

Inspection of Acornwood Pre-School

8 Links Way, FARNBOROUGH, Hampshire GU14 0NA

Inspection date:

26 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Leaders do not have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The pre-school has faced a period of instability and the provider has struggled to recruit a consistent staff team. This has placed additional pressure on some leaders. Poor oversight and a lack of monitoring have led to a decline in standards. There are breaches of the legal requirements, which have a negative impact on outcomes for children. For example, staff are not always deployed effectively to ensure that children are adequately supervised, particularly when children visit the toilets or the large hall. This compromises children's safety and well-being.

The procedures for supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are at risk of falling behind, are not effective. Therefore, these children's individual learning needs are not fully supported. Children do not all develop the knowledge, skills and attitude to learning needed to be ready for school.

Staff are kind and children appear happy in the pre-school. Most children enjoy exploring the activities available and generally behave well. Staff remind them of the 'golden rules' around being kind to others. They build positive relationships with children. For instance, staff recognise when children are upset, and they offer cuddles for reassurance. They speak to children in a kind and caring manner. Children settle well into the environment.

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

- Instability in the leadership team has resulted in some leaders feeling overwhelmed with their workload. They have taken on additional responsibilities and they do not have enough time to complete the requirements of their roles. As a result, monitoring and evaluation of the setting have been poor. Leaders do not have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. Self-evaluation is ineffective, and insufficient progress has been made to drive improvement. However, leaders know the challenges ahead and demonstrate a positive attitude toward addressing these shortcomings.
- Leaders do not deploy staff within the setting effectively. As a result, the staffing arrangements do not meet children's needs. Children are not always adequately supervised and are exposed to hazards that go unnoticed. Leaders do not always ensure that the deployment of staff is effective during busy times of the day, such as when parents bring their children to the pre-school. In addition, staff and leaders do not always ensure that children are within sight or hearing. For instance, children wander into areas of the building that are not visible to staff. This repeatedly goes unnoticed, which results in children not being supervised

appropriately.

- Staff provide children with a healthy breakfast and snacks. They support parents by sharing information on healthy lunch box ideas. This helps to promote healthy food choices for children. However, current food safety procedures are inadequate. Staff do not ensure that children are properly supervised during mealtimes, leaving them to eat alone with minimal oversight. Additionally, staff do not prepare foods, such as grapes, apples and carrots, appropriately to minimise the risk of choking.
- The arrangements in place to support children with SEND are not sufficient to ensure that children's needs are met. Although staff identify children with SEND early on, they do not ensure that they get the support that they need. For example, staff rely too much on parents and carers to get children professional support. Referrals to external agencies are not done in a timely manner. This means that children with SEND are at a disadvantage and gaps in their learning do not close. Children who require additional support often play alone. Staff working directly with children with SEND have limited knowledge and do not implement strategies consistently. This impacts children's emotional well-being and widens the gap in their development.
- Overall, leaders have created an appropriate curriculum that supports most children's communication and language. For example, children happily chat back and forth with staff, telling them about their recent holiday to Tunisia. This helps children to build a wide vocabulary. However, there have been recent staff absences that have led to there being a disjointed approach to delivering the curriculum. Leaders have not ensured that there is a common understanding of the curriculum intent, particularly for those children with SEND. Weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching mean that some children have limited opportunities to make good progress in their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is not 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 and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
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ensure that leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and monitor the provision effectively to identify any breaches of requirements	25/04/2025
improve the deployment of staff to make sure that children are appropriately supervised at all times to ensure their safety	25/04/2025
ensure that food is prepared and served appropriately to promote children's safety at mealtimes	25/04/2025
ensure that timely interventions and referrals are made to better support children with SEND.	25/04/2025

Setting details

Unique reference number	109949
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10388452
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	31
Name of registered person	Acornwood Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP517938
Telephone number	
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2019

Information about this early years setting

Acornwood Pre-School registered in 1987. It operates from Southwood Community Centre in Farnborough, Hampshire. The pre-school is open from 9am to 2.45pm, Monday to Thursday, during term time. There are six members of staff, three of whom hold relevant early years qualifications at level 3 or above, and one is qualified at level 2. The pre-school is in receipt of funding for the provision of early education to children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Mandy Cooper

Inspection activities

- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- 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.
- Children told the inspector about their friends and what they like to do when they are at pre-school.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke with the nominated individual about the leadership and management of the setting.
- Staff spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation during a physical skills activity.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.

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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