Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Childcare Inspection Report on

Acorns Playgroup

The Community Church Centre
15 Prices Lane
Rhosddu
LL11 2NB



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Description of the service

Acorns playgroup is registered to care for 26 children between 2, 1/2 and 4 years of age and operates from the Community Church premises, Rhosddu, Wrexham. The responsible individuals are Mary Arton and Angela Pritchett. The person in charge is Susanna Crossley. The service operates Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9.15am – 11.45am during term time only. The playgroup runs a funded Early Entitlement provision for eligible three year olds. English is the main language of communication.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Children are at the heart of this service and experience warm, attentive and stimulating care. Their well being and self confidence is enhanced by gentle, professional and well qualified staff. The environment is rich with activities that motivate children and help them acquire a range of skills. Leaders drive and sustain improvement and manage staff effectively.

2. Improvements

Some improvements have been made to the outdoor play area, for example a mud kitchen with enhanced water play equipment.

3. Requirements and recommendations

Recommendations are made in relation to fire drills, the outdoor area and specific training for staff to meet the needs of the diverse cultures of the children attending the service.

1. Well-being

Summary

Most children are secure, relaxed, happy and motivated and enjoy attending the service. They are beginning to know the routines, have good relationships with the staff and are learning to communicate their needs and feelings. Children have a voice and make choices. They have access to a good variety of engaging experiences which develop a range of skills through play and they are learning to become independent.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children are encouraged to speak and communicate their needs.

We saw children were encouraged to express themselves during their play and learning by making choices and decisions from a good variety of interesting activities. Children's requests were listened to. For example, children who wanted more time outdoors for free play could do so; others who did not want to join in at snack time could play instead. Some children who were new to the service and could not speak or understand the language were understood by staff and their choices were met by interpretation of their behaviours. All attempts at communication were valued.

Children have a voice and express themselves clearly and most make choices confidently.

1.2 To what extent do children feel safe, happy and valued?

Most children feel safe, happy and valued.

With a few exceptions children were happy and had settled well despite this being the start of term. We saw contented and confident children who were eager to share their experiences of the activities and of their home lives with their new friends and staff. Three children were given cuddles and constant attention as they appeared anxious at being separated from their parents. For example, when three children became distressed and they clearly needed their parents this was respected and their parents were telephoned. They were then reassured, happy to stay and engage in playing with their parents present. Other children were full of smiles, beginning to become familiar with the routine and were happy to stay for the full session.

Routines and bonds of affection are beginning to be established which enables children to feel secure, happy and comfortable.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Overall children interact well with each other and the staff.

Children are becoming sensitive to the emotions of others and are becoming self disciplined. We saw two children negotiating independently about a toy tractor which both wanted. Children were self aware and expressed their needs appropriately and politely such as asking for more of one type of their favourite fruit at snack time.

Children learn valuable social skills.

1.4 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Most children enjoy their time at the service.

Children had positive attitudes to new experiences indoor and outside and maintained an interest in independent tasks. We saw children had great fun in the Rhosduu pre-school outdoor learning environment which they had access to on some days. They rode on twin trikes, built towers out of blocks and had a sense of achievement as they were given additional responsibilities including tidying up or giving out plates and cups for snack. A child displayed a sense of pride and was thrilled as she interacted with a member of staff by bursting into song which played gently in the background singing I'm a little teapot out loud as they both made shapes out of dough. Children had a sense of belonging as they fetched their coats and bags at home time from their individual pegs.

Children are highly active and curious learners and enjoy a wealth of experiences.

1.5 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?

Children develop well, and learn skills to be independent.

Children had an excellent range of activities and play and learning areas to choose from both inside and outside. Children were motivated and were able to concentrate for extensive periods, for example children used the various items alongside the sand, water, and mud kitchen areas and enjoyed showing what they had made to others. Children went to the toilet independently or with support if needed. Some knew how to wash their hands effectively and during snack they poured their own drinks. Structured times such as registration and circle time were good fun where children could choose a book to be read to them, they also learned Welsh words phrases and songs.

Children learn many skills through play and develop well and are becoming independent.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Staff keep children safe and healthy in a caring atmosphere. They are good role models and manage interactions consistently using positive strategies. Staff are capable and professional, meeting the individual needs of the children. They promote children's learning through play and providing stimulating activities

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff keep children safe and healthy.

Staff understood and implemented policies and procedures for the service. We spoke to staff members and found they knew the process to follow should they have concerns about a child. Training certificates evidenced they had completed safeguarding training. All staff had current First Aid qualifications and accident and incident forms showed they were dealt with appropriately and had been signed by parents.

We saw a healthy snack of mixed fresh fruit was hygienically prepared in line with the service's healthy food and drink policy with milk or water to drink. The menu confirmed healthy food is consistently provided to children. We saw the service was part of the Designed to Smile campaign and had embedded the routines of the oral health improvement by encouraging children to brush their teeth toward the end of the session.

Records and discussion showed that emergency evacuation drills had been carried out 3 times a year, the last drill being the 10 May 2017. It is recommended that these are practiced more frequently given the young age of the children so that all children including new starters have the opportunity to experience the procedure.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and promote healthy lifestyles effectively.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

Staff manage interactions successfully using positive strategies; however, they need additional and specific behaviour management training to meet the needs of the diverse cultural backgrounds of some children who attend the service.

Overall, staff promoted positive behaviour well through celebrating good behaviour. We saw staff consistently speaking to children in a caring, considerate manner. They praised children often, for example for sharing, being kind to each other and helping to tidy away toys. They used music and singing to good effect, helping children to learn the routines for the morning. Staff showed respect for children's views and managed behaviour according to the policy in place. However, there has been a large increase in cultural diversity, the service currently caters for children of up to 7 languages, as a consequence we did see some extreme unwanted behaviour and heard a staff member responding by raising their

voice and giving a long explanation to a child about the consequences of throwing toys. The child did not understand the language or modelling of acceptable behaviour, we recommended that leaders identify and employ an interpretation service if possible and arrange specific training for staff.

Overall staff manage children's interactions well, helping the children to be co operative and learn social skills.

2.3 How well do practitioners promote children's play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?

Caring and capable staff promote children's learning and development, providing a variety of interesting experiences inside and outdoors.

Staff chatted happily with the children, creating a relaxed atmosphere and helping the children to engage with activities. We read activity plans which showed staff understood the importance of play for the age range of children, for example, interesting learning experiences were planned across all seven areas of learning with clearly defined learning intentions. We saw adult focussed activities as well as plenty of opportunities for child initiated play. We saw a strong commitment to promoting physical play, children had a range of opportunities to use, for example the outdoor Early Years areas of the local school, the large hall of the service to ride scooters trikes, climbing frame, slide, and the small ~~outdoor area~~outdoor area was available for children to freely access and use the new mud kitchen and water play area.

Staff provided a language rich environment with many opportunities to use and experience the Welsh language. For example, children answered the register in Welsh, sang Welsh songs and were encouraged to say please and thank you in Welsh. It was evident that staff consistently promoted the Welsh language and ensured it was embedded into the children's daily routine.

We saw staff recorded appropriate observations on children's progress and development. We viewed children's records which confirmed observations were relevant and recorded regularly. This enabled staff to track children's progress and developmental milestones, plan for next steps in learning and meet their individual needs.

Staff successfully promote children's all round development and ensure they consistently meet children's individual needs.

3. _Environment

Summary

Leaders provide a secure and safe environment and written risk assessments ensure that staff are aware of how to keep children safe. Leaders ensure children are well supervised both indoors and outside by competent staff. The environment is suitable and the quality and variety of resources are very good.

Our findings

3.1 How well do leaders ensure the safety of the environment?

Leaders ensure the environment is safe and secure.

We saw the premises were securely locked once all parents had handed their children over to staff. Parents stayed with their children in the main hall until staff came from the playroom to take over their care. Visitors were required to sign the visitor book. All areas inside and outside were safe and there were risk assessments evidencing that staff knew what the potential risks were and how to manage them. For example, children wore bright tabards and used a daisy chain for the short walk to the school outdoor play area. The gates to the areas were bolted and staff constantly supervised the children and encouraged them to carry out their activities safely.

All risk assessments had been recently reviewed and electrical equipment had been tested for safety.

Leaders adhere to the service's health and safety policies and procedures and effectively ensure the environment is safe for children.

3.2 How well do leaders ensure the suitability of the environment?

3.2

Leaders ensure the environment is welcoming, friendly and suitable for the ages of the children attending.

Leaders ensured there was ample play space. Areas of play were well set out at child height for children to access with ease. Good quality wooden tables and chairs and child sized toilets and wash basins enabled children to use them independently. The two outdoor play spaces and large hall were used effectively for children to benefit from a variety of physical play and exercise. Children could also freely access the small outdoor area directly outside the small playroom, we recommended that this area is kept free from weeds and that the uneven area by the door is levelled to make it more attractive and free from potential hazards.

Leaders ensure children are cared for in a child centred environment which offer rich play opportunities

3.3 How well do leaders ensure the quality of resources and equipment?

Leaders provide children with furniture, resources and equipment that is varied, age appropriate, clean and of good quality.

We saw leaders had provided children with access to good quality, age appropriate play and learning resources. Toys were in sufficient quantity to ensure children had plenty of choice. Resources were stimulating and encouraged children to follow their own interests and furniture was appropriately sized. All toys and games were clean, of suitable design and condition and were well maintained.

Leaders ensure resources are developmentally appropriate and of good quality.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

Leaders are highly committed, have a clear vision for the service and have suitable systems in place for the smooth running of the service. Self evaluation is effective and improvements are made considering all involved. Staff are well managed and supported which results in sustained improvement and good outcomes for children.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

Leaders have a clear vision for the service, which is shared with parents.

Leaders have a sense of purpose and high expectations to promote improvement and good outcomes for children. For example, staff told us they enjoyed working at the service, leaders were approachable and listened to their ideas. This created a positive ethos whereby staff and leaders worked together and felt valued. We saw consistent child care practice and staff worked well as a team. There was a clear, statement of purpose. All records were well organised, policies and procedures had been recently reviewed and reflected the service provided.

Leadership is strong and has a clear sense of purpose which results in good outcomes for children.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

Leaders promote a positive culture of self evaluation.

Leaders and staff knew their service well and promoted a positive culture of continuous self evaluation and improvement. The services; annual review contained relevant information about the service including areas of good practice and plans for improvement. Some areas for improvement had been acted upon, such as creating a mud kitchen with plans for a bug hotel in the near future.

Leaders know the service well. Strengths and areas for development are recognised and action taken to maintain high standards and improve practice.

4.3 How effective is the management of practitioners, staff and other resources?

Leaders have systems in place for managing staff and resources.

Staff files contained all of the required documentation and evidenced staff had up to date Disclosure and Barring Safety clearances, relevant experience and qualifications. Annual

appraisals and supervision of staff had taken place. Leaders told us that there is a supportive committee and ensure there are sufficient funds for purchasing new resources.

Leaders have effective systems in place for managing recruitment, identifying training needs and working with staff to improve performance.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

Leaders keep parents informed about the service and have developed links and partnerships with them and other agencies.

Leaders and staff were approachable and communicated openly with parents at the beginning and end of the session. Three parents were telephoned by staff when their children who were new or unwell were distressed and they needed to return to the service to stay with their child or decide to leave the session early. Parents welcomed this and felt confident staff had made the right judgements.

Firm links had been established with the Early Education advisory teachers , the Family Information service and the Designed to Smile campaign. Close links with the school ensured a smooth transition between the service and school.

Leaders ensure that partnerships with parents, the school and others benefit the children and have positive outcomes for them and their families.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Areas of non compliance identified at this inspection

None

5.3 Recommendations for improvement

- To complete fire drills more regularly
- to identify and employ an interpretation service if possible and arrange specific training for staff, and
- the small outdoor area directly outside the small playroom, is kept free from weeds and that the uneven area by the door is levelled to make the area more attractive and free from potential hazards.

6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full, unannounced inspection undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. One inspector visited the service on Tuesday 26 September 2017 for approximately four hours.

We:

- Inspected a sample of documents and policies;
- observed practices and completed observations using the SOFI 2 tool to capture evidence of children's engagement and the care being provided by staff:
- we spoke to the children, three parents, staff, person in charge and one of the responsible individuals,
- discussed our findings with the person in charge and one of the responsible individuals and,
- inspected the areas used.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website www.cssiw.org.uk

7.

7. About the service

Type of care provided	**Childrens Day Care** **Sessional Day Care**
Responsible Individual	**Mary Arton** **Angela Pritchett**
Person in charge	**Susanna Crossley**
Registered maximum number of places	**26**
Age range of children	**2 and a half – 4 years**
Opening hours	**9.15 – 11.45 Monday to Thursday during term time**
Operating Language of the service	**English**
Date of previous CSSIW inspection	**1 October 2014**
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	**26 September 2017**
Is this a Flying Start service?	**No**
Is early year's education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	**Yes**
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	**No**
Additional Information: This is a service that does not provide an 'Active offer' of the Welsh language. this is because the service is situated in a primarily English speaking area and the provider does not currently intend to offer or promote a Welsh language service.	

~~No noncompliance records found in Open status.~~