

Inspection of The Little Acorns Preschool (Chelmsford)

St. Luke's Church Hall, Gloucester Avenue, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9DT

Inspection date: 18 March 2024

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

Staff are kind, caring and responsive to children's individual needs. Children arrive happy and demonstrate that they feel safe. They play cooperatively with their peers. For example, children delight in purchasing items from the role-play café with pretend money, chatting to their friends as they play. This helps to develop their communication and mathematical skills effectively. Children behave well. Staff introduce initiatives, such as the 'emotion buckets', to help children talk about how they feel and begin to learn to regulate their own behaviour.

Children are developing good levels of independence. They prepare their own snacks, pour their own drinks and attempt to put on their coats. Staff teach children to follow good hygiene routines, such as handwashing, and explain why these are important. Children learn about the things that contribute to a healthy lifestyle, such as exercise, eating a balanced diet and looking after their teeth. Children enjoy physical activities and fresh air when playing outside. Staff provide opportunities that present challenge and encourage children to take risks in their play. For example, children practise their large motor skills when negotiating the obstacle course, which helps to develop their balance and coordination.

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

- The manager and staff team work well to provide children with a good start to their learning. The curriculum centres around the individual needs of the children. It builds on what children already know and can do and provides experiences across all areas of learning.
- Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive good support to meet their needs. The special educational needs coordinator works with staff and parents to help identify where children may need support. They put plans into place to help them succeed. All children gain the skills they need to be ready for their next stage of learning.
- Staff encourage children to learn about the world around them. For example, they complete tasks such as planting seeds and building bug hotels. This helps children understand about taking care of the world they live in.
- Staff focus well on supporting children's language and communication skills. They engage children in good discussions, extending vocabulary and role-modelling words. Children enjoy stories and singing nursery rhymes. Staff listen and respond well to children, giving them time to think and speak.
- Staff understand and promote physical development well. Children are supported to develop both their fine and gross motor skills. Staff provide a range of experiences, such as messy play, to promote small muscle development in readiness for later writing activities. Children practise walking along balance beams and pedalling tricycles. They are physically active in their play. This

supports their good overall development.

- Staff teach mathematics well. They engage children in problem solving, comparing and counting objects as they play. For example, they use scales to measure how much different objects weigh. Children learn to use mathematical language, such as 'over', 'under' and 'through'.
- Staff provide inviting environments for children to explore. They make sure there is a variety of activities and equipment that meets children's needs and promotes their learning and development. However, staff do not routinely encourage children to learn how to respect their environment and the toys. For example, children are not always expected to tidy up toys after themselves.
- Partnerships with parents are a strength of the pre-school. Parents comment that their children are receiving very good care. They welcome the effective communication they receive about their children's progress. Staff provide information to help parents to support their children's learning further at home.
- Staff work together extremely well. The manager values the staff team and uses supervision sessions to talk about their well-being. She identifies training that is specific to individual staff's needs. The manager recognises the importance of keeping staff's professional development up to date. Staff comment on the strong relationships they have and feel supported by the manager.

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:

- help children to learn to take more responsibility for their toys and the environment.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY420651
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10308330
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	42
Number of children on roll	50
Name of registered person	The Little Acorns Pre-School (Chelmsford)
Registered person unique reference number	RP901175
Telephone number	07383556431
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2018

Information about this early years setting

The Little Acorns Preschool (Chelmsford) registered in 2011. The pre-school employs 10 members of childcare staff. Of these, seven staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, during school term times. Sessions are from 9.15am to 12.15pm, with optional sessions from 9.15am to 3.30pm or from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Tina Mason

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 manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk of the setting, inside and outside.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation and, together, they evaluated this.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they were doing in the setting.
- The staff spoke with the inspector at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed relevant documentation, including the suitability checks of all adults working in the setting.
- The inspector took account of the written views of parents at the time of the inspection.

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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