

ACORNS NURSERY'S APPROACH TO SUPPORTING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

Below are answers to the most frequently asked questions about our approach to understanding your child's needs and, should they need additional support, how they will be identified and actioned.

How does Acorns Nursery know if a child needs extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs?

When you visit us for the first time we will share what you can expect at Acorns. As your child's first educator, we will ask about your child's experiences and whether you are concerned about their development. As part of the registration process, you will complete an 'All About Me' form specifically about your child and what is important to them.

We will ask to read your child's Red Book to get us up to speed with your child's milestones so far. We strive to capture their developmental starting points in their first two weeks. Children are allocated a key person who will support your child as they settle into nursery life. The key person will become a familiar figure, accessible and available to you regarding all aspects of your child's personal, social, emotional and physical development.

All children have a formal development check between the ages of two and three years, known as the Two Year Check. This is a short written summary of their development in three prime areas of learning, personal, social and emotional, communication and language and physical.

If you have a concern about your child's development, or if they have been diagnosed with an inclusion requirement, an initial meeting will be set up with the Special Education Needs and Disabilities Co-Ordinator (SENCO) to discuss their requirements prior to starting. This enables us to liaise with the relevant professionals or outside agencies and get support in place, if required.

If you have any concerns about your child's development you can discuss this in private with your child's key person. If your child's key person has identified a possible individual need they will discuss the matter with you and plan together to support your child's learning development.

Should you be unhappy with how the concerns are being managed or dissatisfied with the progress your child is making, you should speak to our trained SENCO; who can offer advice and support.

How will Acorns Nursery staff support my child?

During your child's settling-in sessions at Acorns Nursery, you and your child will be introduced to your child's key person and the staff team. You will have the opportunity to accompany your child on at least two visits to help settle them and develop a relationship with the key person.

We carry out regular observational assessments of all children in our care. These are linked to ages and stages of development as set out in Development Matters. This document helps practitioners identify individual needs of the children, their next steps for learning, and how to plan suitable experiences for each child. The observations are gathered using a variety of methods i.e. written, photographs and examples of work. These are cross-referenced against the child's individual progress overview in a Learning Journal, on an ongoing basis.

If your child appears to need more support, the SENCO will carry out specific assessments and write an Individual Support Plan (ISP) in conjunction with the key person. Reports identifying your child's individual needs from healthcare professionals such as Health Visitors, Speech & Language Therapists (SALT) may be used to identify the next steps for learning. All of these will be shared with you formally at meetings, held approximately on a six-week basis or more frequently if required, where common interests and goals are discussed and agreed.

If your child makes limited progress towards the targets set we might request an Education, Health and Care Assessment (EHCA). This is a full investigation of your child's educational needs and is the first step to getting an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) all of which will enable your child to have the opportunity to reach his/her full potential.

We are keen to have a close and meaningful partnership with you, by providing important information and agreeing the best strategies to support your child. Children's Learning Journals are accessible at all times and are reviewed formally at six-monthly parents' evenings.

The SENCO will explain how:

- children's individual needs can be met
- inclusion provision is co-ordinated
- parents will be kept up to date and supported, and
- other professionals such as the Graduated Response Early Years Team at Surrey County Council, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and other health services will be engaged.

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

The 'All About Me' and starting points assessment are crucial in helping us to understand where your child is developmentally when they join Acorns. This ensures that we can plan for each individual child so that they get the very best start on their journey into learning.

The curriculum we follow at Acorns is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It sets standards for the learning, development and care of your child from birth to 5 years old across seven areas of learning. Our objective is to create opportunities for children to test, rehearse, practice, critically challenge, measure and explore a wide range of developmentally based activities in a safe and caring environment. All of which will be introduced at the pace which best meets each child.

We appreciate that from time to time we need to purchase specialist equipment and resources for a child and will discuss this with the key person and you in advance.

We encourage parent participation in our curriculum which can be as simple as sharing something of interest from home. We welcome all contributions that you might like to make to your child's learning journey and will share with you how this can be done.

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

From the outset, it is important that we establish a shared level of expectation offering an 'open door' approach so that you feel confident and secure to seek advice, help and support should you need it.

We encourage practitioners and the key person to develop a clear communication approach with you through: daily conversations when children are brought or collected from nursery, parents' evenings, newsletters, e-mails and via our website and social media. We can agree a convenient and appropriate form of communication with you which may be verbal, written, e-mail or text.

Children's Learning Journals and planned next steps in learning are shared with you at your request. At termly parents' evenings we will discuss your child's interests, friendship groups, progress and any concerns. The SENCO and key person are very happy to offer ideas and explore ways to support your child's needs; which can be mirrored and extended at nursery. We are keen to work collaboratively with all external agencies and professionals; and will adopt the appropriate practices.

What support will there be for my child's overall well being?

We are mindful that the circumstances and changes children experience throughout their early years may impact on their wellbeing. Wellbeing refers to feeling at ease, being spontaneous and free from emotional tension and is crucial to secure 'mental health'. We achieve this by actively listening and observing children at play, engaging in their daily routines and interactions and being alert to any increase in stress levels and anxieties.

We plan how the environment 'feels' and how it is set out, this includes places where children can go to rest and have quiet times. It is paramount that the nursery feels calm and comfortable so that children can learn well.

Practitioners and their key person will feature strongly in your child's day to day life. At Acorns we recognise that children will learn from those around them, therefore, practitioners as trusted adults strive to model respectful and caring behaviours and responses.

What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the nursery?

We will always explore, discuss and seek your permission before contacting any outside agencies. Here are the early years services we regularly access for advice and guidance:

- Health Visiting Team
- Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)
- Portage support (significant developmental or other needs for children under 40 months)
- Educational Psychologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physiotherapist

There are other specialist services available in Surrey who we are happy to engage with on a needs basis; please see the Surrey SEND Local Offer webpage.

At Acorns Nursery all staff have early years qualifications and experience of working with children within the 0 - 5 age range. As a team we regularly reflect on our practice, undertake individual supervision and annual appraisals to identify continued professional development.

What training are the staff supporting children with SEND had or are having?

Our SENCO continues to embark on a broad range of training covering a variety of special educational need topics. The SENCO attends termly meetings to keep her SEND knowledge and understanding up to date and to share good practice with other SENCOs. Further courses such as behaviour management, equality, diversity and inclusion and speech and language have been attended by many other staff within the nursery.

How will my child be included in activities outside the nursery including outings and trips?

Regular woodland walks and visits to the church run throughout the year. We anticipate involving all children in these activities and will access equipment and support to do so. We complete routine risk assessments of the journey to and from the woods/church and within the visiting area. Additional staff and equipment would be accessed to enable any child to join the excursion.

How accessible is the nursery environment?

The nursery is located in a bright and airy village hall with ground level access. We are confident that reasonable adjustment such as fitting threshold ramps, will make the nursery widely assessible to all. In addition, a disabled toilet is available within the village hall.

We welcome families from all cultures and children who have English as an additional language. Children's home languages will be recognised, valued and supported. Appropriate translators will be sought if required.

How will Acorns prepare and support my child to join the nursery, transfer to a new setting or the next stage of education and life?

We offer all new families to Acorns settling in sessions prior to starting. These generally take place in the last week of term, prior to starting, followed by gradual settling in during the first 2 weeks of joining. We do not limit the number sessions you can attend, as each child may have different experiences and needs. They normally last 1-1.5 hours. These sessions are designed to allow your child to familiarise themselves with the environment and to build relationships with key members of staff and their new friends. Photo books or a 'special box', containing familiar objects, can be brought to nursery to support this challenging transition.

Every child is assigned a key person and their role will be to form a relationship of trust and support with you and your child. Discussions regarding specific care needs, interests and involvement of other agencies will take place at this time. In addition, we would arrange to meet any healthcare professionals involved in order to support your child's transition into the nursery. We may identify additional training for staff related to your child's needs. We also seek to ensure that we, you and the staff team, agree a consistent approach to give continuity of care between home and nursery.

If your child is transitioning to school or moving to a new setting we will prepare an end of year/ transition summary. Your child's key person and SENCO will arrange a transition meeting with the new setting and any other professionals that have been involved in your child's care. These meetings are designed to ease the transition and to ensure the care plan and/or ISP have been shared, with parental

consent, prior to moving; enabling all relevant professionals to discuss your child's emotional well-being, developmental needs and share strategies that have been successful.

How are the nursery's resources allocated and matched to children's special educational needs?

The nursery has a wide range of resources and plans its budget to ensure all children have access to appropriate resources. If necessary the nursery will endeavour to access Inclusion or Discretionary Funding to enable the employment of additional staff.

All specialist resources will only be sought after consultation with you and involved agencies. We will ensure that parents are aware of all funding opportunities, such as Early Years Pupil Premium, to help us access specialist resources and training to meet individual children's needs.

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

At Acorns, dialogue between you and the nursery regarding your child's development is open, on-going and with your full knowledge. We continue to monitor your child's needs through key person observations which will be discussed with you and the SENCO. Observational assessments linked to the EYFS and knowledge of child development will be used to identify what support is required. Extra support will be put in place, if necessary, with the aim of enabling your child to become independent within the environment.

The inclusion funding process will identify the level of need based on evidence we submit to a panel at Surrey, along with other observations from professionals working with your child. The next steps will be shared with you, your child's keyperson and the SENCO at review meetings. These will include ideas and advice on how you and the nursery can continue to support your child.

How are parents involved in the nursery? How can I be involved?

Parents are welcome to involve themselves in numerous ways; by volunteering to be part of the committee in an official capacity or as a fundraiser. Several meetings are held each year where input is welcome. Email and regular newsletters encourage new ideas as well as a 'message box' in reception for comments and messages.

Who can I contact for further information?

Our website contains a wealth of information including all our contact details

The initial point of contact at Acorn Nursery is the Manager – Beatty Currier who can be reached on 01483 860723 between 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday or by email at acornsnurseryleader@gmail.com.

Contact details of current committee members can be found in the reception.