

Inspection of Little Acorns Pre-School

The Community Room, Stukeley Meadows Primary School, Wertheim Way, Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 6UH

Inspection date: 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive happy and settle quickly in the pre-school. Staff provide a welcoming and secure environment, where children feel safe and valued. They are kind and encouraging, helping children to develop high levels of self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning. Children enjoy a wide range of exploratory play opportunities. For example, they explore ice they find in the garden and use tools to scrape and break it up. Staff consider the learning environment to support children's access to resources. As a result, children confidently access tools and equipment independently to support their learning. Children are curious and staff support their investigations by allowing them to test out their ideas. For instance, children fill containers with water and other materials. They make predictions about what will happen to them when left overnight in the cold weather.

Children form close and affectionate bonds with staff. They actively seek them out to join in with their games and enjoy their playful interactions. This helps to support children to remain engaged in activities. Children behave well and follow the good example set by staff, who use gentle reminders to reinforce behavioural expectations. Staff are nurturing in their approach to children's emotional well-being. This helps to support a calm environment where children are friendly, polite and enjoy being helpful.

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

- Staff have good knowledge of their key children. They understand what children need to learn next. Staff gather information from observations to inform their planning. Children's next steps are shared among the staff team. This allows all staff to consistently support children's learning through repetition in a range of rich experiences. This helps children to make good progress in their learning and development.
- Communication and language are a strong focus in the pre-school. Staff talk to children as they play and get down to their level. They ask questions that engage children's thinking and encourage them to share their ideas. Children enjoy listening to well-read stories and engage in various action songs throughout the day. Staff comment on children's play, using words such as 'crinkly', 'cracking' and 'floating', while children explore materials in water. This helps to promote their emerging speech and widen their vocabulary.
- Staff promote children's good health. They encourage healthy eating as children grow vegetables from seed and harvest them for snack. Staff plan the outdoor area well to develop and challenge children's physical skills. They learn to balance and negotiate the outdoor space with wheeled toys. Staff position themselves close by so that children are safe to explore their capabilities as they access larger climbing apparatus.

- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by staff. They work closely with other professionals. Staff access training and implement targeted support for children who require additional help with their development. They incorporate strategies such as picture cards, visual prompts and small-group activities to develop children's ability to focus for longer periods of time. This helps to ensure children make the best possible progress.
- Staff support children in their independence. For example, children learn to manage tasks for themselves, such as putting on their coats and fastening zips. They take responsibility for preparing their snack and clearing away their dishes. Children learn to manage their personal care needs, such as washing their hands prior to eating and following messy play.
- Partnerships with parents are good. Staff gather detailed information from parents, including routines and toy preferences to help children as they first transition into the pre-school. Parents comment that staff are friendly and caring and describe the pre-school as 'homely'. Staff encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning. They welcome visits from parents to share their hobbies and expertise with the children.
- Staff work well together. The manager values her staff team and provides regular opportunity to discuss the provision and ways to improve practice. Staff have regular opportunities for training. However, the leadership team has not yet established a highly effective method to help all staff develop a deeper knowledge of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff have a secure understanding of how to safeguard children. They regularly complete child protection training. Staff are familiar with the pre-school safeguarding policies and procedures. For example, they are aware of the procedures to follow for whistle-blowing and how to raise concerns they may have about a child. Regular risk assessments are carried out to help ensure the equipment and environment used by the children remains suitable. The manager ensures staff are deployed effectively throughout the day to maintain children's safety. The management committee understands its roles and responsibilities in relation to supporting and managing the pre-school.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- build on the already good practice and seek further ways to help all staff develop first-rate teaching skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	221640
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10307839
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	3 to 4
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	26
Name of registered person	Little Acorns Pre-School (Huntingdon) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP905025
Telephone number	07594 477652
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2018

Information about this early years setting

Little Acorns Pre-School registered in 1995 and is run by a committee. The pre-school employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold appropriate qualification at level 2 or above. The manager who has a level 3 qualification. The pre-school is open from Monday to Friday, term time only. Sessions are from 8.50am until 2.50pm. The pre-school provides funded education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Louise Harris

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 inspector spoke to staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about the curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this had on children's learning.
- Parents provided verbal feedback during the inspection. The inspector took account of all their views.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager to assess the impact of staff's teaching on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the committee and the pre-school manager. She looked at relevant documentation, including evidence of the suitability of staff and committee members.

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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