

Acorn Playgroup and Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school was registered in 1994 and is a voluntary community setting. It operates from a classroom within Oaklands JMI School in Oaklands, in Welwyn, Hertfordshire. It is located in a large classroom with toilets, storage, and an integral kitchen. All children have access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. The setting also has the use of the school hall and outside play facilities. It is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The group supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

A maximum of 24 children aged between two and under five years of age may attend at any one time. Currently there are 40 children on roll, of whom 20 receive funding. The setting is open each weekday, during term time. Sessions are from 9am to 12 noon and from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. A lunch club operates from 11.30am to 12.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions from the local community of Welwyn and the surrounding area.

There are seven members of staff who work with the children, all of whom hold National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 or the equivalent. Two members of staff hold NVQs at level 5 and are working towards a Foundation Degree and Early Years Foundation Stage status. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children enjoy the wide range of activities and experiences and achieve well. There are excellent links with parents and carers, the host school and the children's centre, and information is shared very effectively. Children behave well and are included well in indoor and outdoor activities. The manager and staff have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development. They demonstrate a good capacity for future improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop the use of technology in activities to extend children's learning
- develop planting, growing and sensory areas in the outdoor area.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's safety is protected well because staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and child protection procedures. They ensure that clear, comprehensive policies, procedures and documentation are in place. Risk assessments are carried out daily to ensure the environment is kept safe, and these checks are carefully recorded. Parents and carers follow rigorous procedures when collecting their children. Staff are deployed effectively, both outdoors and indoors, to keep children safe. Fire evacuation procedures are practised regularly to familiarise staff and children with the routine. Children have access to a good range of equipment and resources that are well-maintained and suitable for their age. There are robust staff recruitment and vetting procedures in place to make sure all those having contact with the children are suitable.

The setting is well led and managed. There are good self-evaluation systems in place which ensure that improvements have a positive impact on the children's experiences. The manager and staff value the views of parents and children and take these into consideration when identifying future activities and developments. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in monitoring, planning and evaluating the children's experiences. Staff clearly identify what works well and outline areas for improvement, such as developing children's skills in communication, language and literacy. Opportunities to use the computer are welcomed; however the children do not make full use of information technology resources, such as the digital camera, in their activities and learning. Staff make effective use of a good range of resources to meet most of the children's needs. However, currently, the outer space does not provide enough opportunities for children to practise planting, growing and sensory skills. Staff promote equality and diversity well and make sure children are integrated into well-planned activities. They provide very good support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, so they make similar progress to their peers. There are regular appraisals of staff and they work hard to enhance their existing qualifications and expertise.

Partnerships with parents and carers are outstanding. Feedback from parents indicates that staff are very approachable, friendly and caring, and children achieve well in a stimulating, nurturing environment. They are kept well-informed of events, such as Grandparent's Day and fundraising activities through newsletters, informal discussions, the website and the parents' notice board. Key staff monitor the children's achievement and progress and share this information regularly with parents and carers. The relationship with the host school is outstanding and the children benefit from the use of the outdoor area, hall and playing field. Information is shared very effectively with Foundation Stage staff to ensure a smooth transition into full-time education. Staff have developed highly effective links with the children's centre and outside agencies who help them to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children benefit from being cared for in a welcoming, inclusive and stimulating environment. Activities are well-planned and organised and children achieve well. They enjoy learning through topics, such as People Who Help Us, Myself and Autumn. Staff value children's views and ideas and incorporate these into their planning and selection of activities. They make full use of planning and evaluation to plan the children's next steps in learning. Children are well-behaved because staff are very good role models with high expectations and a consistent approach to managing their behaviour. Children develop good self-esteem and respect the rules and boundaries. They share their resources with one another as they play and tidy away their toys sensibly. Children are fully included in activities and festivals such as Hanukkah, Diwali, Christmas and the Chinese New Year. Parents tell them about lifestyles and customs in China and India. These interacting experiences help to enrich their understanding of the wider world.

Children have a good understanding of keeping themselves healthy. They learn to make healthy choices at snack time and their physical skills are developed well as they skilfully balance on apparatus, the train and ride their pedalled vehicles. They have fun dancing and throwing balls. Children have a good understanding of keeping themselves and others safe. They handle equipment carefully when they prepare fruit salads and fruit kebabs. They practise their road safety skills in the outdoor area and benefit from talks on safety from the police and fire services.

Children enjoy their experiences and achieve well. They develop their creative skills well through painting self-portraits, collage activities and model making. They enjoy listening to stories about 'The Three Little Pigs' and talk about the materials the houses are made from. They readily identify two-dimensional shapes inside and outside. Songs, such as 'Five Currant Buns' help them to practise their counting skills. They enjoy building dens and going on insect hunts. Children cooperate well as they play parachute games and enjoy going on nature walks in the school field. Their communication, language and literacy skills are developed well through role play in their post office. They benefit from visits to the local shops and park. They skilfully complete simple programmes on the computer and develop good control of the mouse. Children enjoy mark making in cornflour and shaving foam and many can form letters, and some of the older children can write their own names neatly. Overall, children are prepared well for future learning experiences and life outside the school day.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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