

Inspection of Acorn Childcare Nursery

Off Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Cheshire CW8 1JJ

Inspection date: 16 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Leaders and managers do not scrutinise and evaluate practice accurately or effectively. This means that they do not know what to do to maintain and improve standards. Systems for monitoring and improving staff performance have broken down. The quality of children's care and education has deteriorated.

Staff do not follow health and safety procedures rigorously enough. For example, the provider's policy is that when children bump their head, the injury is monitored and parents are contacted. However, there are occasions when staff do not follow the procedure. Some staff do not know the action that they must take if they have concerns about a colleague's behaviour or practice. Managers do not notice and remedy gaps in procedures and staff's knowledge. Children's welfare is compromised.

Overall, children demonstrate that they feel at home in the nursery. However, there are significant weaknesses in the curriculum. Pre-school children learn to respond to questions about a narrow range of factual information. This does not help them to become enquiring, successful learners. Staff working with two-year-old children demonstrate weak understanding of how to promote children's positive behaviour and understanding or how to manage children's behaviour appropriately. Children do not learn to understand what is expected of them or how to manage their own feelings and behaviour.

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

- Action to raise the quality of this provision is not effective. The provider has begun to take steps to improve the nursery. This includes accepting advice and support from the local authority and appointing a new group manager to lead and oversee improvement. However, the group manager is not always on site. She is unable to provide the consistent, continuous support that the nursery needs. At the time of inspection, the provider's capacity to improve children's care, safety and education is not established.
- The provider fails to ensure that the outcome of every concern and/or complaint from parents and carers is recorded. As a result, records do not provide evidence that all complaints have been considered and required action taken. This does not support the ongoing review and improvement of practice that promotes children's welfare and progress.
- The system for inducting new staff does not ensure staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities. This is particularly concerning as managers, who are responsible for leading the staff team, also receive too little support when they are appointed. Poor practice becomes embedded and new staff copy it. Furthermore, staff fail to demonstrate robust understanding of some policies and

procedures, aimed at keeping children safe. These weaknesses are not addressed and the quality of the provision deteriorates further.

- The provider fails to implement adequate arrangements for the supervision of staff. Staff do not receive the support, coaching or training that promotes the interests of children and leads to continuous improvement. Consequently, managers and staff do not know what they need to do to improve their individual professional skills and knowledge. This has a negative impact on children's progress and well-being.
- Risk assessments are not effective. Staff complete daily checklists to show that the areas where children play have been checked and are safe. Nevertheless, they fail to identify significant hazards to children's safety. For example, an outdoor water tray used by babies and toddlers is dirty. Staff do not realise that the stagnant slime puts children at risk of water-borne infection.
- The provider does not ensure that children's behaviour is managed in an appropriate way. Staff have unrealistic expectations of young children's behaviour. This leads to them using ineffective and inconsistent behaviour management strategies. This does not help children to learn to manage their own feelings and behaviour. This is particularly the case with staff who work with two-year-old children. Furthermore, staff fail to acknowledge that some of the causes of children's unwanted behaviour are due to lack of appropriate support in their learning.
- Children's learning is not sequenced well enough. Two-year-old children learn to recognise numerals because this is prioritised and praised. However, they do not gain the early skills of counting and numbers knowledge that lay good foundations for later mathematics. Pre-school children regularly sit through lengthy, whole-group activities that have little or no impact on what they know or can do. Children do not make good progress.
- The atmosphere in the nursery is generally positive. Staff and children play together and enjoy each other's company. However, there is a heavy focus, from a young age, on teaching a narrow range of facts. This limits the number of new words that children learn. Children learn to search for the 'right' answer to questions. This sometimes discourages them from speaking. It does not encourage children to become confident talkers who pursue their own ideas.
- Children play out every day in the extensive outdoor area. This promotes their physical development and sense of adventure. Children eat healthy, nutritious food. They enjoy learning about where different food items come from. This develops children's awareness of the wider world.
- Parents know the name of their children's key person. They say that they like receiving information and photos via the online app. For example, staff share information about what children have eaten and how long they have slept for. Parents are particularly pleased with the settling-in process. They say that staff take time to get to know children before they begin to attend the nursery.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Weaknesses in leadership and management mean that children's safety and well-being are not assured. Managers and staff complete training in safeguarding matters. However, some staff do not demonstrate that they can apply their knowledge effectively. For example, it is not established that they would recognise and act on concerns about a colleague's behaviour or practice. This puts children at risk of harm. There are procedures in place for keeping required records. However, there are instances when nursery procedures are not meticulously followed. For example, when children have accidents and injuries. Some aspects of health and safety are promoted well. The well-led catering team demonstrate a vigilant attention to detail. They adhere to parents' preferences and meet children's dietary needs safely.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take enforcement action.

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

| | Due date |
|--|------------|
| ensure that staff know how to apply their safeguarding knowledge effectively, so that they recognise and act on concerns about colleagues' behaviour or practice | 09/03/2023 |
| use risk assessment effectively to identify and minimise risks to children's safety | 09/03/2023 |
| ensure that staff follow nursery procedures on every occasion that children have an accident or sustain an injury | 09/03/2023 |
| implement effective systems for inducting managers and staff, so that they understand their role and responsibilities | 09/03/2023 |
| implement effective systems for supervising managers and staff, so that they continuously improve their skills and knowledge | 09/03/2023 |
| ensure that the outcomes of concerns and complaints are recorded | 09/03/2023 |

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| improve systems for managing children's behaviour, so that children develop positive attitudes to learning. | 09/03/2023 |
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To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

| | Due date |
|---|-----------------|
| train staff to deliver a broad, sequenced curriculum that builds on what children know and can do | 09/03/2023 |
| support staff to ensure that every activity and interaction helps children to extend their vocabulary and communicate their thinking confidently. | 09/03/2023 |

Setting details

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| Unique reference number | EY280796 |
| Local authority | Cheshire West and Chester |
| Inspection number | 10278218 |
| 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 | 65 |
| Number of children on roll | 101 |
| Name of registered person | Acorn Childcare Nursery Limited |
| Registered person unique reference number | RP523881 |
| Telephone number | 01606 77877 |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 August 2017 |

Information about this early years setting

Acorn Childcare Nursery registered in 2004 and is located in Hartford, Cheshire. The nursery employs 27 members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold qualifications at level 5, 20 members of staff hold qualifications at level 3 and one holds a qualification at level 2. One member of staff holds qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, 51 weeks per year, except for bank holidays. Sessions are from 7am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Susan King

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 setting.
- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The group manager and the inspector completed a learning walk of the nursery. They conducted a joint observation of practice.
- Meetings took place between the provider, the group manager and the inspector as appropriate. This included two scheduled leadership and management meetings.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children during the inspection. She spoke with parents and took account of their views.
- Examples of documentation were sampled and reviewed by the inspector. She checked 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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