

Local Offer for The Acorns Nursery and Forest School

Both our nurseries are in West Sussex and we access professional early years' services from them.

1. How does the early years setting know if children need extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)?

Please raise and discuss any concerns initially when you come to visit. If The Acorns has the facilities to accommodate your child the extra help will be discussed with the SENCO and your child's keyworker in partnership with West Sussex.

2. How does the early years setting know if children need extra help?

Working closely in partnership with our parents, we have an ongoing assessment and monitoring system, including the 2 year check. This is designed to help us identify any areas where your child might need extra support before going to school. We ask you to complete an 'All about me' form prior to your child joining us and we ask you to let us know at the beginning of each term what your child can do and what he/she finds challenging. We use this as a starting point for our termly profile of your child.

At The Acorns all members of the experienced team care for and nurture all the children who attend. In addition to this, each child has a special person within the nursery called their 'key worker', who has overall responsibility for their welfare and development. Your child's key worker is the person with whom you will liaise during your child's time with us and who will form a strong bond with you and your child. The key worker will observe, assess and monitor your child's development and progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the statutory curriculum, meeting with you on a regular basis and answering any queries or questions you might have.

We have a very good rapport with our parents and if we were concerned about any aspect of your child's development, we would first of all talk to you about it. Then, in consultation with you, the key worker and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), we would decide on the most appropriate course of action. This might involve preparing an individual play plan (IEP), arranging a referral for Speech and Language or asking for support from the appropriate agencies who help with behavioural and developmental issues. The SENCO would be involved in designing and developing an individual play plan with you and the key worker, writing reports for the Early Years Planning and Review Meetings (EYPARM), liaising with partner professionals and working with them to have strategies in place for a smooth transition to school.

3. What should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs or disabilities?

If you think your child may have special educational needs, please let us know at the earliest opportunity. Prospective parents will often mention any concerns they have when they first approach us with regards to making a preliminary visit to the nursery. This enables us to talk to you about our range of experience with SEND and our areas of expertise. As newly registered parents at the nursery, we offer to make a home visit and we offer settling-in 'stay

and play' sessions before your child joins us. These all provide you with opportunities to tell us of any concerns you might have. If we are made aware of your concerns at this initial stage, it enables us to talk through your concerns early on and to discuss with you, your key worker and SENCO, whether we feel the issue is something we can deal with in-house or whether it might be prudent to have professional support put in place as soon as possible or if indeed The Acorns is the right setting to provide the best outcomes for your child.

4. How will early years setting staff support my child?

Your key worker will talk to you first of all and then discuss the issues with the SENCO. Together they will work out strategies to help your child move forward.

Each child is supported, according to their individual needs, in a nurturing and supportive environment by your child's key worker and all the team. A good rapport is established between your child and your key worker who will support and guide your child, interacting with them, playing with them, helping, supporting and encouraging them throughout their time with us. There will be an opportunity at the end of each attendance for verbal feedback. During the first four weeks we will also give you a daily diary, detailing activities that your child has participated in and particularly enjoyed so that you can chat to them about their day as they settle with us. Individual progress is constantly monitored using the Speech & Language Monitoring Tool and their next steps are always discussed and agreed with you. Individual play plans are kept under constant review and updated as felt appropriate to ensure that they are successfully meeting the current needs of your child. If you have given your agreement for the early years specialists to support us to help your child, you will be invited to attend their regular review meetings for feedback on your child's progress and their suggestions for the way ahead.

5. How will the curriculum be matched to my child's needs?

If deemed appropriate an Individual Education Plan will be put in place.

Our curriculum, which is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is open-ended to cater for the wide variety of needs, interests and learning styles of each of the individual children who attend. We have a robust system of observation, assessment and planning in place in the prime and specific areas of learning in line with the EYFS guidelines. Your child's key worker will work with you and alongside your child to encourage successful outcomes for your child across the curriculum discussing the opportunities for professional support if deemed necessary.

6. How will both you and I know how my child is doing and how will you help me to support my child's learning?

You will be invited to attend regular meetings to discuss progress.

We are a friendly nursery and will constantly discuss your child's progress with you.

We keep ongoing records of your child's progress in their learning journal and you are free to come and read our observations at any time. You can also make an appointment to see your child's key worker at a mutually convenient time should you wish to do so.

We write a detailed report on your child's progress once a year which tracks their stage of development on the EYFS framework and we compile a profile of your child once a term.

We have a formal Parents Evening once a year in November and another in June for parents of leavers, but as I have said before, you can make an individual appointment at any time convenient to you and your child's key worker.

We offer suggestions of simple activities that you can do at home to support the curriculum in our Planning Plus document sent to parents at the start of each term, but your key worker will also be happy to offer other suggestions relating specifically to your child if you would find that helpful. We invite you to send in objects of interest which support our weekly nursery theme for your child to talk about and share with their friends. We also invite you to participate in nursery school activities so that you can experience at first hand your child's nursery day and see how you can support our ethos at home.

7. What support will there be for my child's overall wellbeing?

Your key worker together with The Acorns team will support your child and help him/her to settle happily and understand and follow our house rules and routines.

The Acorns team and your child's key worker will do all they can to support your child's wellbeing within the nursery. A flexible approach, taking individual needs into account underpins our practice. We follow practices and policies in accordance with the EYFS. A full set of policies is available in our Parent File for you to access.

Rigorous recruitment procedures are in place and enhanced criminal records checks are carried out. We are working towards all permanent members of the team having Child Protection qualifications, First Aid training and a Food and Hygiene Certificate. Robust risk assessments are in place to create a safe and healthy environment for your child. Healthy eating, with our parents offering suggestions for the menu are in place. Medicine can be administered in certain circumstances under strict guidelines with written parental consent. Staff act as good role models and help and support all the children to adapt to their new environment within the nursery and learn house rules. They help new children to understand the ethos of The Acorns, showing each other mutual respect and playing together in harmony, whilst recognising that some children might display difficulties with emotions and behaviour due to a diagnosed special educational need. The children learn to share their views and ideas and these are incorporated into our day whenever possible.

8. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the early years setting?

We access all the relevant agencies provided by County to support your child.

Over the years we have worked with children with a range of SEND and a wide range of support services and we will continue to strive to do this, to offer the best support we can for you and your child. We have developed an expertise in supporting bilingual children, for whom English is not their first language. Janet Irwin has a qualification for teaching English as a foreign language: a TEFL Certificate. We have also worked closely with Speech Therapists and

attended much relevant training.

Our staff are skilled and experienced with early years and attend further training on all aspects of SEND in early years whenever possible. Our SENCOs are experienced in writing individual play plans to meet the needs of children with SEND. As detailed earlier in Question 1, they write reports for use within the nursery and for outside agencies and they contribute to meetings to provide a co-ordinated assessment and planning process for children with SEND.

9. What training have the staff, supporting children with SEND, had or are having?

All staff access training whenever possible. Within the nursery we have had lots of experience of children for whom English is not their first language.

The Acorns Team are led by Janet Irwin a qualified teacher with an MA in Early Years Education and a TEFL qualification for teaching English as a foreign language. Janet also has a Level 3 qualification in Forest School Leadership and Management.

We attend training from West Sussex whenever possible.

Long serving staff members have had SENCO training and have attended multiple courses on all aspects of early years: learning in the outdoor environment, understanding behaviour & behaviour management, physical development, brain development, speech and language development and more recently the specialist training: The Solihull Approach & Elklan Speech and Language.

Other staff who have joined more recently, have not yet accessed any training specifically aimed at SEND since they joined us, but have accessed a range of training on learning through the outdoor environment as this is a an area which plays an important part in our nursery. All staff will access further training as often as possible.

A record of training schedules are kept on file and further training and advice is always sought from partner professionals in case of need with a SEND.

10. How will my child be included in activities outside the setting including trips?

All the children who attend the nursery are invited to join us on trips and adjustments are made as appropriate for the children for whom this is deemed necessary in consultation with their parents/carers.

The Acorns Nursery and Forest School has an inclusive policy and will try to accommodate all the children within the setting in activities and trips arranged for them in consultation with their parents and carers. Permission forms will be signed by all the parents of the children involved and parents and carers will be invited to join us on the outing if they would like to do so. Planning for outings and activities outside the setting is considered carefully after a robust risk assessment and takes into account the needs and dietary requirements of all who attend.

11. How accessible is the early years setting environment (indoors & outdoors)?

We strongly believe in learning through the outdoors and access the outdoors as much as possible, going for walks in and around Lindfield.

If you have a child with special educational needs or a disability, please contact us first on 01444 455081 and speak to Janet Irwin the owner so that she can explain in detail the accessibility of each of our settings and discuss your child's individual needs and requirements. Please look at the photos of the settings in our blog and in the photo gallery on the website too as this will help to give you a clearer picture.

If you find English challenging and want to know more about The Acorns, please bring along a friend who can translate for you or let us know which language you speak and we will try to help by asking one of our parents who speaks your language to come along as an interpreter. Within the team we have French, Spanish and Ukrainian speakers and parents who speak a variety of other languages.

We have had experience of children with auditory impairment and we have used signs and visual aids to help aid communication together with sensory equipment and followed best practice by calling on speech therapists for support and guidance.

12. How will the early years setting prepare and support my child to join the early years setting, transfer to a new setting/school?

We have an induction system prior to joining the nursery and will transfer the observations we have made to any new setting to which your child moves.

13. How will the early years setting prepare and support my child to join the early years setting.

We will offer a home visit so that we can meet you and your child in your own home environment and see at first hand the adjustments that might need to be made and put in place ahead of your child's start date. We will seek County advice and support if necessary and available. We have an open ended settling-in policy and you will be invited to come along with your child to spend as long as you like settling them in. There will be paperwork to complete so that we have a full picture of your child's needs and we will work together with you to help your child settle happily with us.

14. How will the early years setting prepare and support my child to transfer to a new setting?

We would prepare a liaison document for the new setting and contact them to talk to them and help them to prepare for the transition by making them aware of the strategies that we have put in place and any adjustments that we have made to help your child. We would also send a copy of our most recent report. We would reassure your child and encourage them to talk about their new setting in a positive way and encourage them to take their special Nursery

School Book that our parents compile for their child to share with their new friends and teachers.

15. How will the early years setting prepare and support my child to transfer to school?

We have a good rapport with local schools and the teachers usually come and see us or phone us to talk about children joining their school. We let you know when they are coming and we ask for your permission to share information with them. Provided you are happy for us to do this, we discuss any strategies that we have found helpful and ideas which we think will help their transition. Should the new school not get in touch, we contact them. With your permission, we give them your child's final report which we complete in June. During the Summer Term, your child will be invited to go to Storytime sessions at their new school to meet their teachers and the children who will be in their class. We let you know who will be in the same class and encourage you to have playdates together over the summer holiday. Your key worker will be talking to your child about starting school, reading them stories on the subject about starting school and allaying any fears that they might have. We give them strategies to develop their confidence to interact with their peers and join in positively with the wider school community. We offer you as parents and carers support too and hold a Evenings with Janet during the course of the year discussing any areas of Early Years you would like to discuss and giving you helpful advice on preparing your child for school.

16. How are the early years setting's resources allocated and matched to children's special educational needs?

We have a myriad of resources and how they are allocated is dependent on each individual child's needs.

Should we need more resources we can ask the specialist early years' team for support and access the toy library.

17. How is the decision made about what type and how much support my child will receive?

The decision will be a team effort with parental involvement. The IEP is developed, monitored and regularly reviewed by the key worker and parents with help being sought by outside agencies if and when necessary.

The decision about what type and how much support your child will receive will be based on their perceived level of need. We will observe your child within the setting and discuss our findings with you, together with your keyworker and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator SENCO and we will put forward suggestions for the way ahead. If the level of need is deemed great, we will seek advice and support from the support services. Maybe an IEP will be put in place and the impact of the support will be judged by the progress made by your child during the time the support is available. The progress will be monitored and next steps will be agreed. If the next steps are achieved by implementing the IEP, the support will be deemed to have been successful.

18. How are parents involved in the early years setting? How can I be involved?

Parents are invited to contribute to the life of the nursery in many ways as set out in our policy statements.

We love parents to join in. You can be involved in many ways with the nursery and your involvement is always welcomed. We ask for your suggestions for improvement on a regular basis and implement your ideas whenever possible. We encourage you to come and read stories and to share any talents that you might have with the children: these might be musical, creative, a foreign language, craft, sport, cookery, Internet skills or Design Technology. Some parents come on a regular basis, others as a one off visit. We invite you to join us on our walks and outings. We invite you to contribute to the menu each term and make suggestions for interesting outings. We ask you to encourage your child to bring in objects that support our weekly theme that your child can talk about and share with us. We invite you to help look after our garden by the doctors' surgery in Lindfield and come along to our annual garden make-over.

19. Who can I contact for further information?

Within the nursery, you can speak to Christina Franks, Caroline Finney or Janet Irwin, the owner.

For outside agencies:-

West Sussex: The Children and Family Information Service: 01243 777807.

To access help and support for your child, you can either do so yourself by making a parental referral or you can go through the nursery.

Janet Irwin or Christina Franks would be the point of contact if you were considering whether or not your child should join The Acorns and they are both SENCO co-ordinators. They can be contacted on 01444 455081 or by email: theacorns@janetirwin.com. Your key worker would be your first point of contact at The Acorns if you wanted to discuss any aspect of your child's development. All the Acorns team have input and Janet Irwin, or Christina Franks would be able to give an overview if you were worried. You as a parent are the main educator for your child and your input is invaluable. The Children and Family Information Services for West Sussex would be able to provide you with information and advice. You will find the local authorities Local Offer on the West Sussex website.

Janet Irwin Sept 2014

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