

Inspection of Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks

School Lane, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5XA

Inspection date: 8 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are happy and excited to attend the setting and are welcomed warmly by the manager and staff team. They understand the routines of the day and eagerly join the circle time activity. Children find their own name cards to self-register and join in with songs and action rhymes. They access resources independently and enjoy the freedom to explore the garden environment, where they run and climb or sit together in quiet spaces to share a story.

Children create an obstacle course using wooden resources and take turns to manoeuvre safely across. Staff sensitively support children to manage risks when using the climbing equipment, helping children to feel safe and secure in experimenting with different ladders and balance beams. This supports their developing problem-solving and coordination skills. Children's behaviour is good. They play cooperatively and share resources when making cakes in the mud kitchen or digging for bugs in the soil.

Staff provide opportunities for children to explore and create using different materials and textures. Children make musical shakers from oats and recycled tubs and are proud of their achievements. Children also enjoy making play dough. They follow staff instructions, listening intently and using mathematical concepts as they measure ingredients and mix the dough. Staff encourage children to describe the texture, colour and scent and children self-select craft items to personalise their creations.

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

- The leadership of the setting is strong and staff report that they find the manager very supportive. The manager has a good understanding of the provision and an in-depth knowledge of the children attending the setting. The staff team are kind and caring and team working is effective. The manager understands the strengths of the staff team and offers professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and develop teaching practice.
- Parents and carers talk positively about the setting and are happy with the service provided. They enjoy receiving feedback about their children's learning and progress and have formed good relationships with their children's key person and buddy. Parents and carers are pleased with the high level of support that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive. Staff conduct home visits on enrolment and this enables the key person to support children's transitions into the setting. This means that children settle in quickly.
- Children are learning to be independent at lunchtime and manage their self-care needs. They pour their own drinks and are supported to open packets and choose the foods in their lunch boxes. Children clear away their plates and cups

and wash their hands independently before and after food.

- Children's behaviour is very good and their emotional development is well supported by staff. They help children to understand the 'golden rules' and learn the routines and boundaries. There is a strong focus on kindness and caring for each other. Children settle quickly to playful experiences because they feel secure and safe in the setting.
- Children's transitions to school are handled positively. There are strong links with the local primary school and the schools in the surrounding villages. Reception class teachers visit the setting and children have good opportunities to prepare for school. For example, they dress up in school uniform and visit the local school to watch special events.
- Children regularly visit the local park and shops. They enjoy visiting the residents of the local care home and have opportunities to participate in forest school. The staff team broaden the children's knowledge of the local community and of cultures that are different to their own.
- Staff follow children's interests and build on their knowledge. For example, children enjoy listening to a story about dinosaurs and excitedly shout, 'Let's look for a dinosaur'. They then undertake a dinosaur hunt and staff model expressive language as they search around the garden, under the trees and in the mud, for the dinosaur.
- The manager has a clear vision for teaching and learning and shares the intent of the curriculum with staff. However, staff do not always understand how to implement the curriculum consistently.
- Children's communication and language is a focus. The manager recognises the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on children's speech development and is implementing a local authority language programme. Staff interactions support most children's development needs. However, occasionally, staff do not recognise when children need help to engage in purposeful play so that they can fully participate in all the rich learning experiences on offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager has an excellent knowledge of safeguarding and child protection procedures. The staff team have received training in safeguarding and understand how to report concerns. They are confident to discuss the signs and symptoms of abuse and understand who to contact at the local authority to escalate concerns. Staff understand their responsibility to report concerns of safeguarding issues, such as a child being exposed to extremist views. The recruitment process is robust and the provider understands their responsibility to safeguard children and to ensure the suitability of those working with children in the setting.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to develop their understanding of the curriculum and guide them to implement it more consistently
- coach staff in recognising when children need help to engage in purposeful play so they can fully participate in learning experiences.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY371758
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10289608
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	2 to 12
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	142
Name of registered person	Acorn Playgroup (Shefford) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP908422
Telephone number	01462 816281
Date of previous inspection	30 November 2017

Information about this early years setting

Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks registered in 2008. The setting employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, nine hold an appropriate early years qualification between level 2 and level 5. The setting opens from Monday to Friday, during term time, from 7.45am to 6pm. During these times, an after-school club is also offered. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Jayne Hamey

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 manager and the inspector carried out a learning walk of the setting. They discussed how the setting keeps children safe and the intent of the curriculum.
- The inspector spoke to parents and children to gather their views of the setting.
- The inspector observed staff interactions and engagement with children.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation together.
- The inspector spoke to the manager and the provider about how the setting is organised and reviewed relevant documentation.

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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