

Helmdon Acorns Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY420501
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Inspector	Melanie Eastwell

Setting address	Hintons Close, Helmdon, Northamptonshire, NN13 5QP
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

Helmdon Acorns Pre-school opened at the current premises in 2011. It is a committee run group and operates from purpose built premises within Helmdon, Northamptonshire. The premises have disabled access and toilet facilities and are located on one level. There is an enclosed garden available for outside play. The pre-school is open from 9am to 3.30pm each weekday during term times. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register only. A maximum of 26 children aged from two to under five years may attend at any one time. There are currently 31 children aged from two to under five years on roll. The pre-school is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are six members of staff, three of whom hold early years qualifications. The pre-school provides funded early education for three-and four-year-olds, it has links with the local school and receives support from the Local Authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The staff team have a well-developed knowledge of each child's needs and this ensures they are successful in promoting children's welfare and learning. Children are safe and secure and they enjoy learning about their local area and the world around them. The partnerships with parents, the local school and other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage are strong and are significant in making sure the needs of all children are met. This means that children make good progress given their age, ability and starting points. The pre-school has begun to develop processes for self-reflective practice to ensure that their priorities for development are well-targeted and respond to the needs of the children attending.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop further the systems for observation and assessment to ensure that the next steps identified are cross referenced across the planning sheets and the recorded observations and ensure that all the written records are purposeful and relevant to children's learning and development
- develop further the process for self-reflective practice to continue to enhance the outcomes for children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The committee, management and staff team in this welcoming and friendly setting are committed to ensuring that children receive an inclusive experience and that they are safe and secure. The recent move to the new, purpose built premises has enhanced the activities and opportunities that are available to the children.

Safeguarding is given high priority. Effective systems are in place for the management of entry to and exit from the building. All visitors are greeted at the door and parents wait in the entrance hall to drop off and collect their children. All the staff have the required clearances in place and effective systems are in place for the recruitment of staff and to check the ongoing suitability of the existing staff. The manager and deputy have completed specific training in safeguarding and they are confident that all the staff understand the importance of following the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines in the event of any concerns. All the required documentation is in place, is organised and kept up-to-date.

Comprehensive risk assessments and processes for checking safety underpin the staff's good awareness of how to maintain children's safety. The pre-school has recently moved into new, purpose built premises that enable the children to have free-flow between the inside and outside play areas and supports them to be independent in making choices and decisions about their play and to access the toilet facilities.

The excellent deployment of resources, including the play materials and equipment alongside the very effective way the staff manage themselves and use their initiative promotes children's enjoyment, their confidence and self-esteem. Children are able to help themselves from the low-level shelving units and boxes that are set up according to the six areas of learning around the room. The staff are monitoring this to ensure that the children are accessing all these areas. For example, they noted that the children were not accessing the large floor puzzles and adapted the area to ensure that sufficient floor space is available to allow the children to complete these puzzles. The staff position themselves with specific activities or spend time monitoring the play. They provide highly positive interaction with the children. They have fun, laugh with them and show a genuine interest in what they are doing. When the staff sit with the activities the children gravitate towards them, they thoroughly enjoy their positive interaction and respond to this. The setting has a wonderful garden area where children can dig and water the plants they are growing in the vegetable patch. They enjoy using the fixed play equipment and the activities the staff take outside. Children are safe because the garden is fully enclosed. There are areas of lawn and a shredded rubber safety surface.

The pre-school has developed strong partnership working with the children's parents and with other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress. They can have access to their child's 'Learning Journey' file at anytime and the staff make themselves available at the beginning and end of the session to provide verbal feedback as required. Parents have access to notice boards and the staff record the day's events on a wipe clean board which is displayed at the end of each session in the

entrance hall. Parents are encouraged to become helpers in the pre-school and parent consultations are held by the key workers to pass on information about their child's progress. Children benefit from the partnerships the staff have developed with the local school, nurseries and childminders. They set up visits and a meeting to share relevant information and ensure their involvement is a three way process that involves the child's parents. This commitment to partnership working contributes to a smooth transition and a consistent approach for the children.

The setting has begun the process of self-evaluation and is keen to develop this further in order to identify their areas of strong practice and to ensure their plans for the future are clear and focused. An 'Action Plan' is in place and the staff team record when the identified targets have been met. The setting demonstrates a good capacity for continuous improvement. They are keen to continue to develop the use of their new building and particularly the outdoor areas. The committee are active in promoting the staff's ongoing professional development through academic training and through attending short courses.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children clearly demonstrate that they enjoy attending this bright and vibrant setting. They benefit greatly from the staff members very positive and sensitive interaction which promotes their growing confidence and self-esteem. They spend time talking to them during activities, asking meaningful questions, promoting vocabulary and offering suggestions to extend the activity when required but also are skilled in knowing when to step back and allow the children to lead the play. Children show that they feel safe. For example, they are confident to move between their chosen activities, they ask for items they want and enjoy initiating conversation with the key workers. They show familiarity with the daily routines and are able to be independent throughout the day. For example, they know where their coats, bags and shoes are kept, they access the toilet areas and they make choices, pour their own drinks and take their plates away at snack time. Each child is treated as an individual and with respect. The staff know them all well and they discuss any specific needs thoroughly with their parents to ensure they can be met effectively. Children at the pre-school are involved in the local community. They enjoy being involved in events at the local school, such as visiting to watch the school play. Children are learning about the wider world through the good range of resources, books and displays of images that celebrate diversity and through discussion with the staff. They are actively encouraged to work together, to 'use their words' to manage issues and disagreements that arise and to think of others. The staff are good role models and ensure they make time to listen to each child's news or comments. Children's efforts are valued through the show and tell sessions and the lovely displays of their art and craft work that has quotes from the children attached.

The children enjoy the creative range of activities provided for them by the staff. However, they are also encouraged to extend their own play. For example, some

children exploring the dry porridge oats by pouring them in and out of a variety of containers ask for some water to mix in. The staff provide this for them and talk to them about how different the texture is when the water has been added. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is promoted through the great vegetable patch that has been created. The children are fully involved in planting and caring for the seeds and enjoy picking the fruits when they are ripe. These are often incorporated into snack time. For example, they help to make a jelly containing raspberries from the garden and taste lettuce and Rocket leaves. The setting is innovative in providing a wide variety of snacks for the children that are interesting. For example, they enjoy tucking into sausages and mini Yorkshire puddings with gravy, as well a variety of fruit. Children sit together for lunch. Most parents provide a packed lunch and some children have a meal provided by a company that supplies the local school with hot meals for the children at lunchtime.

Children's progress in their learning and development is recorded in individual, well presented 'Learning Journey' files. These files contain ongoing short written observations, samples of their work and photographs. The records are kept under each of the six areas of learning which makes sure that a balance of evidence is in place. The key workers also record a six minute tracking observation three times each year that also includes information about the child's level of involvement and whether they play alone, alongside or with their peers. These six minute observations also include a next step for each child that is incorporated into the planning. The staff do identify next steps for the children from the ongoing short observations and record these on the weekly planning sheet. However, they do not currently have a system to cross reference this identification of next steps to clearly show that this is carried out on a regular basis. The key workers also complete a variety of other written documentation for each child that duplicates some of the information already gathered. The completion of this significant amount of written evidence takes a lot of the staff's time. However, children's progress is clearly evident and parents enjoy being able to access their child's file to read the observations and to look at the photographs. The children often have involvement in the updating of their files. They look at the photographs with their key workers and recall events and activities. The children's feelings of belonging and well-being at the pre-school are contributed to by the dedication and genuine interest from the committee, staff and management team.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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