

Inspection of Little Acorns (North East) Ltd.

Little Acorns Day Nursery, 218 Park Road, STANLEY, County Durham DH9 7AN

Inspection date: 22 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children demonstrate high levels of confidence and independence as they explore the setting. Staff provide an exciting and interesting curriculum. They follow children's interests and weave these into activities. For example, children show an interest in shopping. Staff encourage children to write shopping lists and take them to the local supermarket. Children eagerly select items from their list and pay the cashier. This helps children to develop their understanding of the community around them and supports their learning well. Babies giggle with delight as they explore sensory toys and splash in the water. Toddlers enjoy completing inset puzzles with the support of staff. Older children independently select writing materials and make birthday cards for their friends.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, children leave their parents at the front door. On arrival, children are happy to leave their parents and are eager to join their friends in their individual nursery rooms. Staff are caring, nurturing and supportive. Children are happy and feel safe. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour. Children behave well and show positive attitudes towards their learning. They understand the rules of the setting and are kind and respectful to each other.

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

- Staff support children's language development effectively. They speak clearly and repeat words back to children so that they can hear them pronounced correctly. Staff ask children age-appropriate questions and give them time to respond. They engage children in conversations and introduce a wide range of vocabulary. Children's listening and speaking skills are developing well.
- Partnerships with parents are good. Parents know what their children are learning. Staff share information with parents through an online system. This helps parents to understand how children's learning can be further supported at home. Parents are very complimentary about the setting. They discuss how their children are happy and settled. In addition, they comment how much progress their children make.
- The manager has clear aims for the curriculum. Staff provide children with an ambitious curriculum that builds well, overall, on what they know and can do. Staff have identified that, due to the pandemic, some children need extra support to develop their social skills. They plan activities to help children to develop these skills. For example, staff encourage children to share and take turns as they play a shopping game.
- Staff's well-being is a priority. The manager checks in frequently with staff and discusses how everyone is feeling. Staff comment that the manager is very supportive. Staff attend training, such as safeguarding and first aid. The manager carries out individual supervision sessions. However, she does not

always identify further training and support for individual staff, to raise the quality of education even further.

- Children are kind and courteous towards each other. Older children say 'please' and 'thank you' without being prompted. Staff act as good role models. Children listen to staff when they need some guidance and support. Children's behaviour is good.
- Staff provide children with healthy snacks, such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Children have packed lunches from home. However, staff do not always help children to develop a deeper understanding of what is a healthy snack. For example, they do not consistently help children to understand why foods such as crisps and chocolate are not part of a nutritious, balanced diet.
- Children have many opportunities to practise their physical skills. For example, they take part in an exercise session. Staff call out a variety of instructions. Children excitedly stamp their feet and hop around the room. Children explain that their 'hearts are beating fast'. This exercise helps children to develop their large-muscle skills, coordination and balance.
- Older children have access to a wide range of creative equipment and resources. They use a variety of tools to create individual pictures. However, in the rooms for under-threes, staff provide children with pre-cut shapes and pictures. This means that younger children are not always given the opportunity to freely express their own artistic ideas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff have a clear understanding of their role in protecting children who may be at risk of harm. Staff know the relevant agencies to contact if they need to make a referral. All staff attend child protection training, to keep their knowledge up to date. They are aware of the correct procedure to take should there be an allegation made against a colleague. Staff are aware of the signs that may indicate a child is exposed to extreme views. Staff complete regular risk assessments indoors and when they take children on outings. This helps to keep children safe.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- focus on professional development opportunities to raise the quality of education to a higher level
- support children's understanding of healthy eating so that they receive consistent messages around healthy food choices
- provide more opportunities for younger children to express themselves fully through creative activities.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY103722
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10234617
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 10
Total number of places	61
Number of children on roll	63
Name of registered person	Little Acorns (North East) Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP521867
Telephone number	01207 438755
Date of previous inspection	29 March 2017

Information about this early years setting

Little Acorns (North East) Ltd registered in 2000 and is located in Stanley, County Durham. The nursery employs seven members of childcare staff. All hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager, who holds a level 6 qualification. The nursery is open from 7.30am until 6pm on Monday to Thursday and from 7.30am until 5.30pm on Friday. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Julie Campbell

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- Parents shared their views on the setting through written feedback.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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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