

Inspection of Acorns Nursery School

St Birinus House, Langley Hill, Reading RG31 4QX

Inspection date: 21 November 2024

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 show immense delight as they enter the setting and spot their friends. They arrive cheerfully, confidently put away their belongings and settle down to the array of exciting activities on offer. Children are warmly welcomed by friendly and attentive staff, who provide a safe and nurturing environment. Staff are very positive role models and constantly show concern for children's well-being. This helps children feel a sense of belonging.

The provider has firm ambitions for children's education and care. Based on assessments and observations, leaders design a curriculum in line with children's needs and abilities. This extends to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff place a strong focus on identifying children who need extra support and make referrals to external professionals in a timely manner. This helps all children to make good progress.

Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour and sensitively support them if minor issues of conflict arise. They promote positive behaviour and use plenty of praise and encouragement. For instance, children who are helpers at snack time, politely ask the other children what they would like to drink. In return, children answer courteously, using 'please' and 'thank you'. Children are friendly and compassionate. They readily introduce themselves to new children and make them feel more at ease. This leads to a respectful and calm environment for all.

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

- Leaders have a clear vision for driving continual improvement. They are extremely dedicated to ensuring the provision is inclusive for all children. For example, the provider seeks support from the local community to further improve the learning environment for children, such as revitalising the indoor areas. They recently purchased large equipment to enhance children's climbing and balancing skills, using additional funding for specific children.
- Staff establish trusted partnerships with parents. Before children start, staff carry out home visits and gather important information to help children settle quickly. Opportunities for collaborative work with parents is effective at helping children's progress. For example, to support children's early reading skills, staff provide personalised reading books for older children to assist their word recognition. This helps to prepare children for their eventual move to school.
- Leaders recognise the importance of staff well-being and their ongoing professional development. They offer staff support through regular meetings and mandatory training. This has proved successful, especially the targeted help given to children with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language. However, the provider does not always ensure that coaching and

training opportunities are consistently effective in enabling all staff to build and expand on what children already know. On occasions, during children's spontaneous play, staff do not fully use opportunities to further extend children's knowledge and understanding. This means that not all children receive high quality interactions to support their learning to the fullest.

- There has been a real drive to increase children's language skills. This has resulted in children becoming competent and confident communicators. Staff skilfully engage children in two-way conversations. They widen children's vocabulary, for example, when they model similar words for 'big'. Staff retell stories and bring them to life, using great expression and props to enhance children's understanding of the story events. Children are totally enthralled during these times, absorbing the language they hear. Children independently select their favourite books and try hard to tell the story from memory, using the pictures as a guide. This demonstrates children's love for books.
- Outdoor learning is a strength of the setting. Children love to play outdoors in the fresh air and actively engage with staff, their friends or explore on their own. They are creative and often make up their own games, such as rolling hoops down the grass slope to see which one is the fastest. While in the garden, children climb, run and balance with growing control and competence. This helps to build their stamina and core strength.
- Children are curious learners and keen explorers. They develop an interest and respect for the natural world. Staff teach them how to grow plants from seeds, such as spring onions. They impressively remember that plants need sun and water to live and grow. Older children question staff as they try to make sense of what they observe, such as 'what happens to plants when there is no sun?' This shows their growing understanding of the world around them.
- Staff support children's independence skills during routine times of the day. They encourage them to use the toilet, wash hands and wipe their noses. Children also try hard to put on their own coats and outdoor shoes. Staff guide children through the process, which helps to develop children's resilience and commitment to following a task through to the end.

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:

- support all staff to develop their knowledge and skills further to deliver consistently high quality interactions with children.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY493676
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10367782
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	24
Number of children on roll	21
Name of registered person	Love Your Community
Registered person unique reference number	RP534909
Telephone number	01189 420475
Date of previous inspection	25 February 2019

Information about this early years setting

Acorns Nursery School registered in 2015. It is based in a self-contained converted house in the grounds of the Baptist Church in Tilehurst, Berkshire. The nursery offers term-time care only. Opening hours are 9.15am to 3.45pm from Monday to Thursday and 9.15am to 1.15pm on Friday. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. It employs seven members of staff. Of these, two hold qualified teacher status and three have a childcare qualification at level 3.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sonia Panchal

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the setting and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing while at the setting.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity.
- 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 inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and read other parent's written feedback.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working at the setting.

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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