

Inspection of The Acorns Nursery & Forest School

25 Denmans Lane, Lindfield, Haywards Heath RH16 2LA

Inspection date: 12 November 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

All children make very good progress as they take part in an exciting range of activities and experiences. Staff use their precise knowledge of each child to adapt their interactions to offer just the right amount of challenge. They very successfully ignite and maintain children's interest, such as through masterful story telling. Children show their growing comprehension as they excitedly discuss the different characters, and they work together to recap the key features of the story. Most of the older children very enthusiastically take part in the optional reading scheme.

There is a tremendous focus on promoting children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Children enjoy regular outings, where they learn about the natural world. They confidently recall learning that has been skilfully embedded over time. For example, they are able to identify a vast range of vegetables following visits to local allotments. Staff build on this interest to take children to shops to buy ingredients for vegetable soup to help them understand where food comes from.

Staff provide sensitive guidance for children to develop good social skills. Children form close friendships and demonstrate very kind behaviour. This is particularly evident in the care shown by older children to their younger friends. Through the dedicated support of leaders and staff, children become motivated, independent learners. This prepares them very well to move on in their education.

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

- Leaders and managers are fully committed to providing children with care and learning experiences that are precisely tailored to reflect their individual needs. Staff are fully supported to understand and implement the exciting and challenging curriculum. They are extremely skilled at seizing every opportunity to enhance children's learning. Staff work extremely effectively as a team, creating a warm and positive atmosphere.
- There is a very strong and successful focus on promoting children's communication and language. All staff use consistent and highly effective methods. They help children to move from learning single words to becoming confident speakers who can engage in complex back-and-forth conversations. Staff expertly introduce a wealth of wonderful vocabulary, which children soak up. This enables children to express themselves very articulately. There are particularly effective arrangements to support children who speak English as an additional language. This is a specialism within the nursery, as two members of staff are qualified in teaching English as a foreign language.
- Staff weave mathematical ideas seamlessly throughout children's play. Children develop a very impressive understanding of numbers and their values. Staff provide a range of practical experiences to reinforce children's knowledge in

real-life situations. For example, children measure ingredients for cooking and use money in local shops.

- Staff provide children with many good opportunities to use their imagination. Children have great fun as they explore the well-equipped role-play area. As children pretend to go camping, staff skilfully extend their thinking as they discuss the items to take. This successfully encourages children to recall things they already know and introduces new vocabulary. Staff also provide resources and regular activities for children to engage in arts and crafts. However, overall, the focus on expressive art and design is not quite as effective as other aspects of the curriculum. Although staff teach children a wide range of different craft techniques, opportunities for children to explore their own creative ideas independently are not as plentiful as for all other areas of learning.
- There are very good arrangements to promote children's health. They are offered nutritious snacks and meals and take part in activities to learn about healthy eating. Children enjoy a great deal of active play each day in the exciting, well-equipped outdoor space. They also benefit from the exercise they get on their regular outings. Routines to promote children's good personal hygiene habits are embedded well.
- Leaders provide regular opportunities for parents to become involved in the day-to-day life of the nursery. For example, parents lead cooking activities and speak to children about cultures and traditions outside of their experience. Leaders use very effective methods to create strong links between the nursery and each child's home. These include the creation of a family tree in the nursery and wonderfully individualised scrap books created collaboratively by staff and parents. This supports children's emotional well-being and promotes continuity in their care and learning.

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:

- enhance the curriculum for expressive arts and design to provide the same impressive standard of opportunities as for all other areas of learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2694555
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10363706
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 3
Total number of places	28
Number of children on roll	21
Name of registered person	Sussex Acorns Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP535303
Telephone number	01444 455081
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

The Acorns Nursery and Forest School registered in 2022. It is one of two nurseries owned by the same private provider. The nursery opens from 8.29am to 3.30pm. There are six members of staff, of whom two are qualified at level 6, two at level 3 and one at level 2. The nursery offers government funded places for children aged from 18 months.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Liz Caluori

Inspection activities

- Managers led the inspector on a learning walk of the nursery and discussed the aims of their early years curriculum.
- The inspector observed the interactions of staff and children during a variety of activities, inside and outside.
- A manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity, and they evaluated the impact on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke to staff and children during the inspection.
- The inspector considered the feedback provided by parents.
- Relevant documentation was viewed.

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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