

Inspection of Little Acorns (Thornbury)

Gillingstool, Thornbury, Bristol BS35 2EG

Inspection date: 4 April 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

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

The provider has failed to monitor the nursery adequately to identify and target breaches in requirements. They have not done enough to address the weaknesses in practice identified at the last inspection to improve the quality of provision.

Staff deployment and supervision of babies in the upstairs room where the youngest children are cared for is poor. Staff fail to meet their individual needs, keep them safe or support their emotional well-being and welfare. These youngest children are not adequately supervised while eating to ensure staff would be alerted to choking. Staff do not check on sleeping babies frequently enough. Staff fail to notice incidents that result in babies receiving injuries. These weaknesses put children at risk of harm.

Although the manager knows what she wants children and babies to learn, staff do not implement the curriculum effectively. Staff do not engage in high-quality interactions with children to motivate and support them to move on in their learning and make good progress.

Due to inconsistencies in staffing, the key-person system does not effectively meet the needs of babies and children. Babies in the upstairs room are unsettled and cry continually because they have not formed secure attachments with staff who are, therefore, unable to console them. This upsets other babies and creates an unhappy and chaotic environment.

Toddlers and pre-school children demonstrate they are happy. They are confident to approach and talk to unfamiliar adults about their play. Children and babies have regular opportunities to play outside in the fresh air and enjoy healthy food and snacks.

Staff throughout the nursery show children respect when they ask to change their nappies and talk to them to make it a positive experience. Staff work with parents to support children to potty train.

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

- Although the manager has worked hard to provide staff with training and support since the last inspection, this has not had the impact of raising the quality of the provision. Several staff have recently left the nursery, and the provider has been unable to recruit replacements. This staff shortage has placed a huge burden on some staff who struggle to carry out their roles because they are now the key person for a lot of children. Staff are frequently being moved around the nursery, working away from their key children in other rooms. There

is also a reliance on staff from other nurseries in the chain and agency staff to provide cover. This does not provide consistency for children to support their emotional well-being and learning and development. These unfamiliar staff do not know the babies and children well enough to engage in high-quality interactions with them to extend their learning.

- The management team does not ensure that staff working in the upstairs baby room deploy themselves effectively or supervise babies vigilantly enough to keep them safe. For example, babies sit alone in chairs feeding themselves snack with no interaction from staff who are engaged in other tasks or trying unsuccessfully to console other crying babies. Staff fail to notice when babies move aimlessly around the room, fall and hurt themselves or when babies unintentionally hurt others. Staff do not check on sleeping babies every 10 minutes as per the nursery's policy to help promote their well-being.
- Staff do not meet the individual needs of the babies who are cared for in the upstairs room, and the quality of teaching and learning in this room is poor. Indoors, babies spend long periods crying, sitting alone unoccupied or moving aimlessly around the room with dummies in their mouths with little or no interactions from staff. Staff do not engage babies in play to increase their enjoyment and to support their communication and language skills. During outdoor play, staff leave more confident mobile babies to explore the resources on their own while they try to settle other upset babies.
- The curriculum is not implemented effectively because staff do not recognise opportunities to extend children's learning. For example, when older children show interest in a snail outside, staff do not help them to find out more, and children lose interest and walk away. Toddlers tell staff they want to draw a flower on an easel with a paint pen. Staff guide a toddler's hand to draw a flower but do not then encourage them to have a go at drawing one by themselves, to support their early mark-making and creative skills.
- Staff receive support from the local authority with intervention plans for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, staff struggle to support these children well enough to engage them in activities due to the weaknesses in the key-person system and staff training. As a result, children with SEND spend long periods standing back and watching other children play or explore resources independently.
- Most older babies, toddlers and pre-school children enjoy story and song times. Older children show pride as they operate the CD player to make the music play. However, at times, the pace of large group song time is too fast for older babies, and some songs are too difficult for their stage of development. When pre-school staff read a story, they support children to develop their vocabulary, talking about new words they could use to describe a big egg, such as 'gigantic'. Older children demonstrate some mathematical skills during play, such as counting the points on a star they have constructed.
- Overall, staff encourage children to behave positively, share and take turns. However, it is chaotic during the transition time after lunch in the toddler's room. Toddlers who are not sleeping are left to their own devices for a long period while staff engage in routine tasks. Toddlers run around the room using loud voices and crawl under tables and climb on furniture holding resources,

disturbing those who are trying to sleep. Although some staff notice this, the behaviour goes unchallenged.

- Older children gain self-care skills. Toddlers learn to feed themselves with a fork and confidently clear away their plates after lunch. Pre-school children take off and hang up their coats on pegs by themselves. However, staff do not support all older babies in the downstairs room well enough to become independent eaters. Staff sit babies on chairs that are too low, and their chins barely reach the table, so they struggle to reach the food on their plates.
- Parents speak positively about the friendly and welcoming staff. They appreciate the information staff share with them about their children's care and learning during handovers and through the online application.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The weaknesses in staff deployment and supervision of children, particularly for the younger babies in the upstairs room, put them at risk of harm. Nevertheless, staff throughout the nursery have a secure knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. They are confident about the reporting procedures, both within the nursery and to outside agencies, if they have any concerns about a child or colleague. The manager follows robust recruitment procedures to help ensure staff are suitable to work with children.

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 staff in the room for the youngest babies supervise babies effectively at all times and are able to quickly identify and address incidents, to help keep them safe	05/04/2023
ensure staff deploy themselves effectively at all times, to promote children's well-being and to meet their individual needs	05/04/2023

ensure staff follow the nursery's policy and procedures to check on sleeping babies regularly to promote their well-being and help keep them safe	05/04/2023
develop an effective key-person system, to help babies and children feel safe and settled, and to promote their individual needs adequately.	21/04/2023

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

	Due date
provide all staff with effective training, support and coaching to implement the curriculum effectively to help all children make good progress	21/04/2023
ensure staff working with the youngest babies respond to babies' emerging needs and engage in high-quality interactions with them, to promote babies' communication and language skills and enjoyment.	31/05/2023

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY414936
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10243333
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	136
Name of registered person	Little Acorns (South West) Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP904196
Telephone number	01454 418788
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2022

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 19 members of staff working with the children. Nine staff including the manager hold a relevant early years qualification at level 3. One staff member holds a relevant qualification at level 2 and the other staff are unqualified.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Karen Allen
Joanne Neenan

Inspection activities

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- This inspection was carried out as a result of a risk assessment, following information received about the provider.
- The manager joined the inspectors on a learning walk and talked to the inspectors about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- The inspectors observed the quality of care and education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's well-being and learning.
- Children spoke to the inspectors during the inspection.
- The inspectors talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager and an inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity in the pre-school room and a joint observation in the upstairs baby room.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspectors.
- The inspectors spoke with the manager and a representative from the senior management team, 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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