

Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks Club

School Lane, SHEFFORD, Bedfordshire, SG17 5XA

Inspection date	22/03/2013
Previous inspection date	22/09/2008

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Children have formed close bonds and relationships with their key person and as a result are settled and secure in the setting.
- Children are offered a wide variety of stimulating activities and resources that build on their individual interests. This contributes to them being enthusiastic about their play and helps them develop positive attitudes to learning, in preparation for their future learning and transitions to school.
- Partnerships with parents, other agencies and providers are good. This ensures that children are given good levels of support to meet their individual needs and that parents are fully involved in their children's learning.
- The management and staff team have a detailed knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and are committed to ensuring that children are safeguarded.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Large group activities do not always fully engage all children or enable them to contribute in a way that is of value to them.
- Staff do not always fully encourage children to explore the all year round effects of seasonal changes on the outdoor environment.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the main classroom and the outside area.
- The inspector looked at a selection of policies, procedures and photographs of children joining in with different activities.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector spoke with the management, staff, children and parents at appropriate times throughout the inspection.

Inspector

Susan Ennis

Full Report

Information about the setting

Acorn Pre-School & The Mighty Oaks Club was registered in 2008 at its current location and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It is situated in purpose built premises in the grounds of Shefford Lower School in Shefford, Bedfordshire and is managed by a committee. The setting serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from one main classroom and there is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The setting employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at level two or above. The setting opens Monday to Friday during term-time. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. Within this time children, including those in the early years age range, may attend for a breakfast club, pre-school sessions, lunch club and an out of school club. There are currently 56 children attending who are in the early years age group. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children and supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- enhance the use of the outdoor play area in all weathers in order to allow children to explore the effects of different seasons on the environment

- strengthen the delivery of large group activities in order that they consistently take into consideration the abilities of children of different ages, in order to support all children's engagement and participation in the activity.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of how to promote the learning and development of young children. As a result, they provide interesting and challenging experiences that engage children in their learning and ensure that they enjoy their time at the setting. Staff provide jigsaw puzzles that help children develop their physical and sequencing skills as they have to place the pieces in the correct order to help the child in the pictures get dressed. Once these are complete the children use their imaginations to introduce stories about where the child in the jigsaw might be going. While doing this they extend on their language development and make links to their own experiences as they

decide that they are going to 'a party' where they will have 'a strawberry birthday cake' for tea. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by the skilled staff at the setting. Staff attend additional training in order to fully understand children's specific needs and appropriately support children throughout the session, ensuring that they can meaningfully participate in the play opportunities provided.

The well-resourced learning environment helps to ensure that opportunities are mainly taken to support and extend children's learning across all areas. For example, children excitedly explore the use of torches as they shine the light on the wall and encourage the inspector to cover the spot made with their hand. This proves more difficult when they shine the light on the ceiling. They find this very amusing and quickly move the light to a lower position so that the game can continue. A good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities encourage children to make choices about their play and to also learn in a structured environment. They, therefore, develop essential skills for use in school and in future life. For example, they proudly participate in a 'show and tell' session where they are encouraged to bring an item from home to show and describe to their friends, developing their confidence and self-esteem. However, due to the size of the group, some older children's learning is less well challenged while younger children find it difficult to sustain their concentration. As a result, some children start conversations between themselves instead of always listening to the member of staff.

Children enjoy the opportunities available to free flow between the inside and outdoor area. They extend their physical skills as they walk across balancing beams and develop their spatial awareness as they propel themselves around on a range of scooters and bikes. However, the outdoor area is not always used to its full potential as the children are not given all year round opportunities to explore the effects of seasonal changes on the environment. For example, they do not currently access the rope bridge because the grassed area is 'too muddy' following the recent inclement weather. They do, nevertheless, recognise when the large ride-on cars are looking a bit dirty and take great pleasure in washing them with soapy water and brushes.

Effective systems of observation and assessment ensure that children are monitored in their development across all areas of learning. Staff have high expectations of the children and work closely with the parents as their children start at the setting, to establish accurate assessments of the children's starting points. Home visits and an 'All about me' form encourage the parents to share what they know about their child and helps the staff identify the children's current interests and where they are in their development. Staff then use this information together with their own initial observations to plan for the children's next steps and further progress. Good communication with parents means that they have opportunities to share updates about their child and to be involved in their learning. They are regularly invited to consultations where they can discuss their child's progress with their key person. Informative newsletters also explain some of the areas of learning and why, for example, outdoor play is important in supporting children's physical, personal and emotional skills. Parents are encouraged to participate in activities such as the 'Rhyme Time Challenge' where they are given a sheet containing a number of nursery rhymes to learn at home with their child to enhance their language skills.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The successful implementation of the key person system helps children form secure attachments and bonds with the staff, therefore promoting their confidence and well-being. Flexible procedures and sensitive strategies are used to support new children in settling quickly. For example, some children feel more secure when they see a familiar toy as they enter the classroom and others are more reassured when a buddy key person is allocated to them for the day that their own key person does not work in the setting. The staff work well with parents, other agencies and providers to ensure that children's individual needs are met. For example, when parents feedback that children are hesitant in cleaning their teeth, staff borrow a large set of dentures from the nearby children's centre to demonstrate the importance of good hygiene practices. They then give each child a chart to complete at home each time they brush their teeth and reward children's efforts with a certificate.

The staff team are good, calm role models for the children. They provide clear guidance about acceptable behaviour and are consistent in the strategies used. Consequently, children are learning to be kind to others as they are encouraged to wait their turn at, for example, a bubble painting activity and explain that 'we have to be careful with plants' when their friends touch the flowers planted outside. Relationships are strong at all levels and children are learning to respect and tolerate each other's differences. They display high levels of confidence and self-esteem. They talk confidently with their friends and do not hesitate in reminding them when it is tidy up time. Children are developing an understanding of the world around them. For example, they participate in Chinese New Year celebrations by using utensils such as a wok in the role play area, which has been transformed into a Chinese restaurant, and raise money for charity by participating in an 'Easter Bunny Hop'. Children are well supported for the next stage in their learning as they get to know and begin to form relationships with their new teachers who visit the setting and take part in transition visits to their next early years provision. Staff ensure that all relevant information is shared and that all children are supported individually in any changes or moves that take place.

Children gain a good understanding about risk and are consistently made aware of the safety procedures in place. They are sensitively reminded to walk when inside and older children confidently explain to younger children that the safety gate on the kitchen doorway must not be opened, except by staff. They are becoming aware of their own capabilities and the risks involved with some of their play. For example, older children learn how to climb the tree within the safe limits by not climbing too high. Children are given clear messages to ensure that they develop a good understanding of healthy eating and the need for physical exercise. They are encouraged to build their independence during snack as they pour their own drinks and know to place their plate and cup in the washing-up bowl when they have finished. Children are offered daily opportunities to develop their self-care skills. For example, staff encourage them to go outside when they are becoming very energetic and to identify that they may need their coat and gloves as the weather is very cold.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years

provision

Both management and staff at the setting set high aspirations for quality. An open-door system and regular questionnaires encourage parents to share their views about the setting. Staff work together to accurately identify priorities for improvement and are proactive in implementing change if required or requested. For example, in response to parents feedback that they did not always get to know which activities their children have enjoyed during the session, staff placed a white board in the lobby area describing the activities that have taken place. Therefore giving the parents an opportunity to discuss which resources their children have enjoyed and develop their children's recall and language skills. All staff are involved in the monitoring process and work in support of the setting and each other to improve their practice to benefit children.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding are comprehensive and ensure that children's welfare is effectively prioritised and promoted. Staff have a strong understanding of the procedures to follow and have all attended safeguarding training to improve their knowledge. The robust recruitment, induction and performance management systems in place ensure that staff strengths are valued and recognised and that targets are set from identified areas for improvement. Regular staff meetings and a weekly working lunch ensure that all staff are kept up-to-date with any changes that take place. As a result, all staff work together to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that they are effectively promoting children's welfare and development.

Staff have a good understanding of the learning and development requirements and use this knowledge well to support children's progress. The manager effectively monitors the activities provided and how staff support children's learning through regular observations and supervision. Staff liaise closely with a range of professionals and work together to support children and their families. Staff build strong relationships with parents which enables them to play a full and active role in their children's learning. Staff at the setting create an environment that is welcoming, safe and stimulating. Children enjoy their learning and grow in confidence, enjoying their early years' experience and securing their future progress.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY371758
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	878639
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	56
Name of provider	Acorn Pre-School
Date of previous inspection	22/09/2008
Telephone number	01462 816281

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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