

Inspection of Acorn at the Rowans

The Rowans Family Centre, 13a Moorfoot, Fullers Slade, Milton Keynes MK11 2BD

Inspection date:

1 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

There is no clear intent for the curriculum that children follow. Consequently, the children do not consistently benefit from teaching helps them to build effectively on what they know and can do. The quality of teaching and children's learning are variable. In some instances, staff introduce children to new ideas. For example, staff explain to children that the salsa that they eat at lunchtime is also the name of a dance. They playfully move their bodies while explaining, which deepens children's understanding. On occasion, in the baby room, staff's time is taken up by completing care tasks out of the room and this affects the quality of interaction between staff and babies during this time. Children make good progress in their communication and language development. Staff support this aspect of their learning well and recognise when children do not make expected progress. There are plans in place to help children to catch up with any gaps in their learning.

Children settle well and are calm and content at the nursery. They separate from parents happily and are pleased to see their key person. Overall, key persons support children well. However, they do not always gather enough information from parents to enhance children's learning about the diverse world that they live in. Despite these weaknesses, staff are caring and children enjoy attending the nursery.

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

- Despite the provider identifying a previous weakness in staff deployment, staff do not always follow good practice. There are brief occasions when staff are left with too many babies as care routines are carried out. Although staff are within hearing to keep children safe at these times, this compromises the quality of staff interactions and their ability to meet children's needs swiftly.
- The provider does not suitably monitor the curriculum. The intent for the curriculum at the nursery is not clear or well understood by staff. Although staff can explain what children enjoy doing and the benefit of some activities, there is no cohesive plan for what children will learn. Therefore, staff do not know if children are sufficiently building on their knowledge and developing their skills for the future.
- There are some action plans in place to support the ongoing quality of the nursery. However, the provider does not have fully effective oversight of the nursery to readily identify weak areas of practice and take rapid action to address these.
- Children form close relationships with their key person and parents praise staff for the genuine care they show children. Staff comfort children and offer them reassuring warmth and affection. Babies follow a familiar routine with plenty of time for rest and sleep when needed. This helps children to feel safe and secure.

- All children develop their physical skills well. They have ample opportunities to be active and enjoy playing and learning outdoors. Staff talk to children about good food choices when eating and help them to learn about healthy lifestyles.
- Key persons do not find out all necessary information about children's home lives. For example, they do not know the home languages that children speak, or what celebrations and festivals are important to them. Therefore, they do not have the knowledge needed to plan a curriculum that helps children to celebrate what makes them unique and individual or to learn effectively about the diverse world they live in.
- Staff give children mixed messages about how to keep themselves safe when they play outside in the natural environment, for example, what they should do if they encounter berries and the rules for playing with wooden sticks.
- Some staff display an exceptional awareness of how to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have an extensive knowledge of the local area and how to support children and families. The provider has highly effective measures in place to support vulnerable families, including ensuring that all children have adequate warm clothing at the nursery and advising families about additional support services.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff, across the whole nursery, have a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms of abuse. They can reliably identify what might indicate that children are at risk of harm and know what action they must take to report any concerns. The provider has robust procedures in place for the recruitment of staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The provider has taken action to ensure that there are risk assessments in place to minimise any potential risks for children. Staff have suitable training to be competent and confident in delivering first aid to children if needed.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
ensure that staff deployment is always arranged to meet children's needs effectively	30/01/2023
construct an effective curriculum that helps children to build on what they already know and can do and prepares them well for their future learning	30/01/2023

improve oversight and leadership to identify weaknesses in practice and take swift action to address these.	30/01/2023
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To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- gather more information from parents about children's home lives and experiences to develop the curriculum and help children gain a better appreciation of diversity
- provide children with consistent messages about the ways they can help to keep themselves safe, especially when playing and learning outdoors.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2679429
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10266046
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	50
Number of children on roll	55
Name of registered person	Acorn Early Years Foundation
Registered person unique reference number	RP901362
Telephone number	07889540737
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Acorn at the Rowans registered in 2022 and operates from the Rowans Family Centre in Fullers Slade. The nursery employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold recognised childcare qualifications at level 3 and above. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language and children with SEND.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Hayley Marshall-Gowen

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.
- This inspection was prioritised following a risk assessment process.
- The inspector discussed the intent of the curriculum and observed its implementation during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and the early years manager. She looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- A joint observation was completed and discussed with the manager.
- Parents were invited to share their views with the inspector. Several parents discussed their views during the inspection and the inspector took account of all feedback received.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children at suitable times throughout the inspection.

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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