

Inspection of Acres of Fun Limited

Acres of Fun Day Nursery, Priors Court Road, Hermitage, Thatcham, Berkshire
RG18 9SG

Inspection date: 22 March 2023

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

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Children enter the nursery happily and enjoy exploring the activities on offer. Staff provide children with plenty of opportunities to investigate and experience new things in the large outdoor learning environment. Most children, particularly the older ones, receive some good quality care and learning experiences. For example, they delight in making a wormery and hunting for worms in mud. However, this is not consistent throughout the nursery. Some of the younger children's learning experiences are variable in quality. This sometimes means that babies are not always offered appropriate activities or effective support to meet their needs.

The managers are keen to promote children's full potential for their learning and development. Most staff understand the curriculum learning intentions securely. However, at times, some staff do not consider these well enough. They do not know how to implement the curriculum through their interactions and activities. This does not always support children's learning at a consistently good level, particularly the youngest children.

Children generally receive consistent guidance from staff to help them develop their awareness of expected behaviour. For example, staff remind older children to check for others around them before they splash in puddles. Children are learning how their actions can impact others.

Despite the weaknesses, children do benefit from some unique and purposeful learning experiences. They have a wide range of outdoor opportunities that help gain confidence in taking risks and challenges. Younger children enjoy mastering how to use a low-level swing independently and smile as they achieve this. Older toddlers use real-life tools under the guidance of a trained forest school staff member, learning how to use these safely.

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

- Managers and leaders implement some secure ways to monitor and support staff. This is evident in their ongoing support of unqualified apprentices. This helps these staff develop a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Although there are regular supervision arrangements, there is not always sufficient monitoring of all staff's practice. This means, sometimes, managers do not identify and address weaknesses. This does not ensure that the quality of practice and provision are consistently good.
- Staff do not always consider the impact of what they do on children. During the inspection, staff read several books in a row to the large group of babies. This was despite some babies crying and being unsettled. A bell was rung between books, which also appeared to upset babies, adding to their sense of feeling

unsettled. As a result, this activity did not engage children well enough or take a good account of their responses and needs. Furthermore, at other times, some staff do not always provide good engagement with the babies, such as at lunchtime.

- Staff and leaders recognise the importance of supporting children's emotional development. They have targeted training to ensure they can offer further support to children who may struggle to regulate their emotions. Settling-in visits are built up over time to help children become familiar with staff and the new environment. However, at times, some children do not always get the emotional support they need. Although staff hold and comfort new unsettled babies, sometimes they frequently pass babies between them. This does not always meet the babies needs well or help them make strong connections with their key person.
- Older children politely follow staff instructions. They proudly tell visitors that they are a 'helper for the day'. They excitedly share out cups and cutlery at lunchtime and enjoy the sense of responsibility. This helps children to understand why behaviour rules are in place. However, the weaknesses in some staff interactions with babies mean that younger children do not always display positive attitudes to play and learning.
- Staff attend regular training to improve their practice. For example, some staff explain how recent training about 'loose parts' has helped them to support children's imagination and share their own thoughts and ideas. This helps children to access interesting activities. However, training is not always targeted effectively and not all staff understand the intentions for children's learning or how to best support this. For example, at a card-making activity, some staff direct children with instructions, rather than encouraging children's creativity as intended. This does not support children's creativity skills consistently.
- Older children have good communication and language skills. They are confident in social situations and make good friendships. For example, they happily splash in muddy puddles and tell their friends about their ideas. Children have a wide vocabulary and use this to articulate what they know. Children demonstrate this well when they confidently tell staff that 'it is disgusting' and talk about needing an 'excavator' to help move a heavy log.
- Staff and leaders build positive parent partnerships. Parents explain how they meet regularly with key persons to discuss their children's age and stage of development. This helps parents to understand their children's next steps in learning. Parents say that the nursery feels like 'one big family'.
- Staff and leaders promote an inclusive curriculum. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have individualised support in place. This helps them to reach their next steps in development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a positive safeguarding culture. Staff attend regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. They know how to spot signs and symptoms if a

child is at risk of harm, such as female genital mutilation. Staff and leaders know how to report it if they have concerns or receive an allegation about a member of staff. Staff carry out regular risk assessments across the nursery. For instance, they mark trees and teach children how to climb to a safe level. This helps children to learn how to keep themselves safe.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- implement effective monitoring of staff to ensure weaker areas of practice are identified and responded to, to raise the overall quality of the provision
- improve the key-person system to ensure all children develop secure bonds with staff and help them to continually build on their confidence and self-assurance
- help staff to plan and implement group times more effectively to meet children's needs and promote learning
- develop effective professional development for staff, to ensure all staff deliver the curriculum intentions well and teaching is consistently good.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY264744
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10280737
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	120
Number of children on roll	140
Name of registered person	Acres of Fun Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP521505
Telephone number	01635 203300
Date of previous inspection	5 September 2017

Information about this early years setting

Acres of Fun Limited registered in 2003. It is in the rural village of Hermitage, near Newbury, West Berkshire. The nursery opens each weekday, all year round, except bank holidays and a week at the end of August. It opens from 8am until 6pm. It also offers out of school care during holidays. The nursery employs 50 staff to work with the children; 34 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. This includes two members of staff who holds early years professional status and three who have early years degrees. The nursery receives funding for the provision of early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Mandy Cooper
Sheena Bankier

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.
- The managers explained the curriculum intentions to the inspectors and their ethos for children's learning.
- Discussions and meetings were held with the managers and staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The managers and inspectors completed joint observations of activities and evaluated these afterwards.
- Some parents discussed their views with the inspectors and some provided written feedback about the nursery.
- Children talked to the inspectors about their interests and activities.

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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