

Inspection of Helmdon Acorns Pre-School

Hintons Close, Helmdon, Northamptonshire NN13 5QP

Inspection date: 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are happy and content and enjoy their time at the pre-school. Staff support them as they confidently explore the environment both inside and outside. Children develop strong bonds with the staff and benefit from warm and nurturing relationships. They draw the staff into their play, showing them worms they have found in the garden. Staff encourage them to talk about how the worms move and feel and reinforce new vocabulary. Children respond to these conversations and repeat words such as 'wiggly' and 'squishy'.

Children have access to large outdoor spaces. Staff provide a range of resources and learning opportunities. They actively extend children's play experiences and social skills. For example, children mix oats with water and mud before spreading it on the ground and splashing in the puddles they make. Staff actively encourage this spontaneous play and laugh along with the children.

Children are supported to learn about boundaries and staff expectations. Staff model polite and kind behaviour and are patient in their interactions with the children. Children behave well and learn to manage their feelings. For example, staff remind them to share with their friends as they complete puzzles together.

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

- The pre-school is well-led, and teamwork among the dedicated staff is strong. All staff strive to ensure that children do as well as they can. Staff benefit from regular supervision meetings where they reflect on their practice and consider areas of further development. As a result, children are supported by staff who have up-to-date training on subjects such as working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and how best to develop the curriculum.
- Staff have high expectations for all children's learning. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with parents, other professionals and staff to support children with SEND. This helps to ensure that children reach their full potential.
- Staff have a sound knowledge of their key children. They are aware of each child's starting points, interests and next steps. This information enables them to plan activities and set out resources to help children progress. Parents confirm staff share children's next steps so they can provide activities at home that develop their child's skills.
- Overall, staff promote children's communication and language well. Interactions between staff and children are positive and supportive. Staff offer lots of praise and ask questions to encourage children to think about what they are learning. However, when asking questions, staff do not always give children enough time

to think about the question and respond.

- Partnerships with parents are effective. Staff share regular information with parents to ensure children's care and learning needs are met. Parents speak very highly of the pre-school and the quality of care given to their children.
- Staff generally ensure children are occupied and engaged in activities. Children demonstrate a good understanding of their daily routine and what comes next. For example, they know that before snack they go outside and learn from forest school activities. On occasions, however, staff do not carefully manage these routines. Sometimes, children are left waiting for other children to be ready before going outside. This means there are times when children are inactive and not involved in productive learning activities.
- Lunchtimes are a social occasion. Staff support children's good health and social skills. They sit with children during lunchtime and engage them in conversations. Children learn about the foods they eat and the benefits these have on their health as they chat with staff and friends.
- The manager reflects regularly on her practice and that of the staff team. She swiftly identifies and implements changes that improve staff practice and the experiences for the children, parents and carers. For example, regular reviews check updates on the online system to ensure parents can view their children's learning and development. This, in turn, allows staff to spend the maximum time with the children during sessions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- give children time to think and respond to questions to support their communication and language skills
- strengthen the management of daily routines so children do not have prolonged periods of inactivity.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY420501
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10305563
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	2 to 4
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	26
Name of registered person	Helmdon Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP905248
Telephone number	01295768327
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2018

Information about this early years setting

Helmdon Acorns Pre-School registered in 2010 and is located in Northamptonshire. The pre-school employs five members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold recognised early years qualifications at level 3. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, during term time. Sessions are from 8am until 3.30pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Julie Addison

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 and the inspector carried out a learning walk together.
- A joint observation was carried out with the pre-school manager of an indoor tuff spot activity.
- The inspector held discussions with the staff throughout the visit.
- A range of documentation was viewed, including paediatric first-aid certificates and evidence of the suitability of staff to work with children.
- The inspector gathered the views of parents.
- The inspector observed interactions between staff and children.

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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