

Inspection of Acorn at Stanwick

Unit 18A, Blands Yard, Church Street, Stanwick, WELLINGBOROUGH,
Northamptonshire NN9 6PS

Inspection date: 28 July 2022

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children are thrilled as they arrive at this fun and welcoming setting. They are warmly greeted by caring, nurturing staff who know them well. Older children are excited as they arrive asking, 'Are we going to the forest today?' Children have a solid routine. They know to select their 'wellies' for forest school, and develop independence as they put them on. Children show excellent behaviour and are kind and caring towards others, offering help when needed. As children pick blackberries, they help each other to reach the 'juicy ones'.

Children demonstrate high levels of energy and enthusiasm as they enjoy forest school activities, and extensive opportunities for outdoor learning. Together, children carefully plan what they want to do and then work together to support each other's ideas. Children decide to make their own volcano. They skilfully use spades to dig a large hole and carefully collect water from a water butt. The children then carry their buckets up the hill to fill the hole. They organise a line so they can take turns to jump in the 'lava'. Children run to collect more water, shouting back to their friends, 'We need more lava!'

The pioneering staff engage children in meaningful tasks to teach them about different global factors, such as climate change. For example, children take part in community Eco-Projects and learn about recycling different materials. This empowers children to make a difference, supporting them to adopt higher levels of respect, care and consideration for the world around them.

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

- Staff help babies to pick fresh flowers in the morning. Together, they arrange the flowers in a jug. Staff encourage the babies to look at the colours and smell the different fragrances. They support them as they reach out to touch the petals. This helps babies to develop confidence and supports their early communication, as they begin to make sense of the world around them.
- Emphasis is placed on supporting children to manage and make sense of their feelings. For example, older children enjoy yoga sessions, which provide calming moments. During these sessions, children lay and listen to the sound of birds, as staff ask, 'What can you hear?' These peaceful moments provide an opportunity for children to think, talk and share what they know, contributing to children's well-being and confidence.
- Staff challenge children's language skills, as they broaden their vocabulary and widen their understanding of the world. Children are becoming confident talkers and can effectively communicate ideas. They share their knowledge as they play. For example, older children talk about an 'army' of caterpillars that 'transform' into butterflies as they search through bushes.

- Partnership with parents and collaboration with outside agencies is successful. This ensures all children's needs are met, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, staff work with parents to find different ways to support children who communicate non-verbally. They gather a range of resources and make up a communication box, to mirror those used at home. This has enabled non-verbal children to effectively communicate with staff. Parents state that the support offered is 'above and beyond' the expected.
- This setting offers an ambitious and innovative curriculum that broadens the children's experiences and provides them many opportunities to be independent. Staff encourage children to form their own ideas, solve problems and express their views and opinions. For example, children have formed an 'Eco Committee' to make decisions on environmental factors, such as organising a community litter pick.
- During activities, staff enthusiastically take part in children's activities. They join in their play, skilfully encourage their learning and extend on what children already know and can do. For example, staff tell children a story about fairies who make potions in the woods. They then build on children's interest as they enable them to make their own potions. Staff question toddlers about what might happen when 'magic powder' is added to the coloured water. Toddlers watch with anticipation as the potion fizzes and bubbles up and over. They excitedly start to add the magic powder to their own potions, thrilled when their own concoctions start to bubble and fizz.
- The inspirational manager has embedded a rigorous system to support the development of staff using peer-on-peer mentoring. This ensures staff receive ongoing continuous support that builds staff relationships and supports their well-being. Staff continuously enhance their professional development and are actively encouraged to follow their own interests in learning. For example, some staff train in mental health first aid to provide support for parents and their peers due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Parents cannot praise the nursery enough. They say they feel involved in their children's experiences as they attend regular stay-and-play sessions. They feel supported to help children achieve key milestones, and value the expertise that is shared with them. Parents say this changes their understanding of how children learn and gives them confidence to do more at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers and staff have a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff carry out regular risk assessments and children are taught to manage risks safely. For example, from a young age, children are taught about safety and potential risks when attending forest school, such as the 'fire-pit circle'.

Managers follow safer recruitment practice to ensure staff are suitable to work with children. Staff and managers actively work with families and other agencies to

ensure early intervention happens promptly. Staff receive ongoing safeguarding training. They are alert to signs of abuse and know how to report any concerns.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY481831
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10071785
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	1 to 4
Total number of places	56
Number of children on roll	116
Name of registered person	Acorn Early Years Foundation
Registered person unique reference number	RP901362
Telephone number	01933 427275
Date of previous inspection	28 September 2015

Information about this early years setting

Acorn Day Nursery, Stanwick, registered in 2014 and is managed by Acorn Early Years Foundation. The nursery employs 27 members of childcare staff. Of these, 18 hold appropriate early years qualifications between levels 2 and 6, including one with qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6.15pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Charmaine Cayton

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 manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provision.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke to/communicated with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The deputy manager spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The inspector carried out joint observations of group activities with the manager.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- 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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