

Inspection of Acorn at Kents Hill

Wadhurst Lane, Kents Hill, MILTON KEYNES MK7 6JF

Inspection date: 4 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

There is a clear and well-embedded curriculum. This stimulates children to develop an explorative and curious nature and encourages them to become skilled at problem-solving. The curriculum is well understood by staff in all rooms. Staff provide 'invitations' and 'provocations' to ignite children's learning. The environment is highly enticing, with resources set up in an appealing manner for all children. Staff have a great depth of understanding about children's stages of development. They swiftly identify children who might need extra support and adapt the flexible curriculum to ensure that children have the best possible opportunities. Consequently, teaching is extremely effective, and staff have high ambition for what all children can achieve. Children explore the environment safely, taking manageable risks under the superb guidance of staff.

Staff support children's communication and language development exceptionally well. This is particularly the case when children learn English as an additional language. Children develop into expressive and confident talkers who delight in engaging in conversations and discussions, showing their extensive knowledge.

Children's behaviour is consistently excellent. This is largely because they experience such high-quality learning experiences that they remain deeply engaged in their play. Equally, staff view children as competent and capable. They allow them the freedom to test out their ideas, try new things and explore with confidence.

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

- The outdoor and natural environment is of vital importance to the ethos of the setting. There are numerous opportunities for children to discover the world around them. The curriculum focuses on children learning about sustainability and caring for the world. They take part in a wealth of activities that foster their learning about recycling, reusing, growing produce and caring about nature.
- The nursery introduces children to hands-on experiences outside of the everyday. For example, the pet chicken is very much part of nursery life and mingles with children as they play. Children collect eggs and take these home to share with their parents. Parents share photographs of how they use the eggs at home, showing great joined-up learning experiences for children.
- Staff's accurate assessments and depth of knowledge of children means they identify when their development does not meet expectations or exceeds them. Their skilful ability to adapt the curriculum ensures that all children experience teaching that expertly meets their individual needs and encourages all children to thrive.
- Staff are always respectful and considerate towards children and their feelings.

They ensure that children are prepared for care practices to be carried out and show genuine care and attentiveness to children and their needs. This, in turn, teaches children to be respectful and caring towards others. All children display high levels of motivation, and they play and learn together in an extremely positive manner.

- The nursery is an important part of the local community. Children enjoy using public transport to visit the local library and enjoy regular nearby walks to park areas. They have been engaged in community projects, such as litter collecting, to help them gain a sense of responsibility and community. Children equally benefit from staff developing successful partnerships with the neighbouring care home. Children and residents enjoy mutually beneficial relationships that help children to understand about different generations and life experiences.
- Staff provide children with meaningful opportunities for learning outside of their immediate experiences. Children learn about what makes them unique and individual. Coupled with a warm and inclusive environment, this helps all children to gain a strong sense of identity and sense of belonging at the nursery.
- Home visits help to establish highly productive relationships with families from the very beginning. Parents are truly viewed as partners in children's care and education. An abundance of information is shared between the nursery and home to support children's learning. Parents are very complimentary about the nursery and share in the ethos and beliefs of the provider that shape their children's education.
- The provider has a superb oversight of the nursery and invests heavily in the professional development and well-being of staff. This contributes towards the stability and exceptional commitment of the staff team. Staff enthusiastically implement any new learning and adapt and expand the curriculum to boost children's experiences. Furthermore, staff share in the vision of providing outstanding care for children. This motivates them to continually strive to build on their excellent knowledge and skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY447040
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10394890
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	56
Number of children on roll	89
Name of registered person	Acorn Early Years Foundation
Registered person unique reference number	RP901362
Telephone number	01908 200 281
Date of previous inspection	30 September 2019

Information about this early years setting

Acorn at Kents Hill registered in 2012. It operates from a purpose-built building in Kents Hill. The nursery employs 25 members of childcare staff. Of these, 22 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and above. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am to 6pm. The nursery provides government-funded places for children from the ages of nine months to four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Hayley Marshall-Gowen

Inspection activities

- The inspector discussed the intent of the curriculum, observed its implementation during activities indoors and outdoors and assessed the impact this has on the children's learning.
- A joint observation was completed and discussed with the manager.
- During the inspection, the inspector held a meeting with the manager. She looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- The inspector spoke with staff and the children at suitable times throughout the inspection.
- Parents were invited to share their views with the inspector. Several parents discussed their views during the inspection, and the inspector took account of all feedback received.

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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