

Inspection of The Acorns Nursery and Forest School

59 Denmans Lane, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 2JN

Inspection date:

12 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

There is some weakness in relation to the provider's understanding of information required to notify Ofsted in relation to those living and working on the premises. However, this does not impact on the exceptional teaching and learning experiences children receive.

Staff provide a highly ambitious curriculum. They follow children's interests and introduce them to new experiences to develop their knowledge and skills. Children demonstrate their learning by enthusiastically recalling information from a recent topic. For example, staff praise children for successfully naming parts of a daffodil, such as the trumpet and petals. Children remember that flowers drink water through the stem and bees pollinate flowers. This shows children understand and retain the information taught by staff. Children are developing their thinking skills and learning facts about nature.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. Staff are excellent role models and consistently demonstrate their high expectations for children's behaviour. Children follow their lead and replicate exceptionally good manners. For example, at mealtimes, children help to serve food and remind their friends to say thank you. Children are very kind; staff provide effective strategies and teach children how to negotiate and share toys. For example, staff encourage children to work together to share binoculars and magnifying glasses to hunt for bugs. Children notice when their friends are waiting and kindly hand them their binoculars to use. As a result, children are learning to have empathy and build positive relationships.

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

- The provider does not have a fully accurate understanding of the requirements that are specific to the provision of childcare on domestic premises. They have not followed the correct procedures to check the suitability of individuals who work in the setting. They have taken up references and ensure all staff are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks. However, they have not provided the details needed to enable Ofsted to complete all the suitability checks required for childcare that takes place on domestic premises. The provider took swift action to supply the information during the inspection and undertook to adjust ratios accordingly while the suitability checks are completed.
- Staff provide excellent support for children who speak English as an additional language. They learn key words in children's home language and celebrate their cultural traditions. For example, staff invite parents to join children in the setting to celebrate festivals that are meaningful to them. They bring cultural food and share traditions with the group to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

- Children's early literacy is supported extremely well. Staff spend quality time each day with children individually, sharing books to develop their early reading skills. For example, staff encourage children to describe pictures in the book to help them develop sentence structure. Staff share guidance with parents to support reading at home. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy looking at books and are developing a passion for reading.
- Staff are exceptionally skilled at capturing and maintaining children's interest in activities. Children join in enthusiastically during small-group time. They listen intently and follow instructions well. For example, children giggle and dance with joy as they learn a new song and follow actions. Staff swiftly support children who become distracted and successfully help them refocus on the activity. As a result, children establish good listening and attention skills.
- Children receive precisely targeted support to develop speech and language skills. Staff listen to what children have to say and engage them in meaningful conversations. They repeat words clearly and give children time to reply to questions. Staff use a range of questioning techniques and introduce describing words, such as prickly and bumpy, to extend children's vocabulary. As a result, children are very good communicators and speak confidently.
- Staff are highly effective at promoting children's sense of identity and self-esteem. For example, staff create family books with children using pictures from home to help them learn letter sounds and share information of people who are special to them. Children love looking at their books, which helps them settle and feel secure. This helps children become confident, enthusiastic learners.
- Staff fully involve parents in all aspects of their children's learning and care. This includes suggestions for meals to add to the weekly menu and support for home learning to promote a consistent approach. Staff organise social events, such as Christmas carols and a family picnic, to help families socialise.

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 meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
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develop knowledge and understanding of the suitable people requirement specific to childcare on domestic premises so that Ofsted are kept updated of staffing changes and provided with the information required to check the suitability of new staff in a timely way.	26/03/2025
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Setting details

Unique reference number	113349
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10376327
Type of provision	Childcare on 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	2 to 7
Total number of places	21
Number of children on roll	27
Name of registered person	Sussex Acorns Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP905716
Telephone number	01444 455081
Date of previous inspection	24 May 2019

Information about this early years setting

The Acorns Nursery and Forest School registered in 1985. It uses the ground floor rooms of a house in Lindfield, West Sussex. The nursery is open five days a week from 8am to 6pm during school term times. The nursery is in receipt of funding for the provision of early education to children aged two, three and four years. There are nine staff, of whom eight hold relevant early years qualifications between level 2 and qualified teacher status.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Lisa Smith

Inspection activities

- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke with the nominated individual/registered individual about the leadership and management of the setting.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and the children.
- The inspector and the manager carried out a joint observation of a group activity.
- 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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