

Acorn Childcare Centre

Malcolm Sargent Primary School, Empingham Road, STAMFORD, PE9 2SR

Inspection date

Previous inspection date

03/04/2014

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

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

- Staff complete regular and precise assessments of children and use these effectively to plan suitably challenging activities. This means that children make good progress because staff have realistic expectations of all children.
- Good partnerships with the host school benefit children as they make regular visits and occasionally play in the school outdoor spaces. Consequently, children gain the confidence needed to support them well as they progress to school themselves.
- Children are protected in the centre because staff have a good understanding of local safeguarding procedures and value children's safety at all times.
- The head of childcare and the manager are motivated and passionate about what they do and clearly love their job. As a result, the staff team are inspired to work well together, creating a warm and welcoming environment.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to further develop the systems in place for monitoring progress for groups of children.
- There is scope to maximise the use of open-ended questions to further extend and enhance children's growing communication, language and critical thinking skills.

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 each room of the centre's environment.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the head of childcare.
- The inspector held discussions with the head of childcare, the manager, staff and children.
- The inspector looked at children's assessment records and planning documentation.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working with children, the centre's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day.

Inspector

Sharon Alleary

Full report

Information about the setting

Acorn Childcare Centre was registered in 2013 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 the Malcolm Sargent Primary School in Stamford, and is owned and managed by a limited company. The centre serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from a large, single-storey building and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The centre employs 15 members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 6, one at level 4, nine at level 3 and three at level 2. The centre opens Monday to Friday, all year round except for one week at Christmas. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 77 children attending who are in the early years age group. The centre provides funded early education for three- and four-year-old children. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It also offers out-of-school provision during the holidays and before and after school during term time.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- extend individual children's already good learning, for example, by providing more extensive opportunities to enhance experiences through even more open-ended questioning
- strengthen the good systems in place for monitoring children's progress to identify any emerging patterns in the progress of different groups of children.

Inspection judgements

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

Teaching is good overall across the centre, with some excellent elements. The manager demonstrates outstanding teaching skills; this means that the consistently good staff have an excellent role model to aspire to. Staff have realistic expectations of the children. They understand that children learn best when they are active and through purposeful play. Consequently, children are thoroughly motivated and active learners. Along with the 'All about me' forms the parents complete, staff carry out their own initial observations. They use this information to make a baseline assessment about children's starting points, which means they can monitor what progress they make. Regular observations are undertaken and this information is used by the key person to effectively identify next steps and

subsequently plan to meet children's individual learning needs. Staff plan each week to encourage individual next steps and any gaps in the planning are filled with exciting activities. As a result, there is breadth and depth to the curriculum and children have good opportunities to play and learn. Observations and assessments clearly link to the ages and stages of development. Procedures for monitoring individual children's development are effective in tracking the progress they make over time. Staff carry out the progress check at age two, which focuses on the prime areas of learning and development. Adult-guided experiences provide children with an opportunity to share news from home, which supports their personal, social and emotional development. Children are confident to talk to staff and friends and share their experiences. For example, a child is excited to tell everyone at the creative table he has visited the local fair.

Speech and language is generally well supported across the centre, through interactions and running commentary. However, this is not always used to the optimum because occasionally staff do not naturally ask open questions to challenge thinking and so extend learning. Staff provide good opportunities for babies to have a range of first-hand, sensory experiences to explore and investigate, such as lettuce, broccoli, snails, sage and play dough. Babies are fascinated as they watch the snail slithering on their finger. Children thoroughly enjoy the outdoor area and their learning and development is promoted all day as children in the pre-school and toddler room can move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. Babies make regular visits to their dedicated outdoor space. At the inspection, the children are unable to play outside due to a council announcement about pollution. As a result, staff provide physical activities indoors as an alternative, such as ring games for pre-school children and dancing with ribbons for babies. Children show increasing control of their body as they experiment with different ways of moving, such as when playing 'sleeping vehicles' they run around, negotiating space safely. This supports physical development. The centre takes positive measures to increase children's readiness for school. For example, they have started to use the phonics system utilised by the school. This supports children in their acquisition of literacy as well as making their transitions easier. Children locate their own names at welcome time. As a result, they are developing an understanding that print carries meaning. Mathematics is incorporated into everyday events. For example, pre-school children count one to 24 at register time to check the number of children. Babies learn about the similarities between themselves and others as they look at photographs of themselves and their family displayed in the room. Toddlers pretend to make calls to staff on a role-play mobile phone. This supports an early understanding of technology. Staff work alongside toddlers as they create a bird feeder; they demonstrate how to spoon the mixture onto the cone. Toddlers copy and as a result, they are developing their fine motor skills.

Children enjoy opportunities to play with a range of creative resources, including paint, sand, water and the mud kitchen outdoors. Children are developing vivid imaginations as they are provided with a wide range of resources to support them. There are real-life pieces of equipment to enhance play, such as telephones, cameras, portable media players and remote controls which creates a more realistic learning environment. This helps children enjoy their imaginative play and engage in role play based on first-hand experiences. Children enjoy dressing up as fire officers and pretend to locate and put out the fire. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, as staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to identify and meet their needs.

Subtle adaptations are made to the environment to ensure that all children are supported to have a positive experience while in the childcare centre. For instance, rugs are placed on the floor and den making resources are offered to soften the acoustics in the room. While there are no children who have English as an additional language, the centre provides children with a selection of visual words in different languages. This promotes understanding and a sense of belonging for parents who speak dual languages. Further learning takes place when the children take part in Mandarin lessons. The management and staff work hard to promote good relationships with parents and this positively impacts upon the children as they benefit from continuity of care and learning between home and the setting. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and next steps through termly summaries. The centre is planning their first parents' evenings since registration. These will provide an opportunity for staff to discuss children's progress and next steps in greater detail. Parents continue to be informed and contribute towards their children's learning by the daily 'to and fro' diary. Action plans are in place to develop the systems to share information with parents on how to supplement their children's learning at home. Consequently, parents are successfully engaged in all aspects of their child's learning.

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

Children and their families are warmly welcomed into the calm, nurturing environment. As a result, relationships between staff and families are good. Children are happy, settled and emotionally secure within the centre. Parents are provided with valuable information about their individual key person and the role the key person will play in their child's learning journey. Children who are unsettled enjoy cuddles and close contact with staff. Babies demonstrate secure attachments as they approach staff for cuddles and seek reassurance. Through these familiar contacts the children become confident to accept, approach and interact with the inspector. Flexible settling-in procedures ensure that children gradually become familiar with key persons, routines and their new environment, which supports them well in the transition from home to the centre. Children can see wonderfully well-presented galleries of their work on the walls, and this gives them a sense of belonging. Children's behaviour is generally good and staff consistently offer words of praise for their efforts and achievements, which helps to build their self-confidence. They mainly understand rules of expected behaviour, such as tidying toys away at the end of the play time.

The centre takes positive measures to increase children's independence and sense of responsibility. For example, toddlers are given responsibility to be 'helpers'. For instance, they help with setting up the snack table. Staff boost children's self-esteem by adding, 'I definitely chose the best helper today'. Children learn to use the toilet independently and they know they need to wash their hands after using the toilet in order to prevent the spread of infection. Some children have cooked lunches; these are brought into the centre from the host school. Parents also have a choice to send in packed lunches. The management maintains the healthy eating ethos by offering lunch box tips on noticeboards. Staff gently remind children how to make healthy choices from their lunch boxes. Children demonstrate a good understanding of healthy choices by saying, 'I think it's better to have fruit'. Drinks and fresh fruit are readily available in individual rooms,

which ensures children remain comfortable and well hydrated. Staff place a high priority on the safety of children in the centre. Concerns are shared and discussed with children, for instance, staff explain about the dangers of running indoors. Children are supervised well at all times and this keeps them safe within the centre.

An emergency evacuation plan is in place and fully understood by staff. Regular fire drills are practised with the children, ensuring they are familiar with the procedure and raising their awareness and understanding of how to stay safe. The learning environment is clean, bright, well presented and provides experiences that cover all seven areas of learning. Children are supported well by all staff as they move to other rooms in the childcare centre. Moves are smooth and easy, due to the interconnecting rooms and the staff consistently popping into other rooms. As the centre is based on the school site, this provides some good opportunities for children to become used to the school environment. This eases the transition process for children when they move up to school. Reception teachers are invited into the centre. This provides opportunities for children to become familiar with their new teaching staff and school environment, supporting a seamless transition when they move to different settings.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The head of childcare and the manager are passionate and dedicated to meeting children's needs to a high standard and use their knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage to support each child to their full potential. The management are very good role models and value the varying individual skills of the staff team. Staff are knowledgeable of their responsibility to safeguard children. They know how to look out for signs and symptoms of abuse and can refer any concerns appropriately. Safeguarding is high on the agenda at team meetings. The management regularly samples the children's learning journey records. They ensure that the children have a suitable learning environment that ensures purposeful and developmentally-appropriate learning takes place. However, there is room to improve the monitoring system further, in order to track the progress of groups of children to identify any aspect of learning that requires further input from staff. New staff are very well supported and undertake a rigorous induction process to ensure they are familiar with the policies and procedures at the centre. The head of childcare has attended a 'Safer Recruitment' course; this further embeds the process for employing new staff.

Management monitor the performance of staff formally through regular appraisals, supervision meetings and observations of their practice with children during activities. Staff understanding of the learning and development requirements is supported very well through the coaching and mentoring of the manager and room leaders. The management has a training matrix that gathers information regarding staff knowledge and skills and this clearly identifies relevant training. Staff are encouraged to enhance their knowledge and understanding of good practice by attending courses that benefit themselves and the children. Recent baby training has inspired staff to transform the environment and their interactions to benefit babies. The management is committed to including all the team in training opportunities. For instance, external consultants have been booked to deliver in-

house training on group activities and active learning. Clear consideration is given to keeping children safe within the centre. This is supported by thorough policies and procedures that are understood well by staff and are implemented effectively to protect children.

Children's safety is given high priority. Staff endeavour to provide a safe and secure environment for children through regular risk assessments and daily checks. The management works closely with staff and parents to monitor the setting and to identify strengths and areas for further improvement. A thorough self-evaluation details how the setting has plans to continue to develop the already good outdoor space. Staff are effective in developing close partnerships with parents and carers to fully meet the individual needs of the children. Parents state they are happy with the standard of care and learning their children receive. They confirm children are making good progress and the staff are friendly and approachable. Information is shared with parents through good quality information boards, newsletters and ongoing chats. Effective partnerships with external agencies and other providers are well established and contribute securely to meeting children's needs.

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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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	EY466379
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	935282
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	77
Name of provider	Acorn Childcare Centre Limited
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01780756056 07919202123

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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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