

Little Acorns

Hurworth Primary School, Westfield Drive, Hurworth, DARLINGTON, County Durham, DL2 2ET



Inspection date	26 January 2016
Previous inspection date	26 April 2012

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding	1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Outstanding	1
Outcomes for children		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- The manager and deputy manager have a clear vision for the setting and continually strive for improvement. Staff are very committed and passionate about their roles and responsibilities. Self-evaluation systems are extremely effective, helping to enhance future learning opportunities for children and maintain the highest level of achievement.
- Staff are exceptionally well qualified and highly skilled, which mean they have a thorough knowledge of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have an excellent understanding of all children and their individual interests and learning needs.
- Planning, observation and assessment systems are sharply focused. Staff have high expectations of children and provide them with a rich variety of challenging learning experiences. This helps children to be well motivated, confident, independent and actively engaged.
- Children are extremely well supported for their future move on to the next stage in their learning, because staff have established strong links with the host primary school. Children are given numerous opportunities to become familiar with the school environment, as they eat their lunch in the dining hall and attend regular visits and special events.
- Staff have developed highly successful partnerships with parents, external agencies, other professionals and the local authority. These relationships contribute to the exemplary care and education on offer for children.
- The indoor and outdoor environments are highly stimulating and well resourced. Children develop a strong sense of self and belonging as they are very happy, content and settled in their surroundings.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance opportunities to further extend children's excellent understanding of their natural environment.

Inspection activities

- The inspector viewed all areas accessed by children, including the outdoor environment.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector observed play and learning opportunities for children and spoke to staff members in the setting.
- The inspector carried out an interview with the manager and deputy manager, and looked at and discussed a range of policies and procedures.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working with children, the provider's self-evaluation form and improvement plan.
- The inspector took account of the views of children, parents and carers spoken to on the day of inspection and through written testimonials.

Inspector

Rachel Enright

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have a strong knowledge of child protection procedures. They successfully implement a detailed range of written policies, procedures and risk assessments which helps to protect children's welfare at all times. Systems to track children's ongoing progress are robust and enable the manager to swiftly identify and close any gaps in children's learning and development. She has identified the need to enhance opportunities to further extend children's understanding of their natural environment and the world around them. Staff are exceptionally well supported to further extend their professional development. They participate in targeted supervision meetings and observations, to enable them to continually reflect on their practice. In addition, staff attend numerous training courses and regularly visit other early years settings to ensure teaching is consistently of a high quality.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Children's thinking and problem-solving skills are exceptionally well promoted. Staff engage children in meaningful discussions, use highly effective questioning techniques and ensure they have time to formulate their answers. Staff continually encourage children to be imaginative, creative and to express their ideas and opinions throughout their learning. Children have extensive opportunities to extend their literacy development and staff ensure they have access to an excellent selection of books, writing materials and mark-making resources in all areas of their play. Staff use a number of highly successful strategies to actively involve parents in their children's learning and development. Parents regularly share information about their children's achievements at home, and are given ideas about how to support their children's learning outside of the setting. This helps to create a consistent and cohesive approach. Parents are extremely complimentary about the setting and staff. They make comments, such as, 'I cannot fault the service provided' and, 'Staff are approachable and nothing seems too much trouble'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

A well-established key-person system helps children to form extremely secure and positive relationships with staff and their peers. Children start to gain a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. This is promoted through their learning experiences and regular visits from people in the local community, such as the police and school nurse. Staff ensure children have numerous opportunities to be active, energetic and enhance their physical skills. Children show high levels of excitement and enthusiasm in the outdoor area, as they explore the mud kitchen, negotiate space using ride-on toys and participate in sports activities. Children play cooperatively together and behave very well.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

All children are making consistently high rates of progress from their starting points and are gaining all of the necessary skills in readiness for school. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are exceptionally well supported by staff to ensure their individual requirements are fully met.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY438010
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	853889
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	2 - 11
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	115
Name of provider	Elizabeth Jane Baker
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2012
Telephone number	01325720396

Little Acorns was registered in 2011. The setting employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including three members of childcare staff who hold Qualified Teacher Status. The setting opens Monday to Friday, from 8am until 6pm, during school term time. The setting is also open Monday to Wednesday, from 8am until 6pm, during school holidays, but has four weeks of full closure. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The setting supports disabled children and those with special educational needs.

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