

Inspection of Children 1st @ Acorns

Draycott Road, Upper Tean, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST10 4JJ

Inspection date: 25 June 2025 - 31 July 2025

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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 feel safe and secure in this warm and welcoming setting. The highly engaging environment sparks children's curiosity and helps them to develop a love of learning. There is a strong emphasis on outdoor play and the use of natural resources. Children investigate, develop confidence and show a 'can-do' attitude as they explore. The ambitious, child-centred curriculum is planned around children's interests and developmental needs. As a result, all children make good progress across all areas of the curriculum. For example, babies explore sensory bottles, watching how the contents move or make noises. Toddlers build with blocks, developing fine motor skills and coordination as they place them together. Pre-school children engage in model making, enhancing their imagination and creativity as they build their structures.

Children begin to develop high levels of emotional security through supportive interactions with staff. Staff respond attentively to each child's care needs, offering nurturing support, comfort and reassurance when children are upset or uncertain. Staff consistently promote children's independence across the setting. They support children in making choices and encourage age-appropriate self-care, such as handwashing and using the toilet. Babies begin to feed themselves, while older children serve their own meals and manage their personal belongings. Children's behaviour is good. They start to understand and follow rules, share resources and resolve minor conflicts independently. Staff model respectful and courteous behaviour by using good manners and speaking to children with warmth and consideration. This approach fosters children's confidence and helps to raise their self-esteem.

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

- Communication and language development is a central focus throughout all ages. For example, simple games, such as gently 'bopping' noses and hiding behind blocks and popping out, create joyful interactions that encourage babies to engage socially. Staff encourage older children to recall events, asking them open-ended questions to encourage conversations. Children enjoy singing and rhymes, further developing their communication and language skills.
- Staff carefully select books to enhance children's learning across the curriculum. The environment is rich in high-quality texts, which children access independently and confidently. They frequently choose to share books with staff, fostering a genuine love of reading and supporting early literacy development. Parents have access to a lending library, which further supports children to enjoy books at home.
- Children are provided with meaningful opportunities to develop their skills. They strengthen fine motor control through activities such as cutting dough, using

pipettes and drawing. Outdoors, children demonstrate growing confidence in their gross motor skills by climbing walls and jumping over low obstacles, while babies pull themselves up and begin to cruise. However, the quality of teaching is not always consistent. Although children make good progress in their learning, it does not enable them to make the outstanding progress they are capable of.

- The newly formed leadership team demonstrates a clear vision for the setting's future direction. It sets high expectations for staff and is committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for children. It provides training opportunities through an online platform, staff supervision sessions and peer observations to strengthen staff skills. However, arrangements to monitor staff practice are not yet fully robust to ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences for all children.
- The setting promotes an inclusive atmosphere where every child is seen and celebrated. Children have personalised spaces, such as named pegs or drawers, and see themselves reflected in displays and photos. Staff know each child well and ensure all children, regardless of background or need, access the full range of learning opportunities, including music, cooking and outdoor activities.
- Parents and carers describe staff as welcoming and approachable. They note that their children are happy, confident and benefit greatly from the rich outdoor learning opportunities provided. Many actively recommend the setting to others, highlighting its playful, song-based approach to learning. Parents also report noticeable progress in their children's speech and value an online system for staying informed about their child's development and next steps.
- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of how to support children in making healthy choices and developing healthy lifestyles. Children receive healthy meals and snacks, have regular access to fresh drinking water and benefit from ample opportunities for fresh air and physical exercise. Staff remain attentive to children's mental well-being and actively support them in managing and understanding their emerging emotions. Whenever possible, babies sleep outdoors to ensure they receive fresh air.

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:

- strengthen staff interactions to consistently provide children with engaging and stimulating activities across all age ranges and all areas of the curriculum
- enhance the monitoring of staff's practice to identify areas for development and

support them to continue to build on their skills and knowledge.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY440074
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10399131
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 5
Total number of places	140
Number of children on roll	194
Name of registered person	Breedon House Nurseries Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP900832
Telephone number	01538723366
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2019

Information about this early years setting

Children 1st @ Acorns registered in 2011. The nursery employs 33 members of childcare staff. Of these, one holds an appropriate early years qualification at level 6, one at level 4, sixteen at level 3 and four at level 2. The nursery opens from 7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, for 51 weeks a year, except bank holidays. The nursery provides funded early education for all eligible children that attend.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Sue Smith
Mikaela Stallard
Johanna Holt

Inspection activities

- The inspection started on 25 June 2025. An inspector returned on 31 July 2025, to gather additional evidence in line with 'Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy'.
- The managers joined the inspectors on a learning walk and talked to the inspectors about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- Children spoke with the inspectors during the inspection.
- The inspectors talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspectors 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 took account of their views.

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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