

Inspection of Little Acorns (Thornbury)

Gillingstool, Thornbury, Bristol BS35 2EG

Inspection date: 3 May 2022

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
|--|-----------------------------|
| The quality of education | Requires improvement |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Children are well cared for at the nursery. They build good bonds with staff, are happy and feel safe and secure. Staff are warm towards children and work well in partnership with parents. Parents are well informed about their children's day at nursery and the care they have received. Staff encourage parents to share information from home to help them maintain an up-to-date knowledge of each child's ever-changing needs and interests. Children behave well and show an interest in the activities and resources on offer to them. They play cooperatively and enjoy regular communication and interaction with staff. However, the youngest children have fewer opportunities to develop their communication and language skills, due to variability in staff teaching.

The environments are well resourced and stimulating for children. Children have a broad range of experiences available. The manager and staff have clear intent for what they want children to learn, and the curriculum is well planned. However, it is not consistently implemented, and the quality of teaching is not consistently good. This means not all children progress as well towards their full potential.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders successfully adapted practice in line with government guidance. The nursery has experienced the impact of the pandemic on staffing, and, at times, has reduced the number of children attending and closed some rooms. In addition, the nursery has experienced a greater than usual turnover of staff and difficulties in recruiting.

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

- Staff are good role models for children. They consistently use positive behaviour management strategies to help children to behave well and understand their feelings and the feelings of others. Children are calm and follow the rules of the nursery, and staff model expectations well.
- Children make good progress in their personal development. Staff are attentive to children's individual needs and work closely with parents to ensure that they offer a continuity of care from home. For example, staff working with babies mirror their sleep routines from home.
- Staff demonstrate an understanding of how children learn. They use their knowledge of individual children to identify what these children need to learn next, and plan ways to incorporate their interests into the activities available to them. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in receipt of additional funding. However, staff do not always carry out their plans in practice. This means they do not always provide all children with enough challenge or extension in their learning to help them make good progress.

- The manager has some support and supervision systems in place to monitor staff's practice and works with the wider leadership team to identify emerging weaknesses in the overall quality of education. However, leaders do not monitor the implementation of the curriculum closely enough. They do not ensure that all staff are supported to develop their teaching skills, to enable them to consistently engage the youngest children in good-quality interactions and learning opportunities.
- Strong key-person relationships are built from the outset and staff work hard to get to know each child and their families well. This helps children to settle quickly at nursery and supports their personal, social and emotional development well.
- Children develop good independence skills. From a young age, children are encouraged to have a go at doing things for themselves and be involved in daily tasks that help them develop good self-care and independence for the next stage in learning and eventual move to school. For example, young children learn to drink from open cups without spilling and older children serve their own lunch.
- Pre-school children benefit from a language-rich environment and are well supported by staff in developing their communication and language skills. For example, staff use songs well to extend children's language skills and the use of visual aids supports the learning of children for whom English is an additional language. Staff working with the youngest children miss some opportunities to improve children's language and communication skills, for example to encourage babble and talk and extend their vocabularies.
- All children develop well in their physical development and benefit from well-planned environments and activities both indoors and outdoors. For example, babies explore interesting textures on rugs during tummy time, older babies ride trikes in the garden, and pre-school children participate in activities to strengthen their muscles in preparation for learning to write.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard children. Staff supervise children well. The manager ensures that all staff have suitable training for their role to be able to recognise and respond appropriately to any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child in their care. Staff are knowledgeable on how and when they may need to escalate concerns outside of the nursery. The premises are secure, clean and well maintained, and staff risk assess effectively. Leaders implement effective recruitment and induction to ensure that staff are suitable and fully vetted to work with children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

| | Due date |
|---|-----------------|
| raise teaching to a consistently good quality by improving the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of staff interactions, particularly with the youngest children | 28/06/2022 |
| improve the leadership arrangements for the support and supervision of staff, to identify weaknesses in teaching more swiftly and provide tailored support to improve their personal effectiveness. | 28/06/2022 |

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

- build staff's skills and confidence in communicating with the youngest children to further promote and enhance children's communication and language skills.

Setting details

| | |
|--|---|
| Unique reference number | EY414936 |
| Local authority | South Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 10218595 |
| 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 4 |
| Total number of places | 115 |
| Number of children on roll | 152 |
| Name of registered person | Little Acorns (South West) Limited |
| Registered person unique reference number | RP904196 |
| Telephone number | 01454 418788 |
| Date of previous inspection | 5 August 2016 |

Information about this early years setting

Little Acorns (Thornbury) registered in 2010. It is located in Thornbury, South Gloucestershire, and it is part of the 'Just Childcare' chain of nurseries. The nursery is open from 7.30am to 6pm on weekdays throughout the year, with the exception of bank holidays and three further days at Christmas. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are 20 members of staff, including the manager. Of these, one holds a relevant level 6 qualification, 11 hold a relevant level 3 qualification, and one holds a relevant level 2 qualification.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Dominique Allotey

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting 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 nursery.
- The inspector held discussions with the leaders at appropriate times during the inspection and in a scheduled meeting.
- The inspector and the manager completed a learning walk together across all areas of the nursery to understand how the curriculum is organised.
- The inspector observed children's activities and teaching, inside and outdoors.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation, including staff's suitability to work with children.
- The inspector spoke to parents, staff and children during the inspection and took account of their views.

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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