

Acorns Day Nursery

36 Alphington Road, EXETER, EX2 8HN

Inspection date	19/02/2014
Previous inspection date	27/09/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
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		1
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 work very closely with parents from the start and throughout their child's time at the nursery to meet children's individual needs. As a result, children make good, and in some cases rapid, progress in their learning.
- Staff successfully provide an inclusive environment where children form secure emotional attachments and develop their confidence and enthusiasm for learning.
- Managers foster a culture of self-evaluation and a drive for improvement. This gives staff an inspiring and supportive environment with a strong focus on children's well-being.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Provision for role play is not as good as for other aspects of children's learning and staff do not always fully embrace opportunities to further develop children's communication and language; for example, during social situations and helping older children to make connections between sounds and letters.
- Assessment, while effective, lacks detail to ensure that it is always precise and sharply focussed on children's progress across all areas of learning. This means that parents do not always get an in-depth picture of where their children are in their learning..

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.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed staff and children in all areas of the nursery and in the various outdoor areas
- The inspector spoke with some parents and children about their experiences.
The inspector sampled key documents, including risk assessments, the complaints log, children's developmental records and key policies, such as, the safeguarding policies.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff, including first aid qualifications and safeguarding training.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, deputy, practice manager and Staff, as well as carrying out a joint observation with the deputy.

Inspector

Sharon Peel

Full report

Information about the setting

Acorns Day Nursery occupies a large house, close to the centre of Exeter. It opened in 1996, and re-registered under the ownership of SPL Education Limited in 2006. It is one of a chain of four nurseries which is linked with St Peter's Preparatory School. There are five playrooms, a sleep room, sensory room, kitchen, toilets, office and staff facilities, as well as three enclosed outdoor play areas. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. There are currently 116 children on roll. The nursery is open from 7.45am to 6.15pm on weekdays, throughout the year. There are 27 staff members, 21 of whom have appropriate child care qualifications, including the manager who has achieved the Early Years Professional Status. The staff team is supported by two chefs and a cleaner.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- embrace every opportunity to further develop children's communication and language skills; for example by providing children with more opportunities to role play and practise skills around linking letters and sounds

- extend assessment systems to ensure the records are more precise and detailed with a sharp focus on showing progress from children's starting points and what is planned for their future learning.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff know the children they care for really well, and plan for their individual needs and interests successfully. The strong focus on the key person system gives staff time to tune into children's fascinations, so that they are able to provide rich detail in what even the youngest children enjoy doing. Staff readily talk about experiences that children enjoy. For example, one of the babies likes 'feeling the wind in their hair' when outside and a toddler likes to say the word for moon in their home language when it's time to go home. Staff are quick to spot children's interests and act on them. One baby shows a particular preference for the yellow bricks in their play rather than any of the other colours. The child's key person spots this and quickly adds more yellow resources to extend their exploration of objects of that colour.

The atmosphere in each of the rooms is calm and nurturing as children happily have cuddles with members of staff, rest and relax in cosy areas or confidently play and explore. Through daily routines, such as, nappy changing, sleep times, meal times and

play times, key persons build up a special relationship with their children. Parents and carers are included in this relationship as they are greeted warmly and given lots of opportunities to speak to their key person to share useful information.

Both babies and older children are able to select their own resources to play with which promotes their independence and ability to drive their own learning. Adults provide additional props to extend children's curiosity and creativity and children's interests and needs appear on planning. Adults join in play sensitively, fitting in with children's existing play ideas and model enthusiasm and excitement for learning through play. Staff respond intuitively to children's needs, such as when they are upset, distracted or tired.

Children use a wide range of stimulating resources which are often real and open-ended. Children play with real pots and pans, real fruit and vegetables and even real shoes and mobile phones. This promotes children's ability to make links to the world around them and develop their creativity and thinking skills. Staff listen to what children have to say, valuing their questions. These questions are written on boards around the rooms to remind staff of what children are interested in finding out more about.

Resources support the different areas of learning and development giving children a broad range to select from. However, role play areas have recently been changed into exploratory zones, which means that although children are gaining in opportunities to explore and problem-solve, children do not have extended opportunities to represent their thoughts, ideas and feelings through role play. While staff are good at promoting language in their playful interactions, there were some missed opportunities to promote 'chat' at snack time; music is played in the background which deters children and staff from conversing socially.

Children can choose where they learn as they have access to enclosed garden areas as well as an indoor sensory room and messy play room. This gives children flexible space indoors and outdoors to explore and move around freely. Pre-School children from 'The Den', upstairs, are given times to be able to choose whether they play indoors or outdoors and staff bring out resources that they are currently interested in. The outdoor areas are in the process of being updated and enhanced to provide more stimulating opportunities for children to learn outdoors. Plans include providing spaces that encourage communication and language, as well as role play outside.

Parents are extremely happy with the nursery. They appreciate the key person system and take up opportunities to meet with them and share information. Parents have access to children's 'Celebration Books' which outlines their achievements at the nursery. These are carried through with the children into their new rooms and give a lovely record of their child's time at the nursery. Parents are given a termly review of their child's progress which tells them if their child is working at the expected level of development for their age. However, these review sheets lack detail to help parents gain a deeper understanding of the key skills needed to help their children to progress towards the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Outside each group room there are leaflets to support parents' understanding of typical stages of development for the children's ages. For example, outside 'The Burrow' there are leaflets about biting, which support parents who may be experiencing this with their toddlers. The setting has good

links with the local children's centre also provides family support. Parents are able to attend a Parent Forum at the nursery which enables them to feed into plans and offer ideas for improvement. A recent outcome from the Parent Forum is that parents now receive information from the nursery via texts. This is proving extremely popular with parents and is especially useful for children living with parents who are separated.

Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of the learning and development requirements and have recently placed a strong focus on the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. This can be seen through staff's use of open-ended questioning, modelling language of thinking and giving children opportunities to play and explore. Although staff are promoting children's communication and language skills well overall staff do not always consider the best ways to support the older children's progression towards understanding links between letters and their sounds. Staff have good relationships with the other settings that children attend and share information regularly on partnership forms. This serves to provide good continuity of care and good support for children's learning and development. They also visit other settings and welcome teachers from the local schools to visit them. Feedback from local schools is positive with one school saying that 'they know the children who come from Acorns Nursery, as they are so well bonded in their friendships'.

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

Children show extremely close relationships with their friends and their carers in the nursery. There is a very strong feeling of happiness and harmony in all of the rooms as children play well together and are keen to work with their key persons. Children show that they feel safe and secure through their confident and calm behaviour. Staff are excellent at responding to the needs of individual children. For example, staff are quick to spot children who need to wipe their noses and promote the importance of hand-washing afterwards. All children, including those who have recently started or changed rooms, show secure attachments to the staff looking after them and they readily seek comfort and reassurance when needed. Children's personal, social and emotional development benefits from these positive relationships and the staff's understanding of how each child is unique.

Key persons take time to get to know the children and their families very well and parents feel well supported through excellent communication from the nursery. Managers ensure that staffing rotas take into account when key children are in so that where possible children are always at the nursery with their key person. On occasions when this is not possible, a buddy system is implemented to ensure that a 'second' key person is available for that child.

Staff are deployed very well with children benefiting from having a high ratio of adults to children. This gives staff the time to focus on supporting children's emotional development. Staff praise children for their achievements and encourage them to persevere and rise to challenge. As a result, children are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their learning as time is built in to gradually introduce children into their

next group room. Parents report that their children are 'excited and eager' to progress to the next room, reinforcing that children are moving on at the correct stages of their development. Children across rooms are given chances to play together in shared outside areas; this supports friendships when they move rooms. Parents are fully involved in this process and are actively encouraged to share information about their children at home.

Children enjoy the excellent healthy food on offer at the nursery, which has recently completed a Healthy Eating Award. All food is cooked on site and the nursery has an outstanding rating for food safety and hygiene. Older children are encouraged to prepare their own snack and to use knives and forks appropriate to their age, supporting their independence and social skills. Parents are encouraged to offer suggestions for food that their children enjoy and they are also pleased that their children try different foods that they may not have eaten at home. For example, children spend time with their key person trying new, exotic fruits together. Children show confidence to taste new food and the key person talks to them about the importance of healthy eating. Children are able to access fresh drinking water throughout the day, and younger children are encouraged to move to using open cups as early as possible to protect their teeth. Parents are supported to understand the health and development benefits of moving children off of dummies, bottles and drinking beakers. Links with the local health visitors are good and they have visited to talk about the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Bright displays value children's work and these are displayed in key person groups. Children have their own spaces on the walls to be able to display their work and key persons take the lead in updating this and encouraging children to share their most recent work. This promotes a high level of pride and sense of belonging in the children. Staff fully support children who are learning English as an additional language and there is evidence of their home languages around the rooms. Staff learn key phrases in children's home languages and encourage parents to share aspects of their language and culture with the setting, valuing all diversity. All children, regardless of age, are offered regular opportunities to have fresh air and exercise and wet weather suits are provided to support outside play in all weathers. Children's physical development is successfully nurtured.

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

Staff are led by a skilled management team who are passionate about their work with children and their families. As a result, children are extremely well cared for and make good progress in their learning and development. There are comprehensive policies in place which includes safeguarding and what to do when an allegation is made against a member of staff. Staff understand and implement the policies well and have regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge. Staff roles and responsibilities are very clearly defined and there is a strong sense of team work.

There is a robust recruitment and selection process. All staff have undergone checks to make sure that they are suitable to work with children and details of their vetting is recorded. Each new staff member is given a mentor as part of their induction, and this

encourages staff to support each other and share good practice. Induction is rigorous to ensure staff are clear about their roles. To help ensure staff ongoing suitability they have annual appraisals and termly supervision meetings that involve observations of their practice and identification of next steps in their development. Staff are asked about their continuing suitability to work with children. They are also skilled in observing each other which fosters a culture of continuous improvement and self reflection amongst all staff members. Staff are offered regular training to update their skills and knowledge and are encouraged to drive their own professional development. There are clear systems to ensure that essential training like safeguarding and first aid are regularly updated for all staff. Staff who attend training are expected to implement ideas and share practice. The manager monitors the impact of training on practice and the manager and deputy also visit other settings to bring back ideas and maintain strong systems for self reflection. The manager has weekly supervision with a general manager and practice manager who are responsible for having an overview of the chain of four nurseries. It is during these meetings that annual, termly and weekly priorities for improvement are agreed upon. The most recent long-term focus has been placed on the role of the 'Key Person' and it is evident that this focus is having a positive impact on children and their families, who appreciate the priority placed on providing caring, warm and positive relationships. There are detailed plans for improving the outside areas. These have been made in collaboration with parents and children. There is a united drive for ongoing improvement.

A high priority is given to children's safety. Staff are vigilant in their supervision to safeguard children's welfare. The premises are safe and secure, with qualified staff only opening the door to visitors. Parents are reminded by signs to ensure that they do not let anyone through the front door.

The manager is also the special educational needs coordinator and designated person for behaviour management. She is proactive in initiating early intervention to support children with special educational needs or with behaviour or social interaction difficulties. The nursery has strong links with other agencies, such as, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and children's services to provide the extra support some children need. Children with medical conditions or impairments are also well supported at the setting and there are embedded policies in place for children who may be on long term and short term medication. Partnerships with parents, other providers and outside agencies are very effective and well established. This ensures that all children's individual needs are being met well.

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	EY341932
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	827487
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	60
Number of children on roll	116
Name of provider	SPL Education Ltd
Date of previous inspection	27/09/2010
Telephone number	01392 272621

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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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