. Children begin to gain an understanding of the world as they observe seasonal changes and hunt for mini-beasts. They learn about diversity as they celebrate various festivals throughout the year. Visits to the local area help children to begin to understand about people and communities. There are good opportunities for children to express their creativity indoors, but this is not as well planned for outdoors for those children who prefer to learn outside.

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

Staff provide a warm and welcoming environment so children separate easily from their parents and quickly settle down to an activity of their choice. The highly effective key-person system enables staff to establish strong relationships with their key children and their families. As a result, children have a strong sense of belonging and emotional security. A key-person buddy system ensures children and families still receive continuity of support should their usual key person be absent. Regular fire drill practices ensure that children understand the procedures for safe evacuation of the building in an emergency. Children behave well because of the good systems in place for managing behaviour. They understand that there are boundaries and know what is expected of them. Staff use praise and rewards effectively to motivate children and acknowledge their positive behaviour.

Every term, children are given a praise caterpillar, which shows their achievements during the term to promote their good behaviour. This boosts their self-esteem and increases their confidence. Staff effectively promote children's self-help skills by encouraging children to take responsibility for small tasks and do things from themselves.

Staff effectively promote children's health by providing them with daily healthy snacks of fruit and vegetables that take account of children's individual dietary and medical needs. Water is available throughout the day for children to help themselves. The outdoors provides good opportunities for daily physical exercise as children ride wheeled toys, climb and run around in the fresh air. Children benefit from the expertise of a dance teacher who occasionally visits the pre-school. Children adopt good hygiene practices as they wash their hands before meals, after messy play and after using the toilet. Children are reminded of safe practices. For example, children are taught to use equipment safely and to walk indoors. Visitors to the pre-school, such as police officers and fire officers support children's understanding about staying safe from strangers and about fire safety. Staff encourage children practise road safety when they visit the local area.

Staff implement effective procedures to ensure children are very well prepared for the move on to school. For example, staff use a bear to role model basic skills to children, such as good sitting and good listening. The lunch club prepares them for the lunchtime experience in school. Groups of four children visit the school and use the computer suite on a weekly rota basis. As a result, they develop their information and communication technology skills while becoming familiar with the school environment. Children practise changing for physical education, which promotes their self-help skills and ensures that minimal learning time is lost when they start school. Teachers visit the pre-school in the summer term and the pre-school staff discuss ways in which they can prepare children for a smooth transition. Parents feel that children are very well prepared and ready for school.

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

Children are well protected in the pre-school because managers have a good understanding of their responsibility for safeguarding children. All staff have attended relevant training and they understand the procedures for reporting any concerns they may have about a child's welfare. Risk assessments are undertaken to ensure that equipment and the learning environment is safe. The premises are safe and visitors' identity is checked before gaining entrance into the building. All members of staff have signed an agreement to accept the pre-school's policy on the safe use of mobile telephones social networking sites. Parents are also informed of this policy. Accident and medication records are well maintained. Some members of staff are trained in first aid, epilepsy and the action to take if a child has a severe allergic reaction. This means that staff are well equipped to address children's various medical needs.

There is a good management structure in place so managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for different aspects of the provision. As a result, staff work effectively as a team, so that the pre-school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

Staff are thoroughly vetted to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. New members of staff work alongside established staff as part of their induction. Staff performance is monitored through informal observations and annual appraisals. Managers have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and know how to improve teaching. Managers monitor planning and children's learning journey records to identify any gaps. There are good opportunities for staff professional development. Consequently, all members of staff have attended training on autism, the new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and behaviour management. As a result, staff have the knowledge and skills to consistently support children's individual needs. Managers are currently supporting two members of staff who are working towards level 3 qualifications to further improve their practice. Staff meetings provide good opportunities for staff to contribute their ideas and to reflect on their practice. The pre-school has successfully addressed the recommendations from the last inspection. They now work closely with other settings that children attend and share information to provide consistency in children's learning and development. Staff continually evaluate the pre-school taking into consideration parent's views to effectively identify priorities for improvement.

The pre-school has developed highly successful partnerships with parents and external agencies. Consequently, children receive the support that they need to make good progress. Good systems for communication keeps parents well informed of their child's progress and the pre-school activities. Parents receive a home prospectus pack on registration, so that they are well informed about the running of the pre-school. They share information with staff when their children first start and contribute to their children's learning and development records. Parents' views are sought through questionnaires and the comment box. Parents speak highly of the staff and are appreciative of the good quality care and education provided. They value the good support provided for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The special educational needs co-ordinator has produced a leaflet, informing parents about the recent changes relating to support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents are encouraged to join in with events, such as sports day and various festivals. Staff draw on the expertise of various professionals who offer support and advice to enable staff to support all children effectively.

## 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. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of 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		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

## Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children’s learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY420651
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	852130
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 5
<b>Total number of places</b>	36
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	67
<b>Name of provider</b>	The Little Acorns Pre-School (Chelmsford)
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	09/12/2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	07812 368 692

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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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