

# Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks

School Lane, SHEFFORD, Bedfordshire, SG17 5XA



## Inspection date

28 February 2017

Previous inspection date

22 March 2013

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement	3
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Requires improvement	3
Outcomes for children		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents

### This provision requires improvement. It is not yet good because:

- Staff have failed to maintain an accurate record of children's hours of attendance.
- Sometimes, staff do not use the information gained from their assessments of children's learning effectively. The next steps planned for some children do not provide them with appropriate challenge or focus on where they need the most support.
- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently strong. Staff do not create a language rich environment for children or consistently support their skills to communicate in a range of ways.
- The management team does not use effective ways to identify and address all current weaknesses in practice to continually drive improvement.

### It has the following strengths

- The key-person system is used well to support children's emotional needs as they prepare to start at the setting. One of the ways staff achieve this is by carrying out a home visit. This helps key staff to gather detailed information from parents and nurture the early relationships with children as they play with them in familiar surroundings.
- Established links with other professionals enable the management team to be alert to, and support the needs of individual families. Staff invite older children's new teachers in to visit, helping to prepare them for their move on to school.
- Parents are very happy with the care provided. They say they are informed about the activities children take part in and have opportunities to talk to their child's key person.

## What the setting needs to do to improve further

### To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and the Childcare Register the provider must:

	<b>Due Date</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ keep a daily record of the hours of attendance of children looked after on the premises and retain these for a reasonable period of time</li> </ul>	28/03/2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ensure the information gained from assessments of children's learning is used effectively, to inform planning and support their good progress across all areas of learning</li> </ul>	28/03/2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ improve the quality of teaching to enable all children to experience a rich language environment, supporting their confidence and skills to speak and listen in a range of situations.</li> </ul>	28/03/2017

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

- develop the process of self-evaluation to clearly highlight and address all weaknesses of current practice and continually drive improvement.

### Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children during the inspection.
- The inspector completed a joint observation with the settings co-manager.
- The inspector held a meeting with both co-managers and the provider. She looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the setting.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents during the inspection and took account of their views.

### Inspector

Rachel Pepper

## Inspection findings

### Effectiveness of the leadership and management requires improvement

The core team of staff are well qualified and eager to improve their practice. They have regular supervision meetings to provide them with some support and to discuss available training opportunities. However, over recent months, the setting has experienced changes to the management team, which has meant trialing different approaches to practice. This has led to some confusion between staff, affecting their ability to effectively support children's learning. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have a secure knowledge of child protection issues and are aware of the earliest indicators that may indicate a child at risk of harm. However, staff do not maintain an accurate record of children's hours of attendance. This has minimal impact on children's welfare as staff can account for the children in their care at all times. Self-evaluation is used to identify some areas for improvement, yet is not rigorous enough to highlight all the current weaknesses.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

Staff appear to know the children well and complete regular assessments of their progress. However, they do not make effective use of this information to precisely identify and plan for children's higher levels of achievement. A drive to focus on children's interests has led to more engaging child-centred activities. However, this has also resulted in next steps for some children that reflect their interests rather than focusing on where they need the most support. Not enough emphasis is placed on helping children to develop good communication skills. At times, staff do not use effective questioning techniques or provide children with time to think and respond. Some aspects of teaching are good. Staff manage groups of children well. They support them to carefully measure out ingredients, using a spoon to scoop flour into a bowl and jug to pour in the milk. Children use their physical skills to stir and combine the mixture to make a batter. They enjoy predicting how many times staff can flip the cooked pancake and catch it in the pan.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

The environment is welcoming and organised well by staff to enable children to make choices in their play. Indoors, children investigate the effect of mixing paint colours in a spinning device. Outdoors, they climb the slide steps and engage in imaginative play with friends, pretending they are on a fairground ride. Staff are suitable role models, helping children to take turns and develop their social skills as they play alongside others. However, children do not always possess the language skills to build on these relationships further. Children are familiar with the daily routines, eagerly seating themselves at the table when it is time for snack. They know how to behave and help tidy away the toys before going home, taking care to place the resources in the corresponding labelled trays.

### Outcomes for children require improvement

Staff do not consistently support all children to make good progress. Nonetheless, children gain some of the basic skills that they need in readiness for school. They are motivated to learn, use numbers to count and are eager to solve problems staff present to them. Staff make appropriate use of funding. For example, they have sourced a company to set up an onsite animal farm for children who have limited access to outdoor experiences.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY371758
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	1065151
<b>Type of provision</b>	Full-time provision
<b>Day care type</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
<b>Age range of children</b>	2 - 9
<b>Total number of places</b>	26
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	93
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Acorn Playgroup (Shefford) Committee
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP908422
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 March 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 816281

Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks was registered in 2008. It is situated in purpose built premises in the grounds of Shefford Lower School and is managed by a committee. The setting employs 10 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and one holds a qualification at level 2. The setting opens from Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions are from 8am to 6pm. Within this time children may attend for a breakfast club, varied pre-school sessions, a lunch club and an out-of-school club. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

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.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120354](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120354).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our website for news, information and updates at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/user](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/user).

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2017

