

Inspection of Acorn at Hedgerows

Netherfield Playzone, Langland Road, Netherfield, Milton Keynes MK6 4NP

Inspection date: 1 August 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	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff offer children a warm welcome into this nurturing and caring nursery. Children are happy and settle well. New children receive close and sensitive support from their key person to help them settle into nursery. Staff provide home visits to new children. This enables them to start building relationships and gather information about children's home lives. Staff know children incredibly well and understand their individual needs. This ensures all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are included, and their needs are met. The manager and staff access and use any additional funding well. They provide additional resources and fund extra sessions for children who they know would benefit from this.

The new manager and staff are really passionate about what they do and how they can provide the best for the children in their care. Children are very inquisitive and imaginative. They love exploring the outdoor space and their environment, looking for bugs, caring for plants and hiding in recycled boxes. Children behave well; they listen carefully to staff instructions and follow these. Staff offer reminders of expectations as needed, such as not to eat play dough. Staff support children to cooperate with their peers and they play well with their friends. Children demonstrate sustained engagement and concentration, for example when they are cutting ribbons to decorate crowns.

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

- The manager and staff team have developed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum for children. This focuses on the individual cohort of children and their knowledge of families and the local community. They ensure children experience nature and the natural environment. In addition, they prioritise helping children to understand emotions so they can begin to self-regulate and show empathy.
- On arrival, staff encourage parents to support their children to use self-registration. Children select their name and photo from the tree and stick it to a peg with their belongings. This supports a sense of belonging as well as helping children to develop a sense of self and early literacy in recognising their own names in print.
- Staff talk to children and help them learn new vocabulary. They also read stories and sing songs, so children hear lots of language. Staff have recently learned basic signs to support children to communicate, especially those who find this more difficult. However, staff do not always use this consistently to enable all children to communicate their wants and needs.
- Staff encourage children to develop healthy habits and independence skills. They offer nose wiping and drinking stations. Even the youngest children delight in

getting themselves a drink of water. Staff also share oral health information with parents and encourage them to register with a dentist. The nursery has developed a recipe book so children can enjoy all their favourite healthy nursery meals at home. This enables parents to also support the development of healthy routines at home.

- The manager and her deputy have a very clear vision of what they want to achieve for the children and their families. They have a good understanding of the setting's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be improved. They ensure staff access regular training, both internally and through an online platform, to develop their knowledge and skills. However, the arrangements to provide coaching and mentoring for staff are not yet fully effective to raise their practice to the highest level.
- Partnerships with parents and other agencies are highly effective. Staff have a really clear understanding of the community families live in. The manager and staff support families to access what they need, such as using the local food bank or children's centre services. They also share any leftover fruit and food with families so they can enjoy this at home. Staff provide a lending library and story bags to help support parents to read with their children at home.

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:

- embed staff's support for children's communication and language development, to ensure this is consistent and gaps close quickly
- provide further coaching, mentoring and support for staff to raise the quality of interactions and teaching to the highest level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2679438
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10350677
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	42
Number of children on roll	69
Name of registered person	Acorn Early Years Foundation
Registered person unique reference number	RP901362
Telephone number	01908 394996
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Acorn at Hedgerows registered in 2022. The nursery is situated in Netherfield, Milton Keynes. The nursery is open all year round from 7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, except for bank holidays and between Christmas and New Year. The nursery employs 12 members of staff. Of these, nine hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Clare Perry

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the nursery 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 deputy manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children communicated with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation during lunchtime.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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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