

Inspection of Little Acorns Pre School

140 Sidegate Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 4JD

Inspection date: 1 July 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive with a spring in their step, eager to talk to the friendly and nurturing staff who greet them with a smile. Staff know the children very well as they offer home visits and tailored settling-in process, where they take time to get to know them and their families. This prioritises children's emotional well-being from the beginning and means children swiftly build strong and caring attachments to staff.

A large focus of the well-planned curriculum aims to provide children with what they need to speak clearly, enjoy books and make sense of the natural world around them. Staff provide opportunities to learn about life cycles, through growing fruit and vegetables in the pre-school allotment. This supports children's understanding of where food comes from and healthy lifestyles. Staff complement children's wider experiences with opportunities to experience ducklings hatching in spring and visits to the local library and parks.

Children use sand timers to take turns, showing they have learned fair ways to play cooperatively. When children find it difficult to share a popular toy, staff calmly and sensitively explain to children the impact of their behaviour on their friends. This excellent and consistent modelling from staff supports children's positive attitudes and behaviours towards others.

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

- The curriculum is built around a range of books, rhymes and activities that have context and relevance to children, helping them make links in their learning. For example, children enjoy fun stories and discussions about the current topic and interest in bees. As children spread honey on bread for their snack, they practise their physical skills to support later writing. Additionally, staff use this opportunity to talk to children about the role of bees. Children show this connected learning is effective when they proudly tell staff that bumblebees do not make honey, honeybees do.
- Staff expertly promote children's independence and self-care skills. Staff model fun and memorable techniques, such as 'pinch, pinch, pull', to support children with opening food packets. As a result, children demonstrate perseverance and determination as they successfully open packets themselves. This bolsters their self-esteem.
- On very hot days, managers diligently reinforce to staff the importance of keeping children safe in the sun. Staff encourage shaded areas to play and remind children to wear sun hats. They offer regular drinks to keep children hydrated, apply sun cream and make sure children play outside for a safe length of time. On occasion, there are inconsistencies in how staff gather information

from parents at drop-off, to precisely plan for individual children's care such as timings to re-apply sun cream.

- The management team work hard to build strong relationships with the link school and other local schools children will attend. Staff read stories and spend time talking to children about what they may expect. This helps children to manage any feelings of anxiety and make seamless transitions when they progress to school.
- Staff promote children's communication and language very well. They consistently model clear and age-appropriate language, alongside providing visual aids and social experiences that support children with their early language development.
- Children delight in choosing from a range of art and craft activities that are inviting and always available. Children thoroughly enjoy the garden where they have an array of resources to build their gross motor skills, such as a climbing frame, ride-on cars and sandpits to dig in.
- Staff mostly arrange the environment carefully to allow children to choose from a wide variety of high-quality resources of interest. Sometimes, staff do not always consider introducing other available resources to deepen children's engagement and help them make stronger connections in their learning and development.
- Parents are extremely happy with the service. All parents, including those of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, express how the management team and staff go 'over and above' to ensure their involvement. This collaborative working ensures that the individual needs of all children are consistently met and they all make significant progress from their starting points.

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

- improve systems to gather information from parents that help staff plan to meet the specific needs of children, particularly during periods of extreme heat
- help staff to consider how available resources can be used to further enhance children's creativity and support them to achieve their next steps in learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	251558
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10394827
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	59
Name of registered person	Little Acorns Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP904767
Telephone number	01473 712236
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2019

Information about this early years setting

Little Acorns Pre School registered in 1994. The pre-school employs 13 members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including two at level 6. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, from 8am until 4pm, term time only. The pre-school provides government funded early years education for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Louisa Taylor

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a tour of the pre-school, both indoors and outdoors, to understand how the early years provision and curriculum are organised. Additionally, the manager showed the inspector the premises and discussed how they ensure it is safe and suitable.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this had on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of group activities with the manager and also discussed self-evaluation.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The inspector held a meeting with the management team and also discussed self-evaluation. The inspector looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of the staff working in the pre-school and a selection of other records.

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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