



## Acorn Playgroup and Pre-School

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### Early Years Offer

**This Offer** is designed to give an overview of how we meet the requirements of any child who is identified with special educational needs, whether this is known before or after starting at Acorn Playgroup and Pre-School. However, we would encourage you to contact us if you would like more information or to discuss any concerns you might have so that we can identify how we could meet your child's needs.

We pride ourselves on our most recent Outstanding Ofsted report (Oct 13) which states "the long established and well qualified team have an extremely strong commitment to continually improving the opportunities for children in their care" and "children's individual needs are quickly identified and exceptionally well met". We would recommend that you read this report which is available on our website.

#### **1. How will Acorn know if my child needs extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs?**

Every child at Acorn is supported by a nominated Key Person who is responsible for the learning and development for each of their Key Children, achieved through nurturing and developing a relationship with your child and yourself.

When your child first joins our setting their Key Person carries out an initial assessment which is a 'snap shot' of their current development stage in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This assessment combined with any information you have provided enables each Key Person to plan activities that help your child to develop through the EYFS framework. This cycle of observing, assessing, planning and reviewing is constant throughout your child's time at Acorn.

If during this process we identify a delay in your child's learning and development, we would discuss this with you and identify additional support we think would help support your child. This additional support is detailed in a Learning Support Plan. If through our observation process we find that despite this additional support your child's learning and development is still delayed, we would ask your permission to seek advice and support from outside agencies on how to provide the best care and educational opportunities for your child. This support might be provided by other professionals such as health visitors, speech and language therapists, early year's specialists, educational psychologists or other health care specialists.

If you think your child has special educational needs before joining our setting, simply discuss any concerns you might have with Amanda Birtles our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), who will work with you to put support in place to make the transition to Acorn as easy as possible for your child.

Amanda will work closely with you and your child's Key Person to continually assess and review your child's development and progress through the EYFS framework. This assessment and review is a continual two way process between you, us and any other professionals involved.

## **2. How will the Acorn staff support my child?**

Amanda Birtles our SENCO has a wide range of experience helping children with different needs. Amanda works with Linda McLellan who was a Registered Nurse for 25 years and supports children with any health issues as well as helping to support children with special needs. Our SENCO will work with you to ensure you are involved in your child's development whilst at our setting.

Your child's Key Person will work closely with you and your child to ensure that they are happy and settled and therefore progressing with their development.

All members of staff are regularly briefed about Learning Support Plans that are in place for children this ensures everyone can help meet your child's changing needs.

## **3. How will I know how my child is doing?**

We will give you daily feedback on your child's progress either verbally or in the form of a Contact Book. We review each child's progress in their learning journals, at parent evenings, in their 2 year check, during half term reviews and when we prepare for meetings with other professionals involved in supporting your child. The regularity of formal meetings between yourself and staff involved will depend on your child's level of need.

Regardless of what methods of feedback are in place, nothing is better than having an informal chat at the beginning or end of each day, so please always speak to us about any concerns or updates you may have.

## **4. How will the learning and development provision be matched to my child's needs?**

Our continual observation, assessment, planning and reviewing enables us to plan each child's learning and development in our provision. We will incorporate any advice from other professionals as well as our own experience to support your child's particular needs and we will ensure training is accessed for staff, where possible, to support your child's learning.

## **5. What support will there be for my child's overall wellbeing?**

Acorn has a firm emphasis on providing a caring, safe and secure environment for all our children and this is achieved by nurturing a relationship with every child, consistent routines as well as understanding and respect for each other. Acorn staff members are sensitive to the needs of all children in our care and have a positive approach to their individual learning and development.

Our setting's Behaviour Management policy details how we support children's behaviour on a daily basis, however, when a child needs specific help and support with their behaviour we work closely with their parents to develop strategies to support and enhance their child's positive behaviour. If specialist help is needed to manage behaviour we can request the support of our Inclusion Development Officer provided by the local authority.

If your child has any specific medical needs, these can be discussed with Linda McLellan who will be able to identify any staff training needs and a Health Care Plan will be agreed. If you already have other professionals involved, we can liaise with them to ensure that we support all areas of your child's development and of course, take advice from you.

## **6. What expertise and specialist services are available at or accessed by Acorn?**

Amanda Birtles has six year's experience in the roles of SENCO and Behaviour support. She has experience supporting children on the autistic spectrum, delivering speech and language programmes and working with children who display 'challenging behaviour'.

Linda McLellan has twenty five years of nursing experience working as a staff nurse at the Royal Free and Westminster Hospital for 3 years. She has also worked with families as a community nurse for seventeen years and within that time worked on secondment with the McMillan team supporting families in their home.

We have close links with both our local Children Centres and work closely with a wide range of other professionals; Inclusion Development Officer, Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapist, Special Needs Health visitors, Autism Advisory Teachers, Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, etc.

We have developed a good relationship with all our local feeder schools this enables us to make the transition from pre-school to primary school much easier for your child.

## **7. What training and/or experience to Acorn staff have in supporting children with SEND?**

Each member of staff at Acorn has had experience of supporting children with special needs; they are all trained in the use of Makaton signs and symbols to assist basic communication with all the children. When a child needs additional signing or symbols for communication we have worked with Speech and Language therapists to provide these to ensure continuity of support from everyone involved. We have regular staff meetings during which we share information about the needs of individual children's and strategies that have been developed to meet them.

Amanda regularly attends workshops and training in order to ensure that her SEN knowledge is up to date.

## **8. How will my child be included in activities outside the setting?**

Your child will be included in all activities outside the setting. However, if you are unhappy about your child joining in with a particular activity you would be welcome to come along as a parent helper.

Risk assessments are carried out for all activities both inside and outside the setting.

## **9. How will I be involved in discussions about and planning for my child's learning and development?**

Your child's Key Person, SENCO and Manager will be happy to discuss your child's learning and development but we may need to organise a mutually convenient time to do so. When developing your child's Learning Support Plan you will be included in agreeing outcomes. We will always ask your Parental Consent before we invite other professionals (Speech and Language therapists etc) to assess your child at Acorn. When visits take place, we endeavour to organise a meeting at the end for a brief discussion and feedback, if this is not possible, copy reports will always be given to you. Every term our Manager sends out a Newsletter informing Parents of what planning topics we will cover and we send out a more detailed communication every fortnight giving parents information on specific activities in our planning.

#### **10. How accessible is Acorn's building/environment?**

Parking is available directly outside Acorn's building with an access ramp. Our environment is very accessible and meets the current disability regulations.

We have no internal steps and have a disabled toilet and sink accessible at all times. Our outside play area is on the same level as the main classroom as is our 'wood bark' play area. Our equipment and toys are all at child height.

#### **11. How will Acorn prepare and support my child with transitions between home, playgroup/pre-school and primary school?**

Prior to coming to Acorn you can share our 'My Acorn' book with your child, this explains what they will be doing and shows pictures of the staff and environment and helps children to prepare for the change. You will be invited to attend several taster sessions during which your child can become familiar with our staff, the other children and their new environment. During these sessions your child's Key Person/Manager and our SENCO will discuss your child's needs and strategies will be agreed to ease the transition for them and you. If necessary, a Health Care Plan will be completed at this stage. During the first few weeks of your child joining Acorn regular feedback will be given to you about how your child is settling in and a Settling In report provided at the end of your child's first half-term.

If your child receives care from another playgroup or childminder, with your permission, we will share progress with them by sharing learning journals each term.

When it is time for your child to leave us and start nursery or primary school we will contact their new setting and invite them to visit your child at Acorn. During this visit your child's Key Person and our SENCO will discuss your child's development and needs to assist their next transition. We often use transition books, similar to our 'My Acorn' book to help familiarise your child with their new setting. When appropriate we encourage the new setting to provide additional settling in visits to meet the child's needs.

#### **12. How will Acorn's resources be used to support my child's special educational needs?**

Acorn has a high staff/child ratio which enables us to give lots of support to our children. We are a very inclusive setting using both our experience and resources to support children's learning and development. For example, we use visual timetables to help children to prepare for change during their session; we use Makaton symbols to aid communication and use specific toys to help develop turn taking, sharing, time management skills as well as language development.

Acorn's equipment and toys are age and stage appropriate and moveable which makes them accessible. If we need specific equipment, we will endeavour to borrow it.

#### **13. Who can I contact for further information about the Early Years Offer in Acorn?**

Tina Soderberg, Manager, 01438 840132 [acornwelwyn@gmail.com](mailto:acornwelwyn@gmail.com)

Amanda Birtles, SENCO, 01438 840132 [acornwelwyn@gmail.com](mailto:acornwelwyn@gmail.com)

For further information on the local authority's Local Offer of service and provision for children with special educational needs and disability go to [www.hertsdirect.org/localoffer](http://www.hertsdirect.org/localoffer)