

Inspection of Acorn Playgroup & Pre-School

Whitehill, WELWYN, Hertfordshire AL6 9FN

Inspection date: 4 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children walk through the doors of the setting with huge smiles on their faces. Their high levels of confidence show that they feel safe. They eagerly approach the adults with special things they have brought from home. For example, one child arrives with cards she has made, another child is keen to show his superhero cape. Children display extremely high levels of motivation and enjoyment. For example, they say, 'I'm going outside to have some fun. I'm on a mission.' Similarly, after experiencing new and exciting ways of travelling down the slide, they say, 'I want to do this all day long.' The excellent range of activities on offer means that children are purposefully engaged in learning throughout the day.

All children are challenged in their learning and make excellent progress. The experienced staff know the children in their care exceptionally well. They recognise their individual personalities, abilities and needs. They have an in-depth knowledge of what children can do and what they need to learn next.

Children's social skills are highly impressive. They play very cooperatively together. For example, they organise and lead their own games. They explain the rules to each other, listening carefully and following instructions. Younger children learn how to share their favourite things with the support of a sensitive adult.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The curriculum is ambitious, well planned and matched to children's interests and needs. The setting places a very high priority on children's language and literacy skills. Staff teach children a vast array of songs and rhymes that help them to learn and use new words. Children learn about letters and the sounds that they make and begin to use them in their writing.
- The environment and resources support children's learning extremely well. Children are well equipped to access the outdoor area. They have outdoor suits and wellington boots so that they can go out in all weathers. This allows them to fully engage in the different experiences outside. For example, they lie in the sand and make 'snow angels'. Staff are committed to ensuring that all children have physical activity every day. They engage in physical play with children, for example by joining in a game of rugby.
- Staff are excellent role models and children's behaviour is exemplary. Children understand and follow the rules and routines of the setting. For example, they are able to talk about the rules for group time, which include 'looking eyes' and 'thinking heads'. Respectful relationships are evident throughout the setting. For example, at lunchtime, children engage in conversation with each other, discussing favourite foods and flavours. They listen to each other and respect each other's different preferences.

- Children are particularly kind and considerate. They look after each other and living things. For example, when they find a worm in the garden, they work together to take care of it until it burrows back under the ground. They find food for it and try to build it a home. Children play harmoniously together in groups. They share space and resources with all children who want to join in.
- Parents are highly complimentary about the setting. They say that their children are 'super happy'. They say that the staff really know their children and support them extremely well in their learning. They particularly appreciate the high ratio of adults to children, which allows children to receive close care and attention.
- The knowledgeable manager has developed an experienced and skilled staff team. She supports staff extremely well through regular supervision sessions, reflection and discussion. The staff team meets weekly to discuss the needs of children and the next steps needed to motivate and inspire learning. The manager has reduced paperwork by streamlining systems of observation and assessment. Staff are given time each week to write observations, which means that their workload is manageable. As a result, staff morale is very high. The manager continually evaluates the strengths of the setting, identifying areas for future improvement. She has clear plans in place to develop the provision and curriculum even further. This helps to ensure that children are given an excellent start to their education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding procedures at the setting are highly rigorous. Staff monitor the welfare of the children vigilantly. They know about the possible signs of abuse and what to do if they have any concerns about the children in their care. Recruitment procedures at the setting are very robust. Background checks on staff are extremely thorough. All staff are registered on the Disclosure and Barring Service update system. This is closely monitored to ensure that all those working with children remain suitable.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY458165
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10127339
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children	2 to 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	62
Name of registered person	Acorns Playgroup and Pre-school Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP906830
Telephone number	01438 840 132
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2013

Information about this early years setting

Acorn Playgroup & Pre-School registered in 1994 and re-registered in 2013, operating from a self-contained unit that is located close to Welwyn village centre, Hertfordshire. It is a community group that is run as a charity and is managed by a board of trustees. The setting employs 11 members of childcare staff, seven of whom hold appropriate qualifications at level 3. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The setting is open from Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions are from 9am until 4pm. Playgroup sessions are available for two-year-old children from 9am until midday. The pre-school sessions for older children run from 1pm until 4pm. Older children may attend all day or for a variety of sessions.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Kelly Brooker

Inspection activities

- The inspector spoke to the manager about how she organises her early years provision and curriculum.
- 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 to staff, children and parents at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector held a number of discussions with the manager. She looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of all persons working on the premises.
- The inspector carried out joint observations with the manager.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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