

Acorns Nursery

Smallford Campus, Oaklands, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL4 0JA



Inspection date

31 May 2017

Previous inspection date

3 March 2014

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 highly positive attitudes of all staff, their excellent knowledge and their commitment to every child and family permeate all areas of their work. Children's emotional and developmental needs are met through the highest levels of care.
- Staff receive excellent support and supervision, reinforcing their ability to use innovative teaching methods. They nurture children's enthusiasm and curiosity, and offer them an abundance of exciting play opportunities.
- All staff use their qualifications exceptionally well to inform their work. They make excellent use of any new knowledge from training. They now offer children further opportunities to extend the use of their senses as they explore natural resources.
- The monitoring of children's progress is exceptionally comprehensive. Any gaps in learning are swiftly addressed, for example, by offering further exciting resources.
- Partnerships with parents are exceptional. Staff offer excellent support to parents in understanding children's learning so that they can build on this at home. For example, they lend resources and invite parents to regular sessions at the nursery, where they can participate in a variety of play experiences with their children.
- Highly practical activities support children in understanding diversity. For example, staff organise sessions for parents and children to share their beliefs and culture. This informs children's knowledge and their ability to appreciate differences.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance even further the opportunities for the youngest children to explore and use information and communication technology.

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 talked with children and staff at appropriate times throughout the inspection. She completed a joint observation with the manager and one of the deputy managers.
- The inspector held meetings with the manager and two deputy managers. She discussed the nursery's self-evaluation, looked at relevant documentation, such as safeguarding procedures, and saw evidence of the suitability of staff.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents during the inspection and took account of their views. She also viewed written feedback from parents.

Inspector

Kelly-Anne Eyre

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

Managers inspire staff and show a genuine commitment to developing the nursery. Their comprehensive evaluation supports this and they have recognised the potential to improve even further the opportunities for younger children to explore technology. Recent improvements include extended planning for outdoor play to offer children even greater play experiences. The manager spends additional funding effectively to promote children's development. Staff build excellent partnerships with other agencies and childcare providers. They work tirelessly to ensure that children's needs are recognised and met. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff consider all aspects of children's well-being and are alert to anything that may compromise children's welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Staff meticulously note children's interests and use these as a way of promoting their learning. For example, staff build on children's interest in natural patterns. Children excitedly make their own spiral snail shells with clay. They build on their mathematical skills as they examine hexagons in a beehive. They experiment by studying the beeswax and note how this softens when heated. Children then develop their creativity as they study patterns on insects and design their own. Children become competent in solving problems. For example, they make paper aeroplanes and modify the design as they try these out. Staff skilfully adapt resources and the environment. Younger children explore pots and pans in the garden and fill these with soil and water. Older children work together to use wooden planks, crates and tyres to make a garden obstacle course.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Exemplary use of the key-person system means that staff have a thorough understanding of each child and they quickly settle. Staff promote children's physical development and children gain an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. For example, they enjoy regular yoga sessions, where they learn about posture, balance and control. Staff are excellent role models and children copy them, showing respect and a mature awareness of how to express feelings and manage their behaviour. Highly sensitive staff interaction supports children in learning to negotiate, interact and work together. These key skills aid children in developing highly positive emotional attitudes in readiness for starting school.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

All children make excellent progress and rapidly develop the skills that support their learning and prepare them for school. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are learning English are particularly well supported. They thoroughly enjoy highly individualised activities that reflect their interests. These capture their attention and they learn to concentrate, explore and communicate.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY268301
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	1087911
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	0 - 4
Total number of places	50
Number of children on roll	100
Name of registered person	The Corporation of Oaklands College
Registered person unique reference number	RP905085
Date of previous inspection	3 March 2014
Telephone number	01727 737745

Acorns Nursery registered in 2003. The nursery employs 24 members of childcare staff. Of these, 21 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above, including one with qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

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