Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Baby Acorns

42 Partridge Road, Roath, Cardiff, CF24 3QX

02920472246

www.acornsnurseries.co.uk

The inspection visits for this service took place between 14/08/2026 and 17/08/2026

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Service Information:

Operated by:	Acorns Nurseries Ltd
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	55
Main language(s):	English
Flying Start service:	No
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	No
Promotion of Welsh language and culture:	The provider is not promoting the Welsh language and culture needs of people, and this requires improvement.

Ratings:

Well-being	Good
Care & Development	Good
Environment	Good
Leadership & Management	Good

Summary:

Overall, children experience good outcomes for their well-being. They confidently make choices, express their views and form positive relationships. Children feel safe, happy and valued, enjoy a good range of play and learning experiences, and develop confidence and independence. As a result, children make good progress and thrive within the nursery.

Staff provide caring, responsive and child-centred support. They promote children's health, emotional well-being and development successfully through nurturing interactions, effective monitoring and a good understanding of individual needs. Children benefit from positive relationships with staff who know them well and support them to make progress in their learning and development.

Leaders provide a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment that supports children's play, learning and development. Children benefit from clean, well-maintained indoor and outdoor spaces,

access to a broad range of quality resources and equipment, and opportunities to explore, investigate and develop new skills. Leaders promote children's safety, well-being and independence effectively. However, leaders' arrangements for assessing the impact of environmental risks on children and taking proportionate action to reduce these risks require strengthening.

Leaders provide clear direction and promote a positive culture focused on children's well-being, learning and development. They manage staff and resources effectively, support continuous improvement and maintain positive partnerships with families. However, governance arrangements require strengthening to ensure significant incidents are appropriately escalated, monitored and communicated.

Findings:

Well-being — Good

Children are encouraged to make choices and share their ideas throughout the day. They independently access resources, select activities that interest them and decide whether to participate in adult-led experiences. Children confidently express their preferences and interests, and staff respond positively to their suggestions. As a result, children know their views are valued and that they can help shape their own experiences. They show good levels of engagement in their chosen activities and maintain focus for extended periods.

Children are happy, confident and enjoy their time at the nursery. They arrive eagerly, separate from their parents and carers with ease, and settle quickly into familiar routines. Children feel safe, secure and valued because they have developed trusting relationships with staff. They confidently seek reassurance, comfort and support when needed, showing that they trust the adults who care for them. Children freely share their thoughts, ideas and experiences. For example, one child proudly explained, “I’m making dinner for my friends,” while leading their own role-play activity.

Children build positive relationships with their peers and form warm friendships. They play cooperatively, share resources and take turns appropriately for their age and stage of development. Children show kindness and consideration towards others and are beginning to understand different feelings and viewpoints. They willingly include others in their play and celebrate each other's achievements. During group experiences, children waited patiently for their turn to speak and responded respectfully to the contributions of others. When minor disagreements arose, children responded well to support from staff and increasingly found solutions together.

Children are enthusiastic learners who explore their environment with curiosity and confidence. They become deeply engaged in their play, develop their own ideas and persevere when faced with challenges. For example, children worked together to build large structures, testing different ideas and adapting their designs when things did not work as expected. They showed pride in their achievements and enthusiastically shared their successes with others.

Children develop independence well. They access resources independently and move confidently between activities and learning areas. Older children take responsibility for aspects of their daily routines, while younger children eagerly explore opportunities to learn new skills. Throughout the inspection, children were relaxed, engaged and clearly enjoying their experiences. Their laughter, conversations and active participation reflected how comfortable and confident they felt within the setting. As a result, children thrive in a nurturing environment where they are respected, valued and supported to develop their well-being, independence and overall development.

Care & Development — Good

Staff keep children safe and healthy through effective daily practices and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. They demonstrate appropriate safeguarding knowledge and understand the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about a child's welfare. Staff promote children's health through healthy eating, good hygiene routines and responsive care. They provide children with nutritious meals and snacks and ensure they meet children's dietary requirements. Staff encourage children to wash their hands before meals and support their personal care needs respectfully. They follow babies' individual feeding routines and complete regular sleep checks to promote their well-being. Staff monitor children closely throughout the day and respond appropriately when concerns arise. They report accidents promptly to parents and work closely with them to ensure medication is administered safely and in line with children's individual needs.

Staff manage interactions well and provide children with warm, nurturing and responsive care. They know children well and build positive relationships that help children feel secure and valued. Staff respond promptly when children need reassurance and consistently use kind and encouraging language. We saw staff comfort children when they became upset and sensitively support younger children during daily routines. For example, when a child became upset during an activity, a member of staff gently asked, *“What is the matter?"* and offered the child's comforter, helping them settle quickly. In the baby room, staff comforted an unsettled child by holding them on their knee, speaking calmly and providing engaging toys. Staff create a caring atmosphere throughout the nursery, helping children feel confident to seek support and reassurance when needed

Staff promote children's development and meet their individual needs effectively. They create a nurturing environment where children enjoy a broad range of engaging play and learning opportunities that reflect their interests, abilities and stages of development. Staff know children well and use observations, learning journeys, snapshots and individual next steps to monitor progress and plan future learning. They track children's progress electronically, enabling them to identify achievements and support continued development. Staff engage purposefully in children's play and use effective questioning to extend learning. During water play, staff encouraged communication and early mathematical skills by asking, *“What colour are the boats?"* and counting with children, *“One, two, three."* They promote children's confidence, communication skills, emotional understanding and independence through a range of meaningful experiences. Staff also work closely with parents and access additional support when required to help meet children's individual and additional learning needs.

Environment — Good

Overall, leaders provide children with a safe, clean and secure environment. They implement risk assessments for all areas of the nursery, including playrooms, outdoor areas and activities, and review these regularly to help identify and minimise risks to children. When leaders became aware of a potential risk associated with mealtime practices, they acted promptly to review procedures and implement appropriate measures to reduce risks to children. Leaders maintain appropriate systems to support children's safety and ensure the premises remain secure. Visitors sign in on arrival and leaders monitor access to the nursery. Leaders also maintain important health and safety arrangements, including fire safety systems, emergency lighting, gas servicing and electrical testing. The nursery recently experienced a pest infestation affecting some areas of the provision. Leaders acted promptly, implementing a comprehensive programme of deep cleaning, enhanced monitoring and pest control measures. They worked closely with Environmental Health and pest control professionals, who confirmed the infestation had been resolved. During the inspection, we found the nursery to be very clean, well maintained and free from evidence of active pest activity. Although leaders took action to address the issue, outcomes for children require improvement as leaders potentially exposed them to unnecessary environmental risks while eradication measures were ongoing and the nursery remained open. We expect the provider to take action to strengthen arrangements for identifying, assessing and managing environmental risks in a timely manner.

Leaders provide children with a welcoming and stimulating environment that supports their play, learning and development. They organise the nursery from a child's perspective and make effective use of available space to encourage children's independence and choice. Leaders provide dedicated age-appropriate rooms, comfortable sleep areas and a range of indoor and outdoor learning opportunities. They create an environment where children can move confidently between activities and access experiences that match their interests and developmental needs. Leaders also provide an outdoor area that encourages exploration, physical activity and imaginative play. They offer opportunities for children to use the beach hut, planting area and construction zone, helping them to investigate, experiment and develop new skills through play.

Leaders provide children with a wide range of good-quality resources and equipment that support their play, learning and development. They organise resources carefully so children can access them independently and make choices about their play. Leaders provide construction materials, dressing-up clothes, vehicles, puzzles, sensory resources and interactive electronic toys that reflect children's interests and developmental needs. They maintain resources well and ensure they remain clean, safe and suitable for use. Leaders also provide sufficient resources throughout the indoor and outdoor environment to promote creativity, physical development, problem-solving and imaginative play. Through the thoughtful provision and maintenance of resources, leaders support children's learning and help them develop a broad range of skills.

Leadership & Management — Good

Leaders provide clear direction for the nursery and promote a positive culture that focuses on children's well-being, learning and development. The Responsible Individuals (RIs) have a clear vision for the service and is committed to providing good quality childcare. They communicate high expectations to staff and implement policies and procedures that support the safe and effective operation of the nursery. Leaders promote safe practices and create an environment where children and staff feel valued and supported. They foster a culture of continuous improvement and ensure staff understand their roles and responsibilities in providing quality care and learning experiences. However, outcomes for children require improvement because leaders did not ensure parents or CIW were informed of a significant environmental incident and governance arrangements did not ensure concerns were escalated and communicated effectively. We expect the provider to take action to strengthen governance arrangements and oversight of significant incidents.

Leaders use a range of self-evaluation processes to monitor and improve the quality of the service. They actively seek feedback from parents, carers and children to inform their quality-of-care review. The review provides an evaluation of the service, identifying areas of good practice as well as priorities for further development. They review accident records, health and safety information and monitoring activities to identify trends and areas for development. Leaders seek advice from external professionals when appropriate and use feedback from monitoring activities to inform improvements. They demonstrate the ability to make positive changes when issues arise and implement actions designed to improve children's experiences and outcomes. During the inspection, leaders maintained regular contact with CIW and demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement through engaging positively in discussions, seeking guidance where appropriate and providing regular updates on the progress made.

Leaders manage staff and resources effectively. They follow safe recruitment procedures and files contain all the required information that demonstrate staff suitability. Leaders provide staff with regular supervision and appraisal opportunities, enabling them to reflect on their practice and identify professional development needs. They deploy qualified and experienced staff effectively across the nursery and maintain suitable staffing arrangements to meet children's needs. The provider agreed to further develop the system for signing staff in and out of rooms to ensure clear oversight of staff deployment, including during lunchtime periods. These systems help ensure staff understand their roles and responsibilities and provide children with consistent care, support and learning opportunities.

Leaders develop partnerships that support children's well-being and development. The service uses a range of communication methods to keep parents informed and involved in their children's care. Parents spoke positively about the service, highlighting that their children were happy, staff were caring and supportive, and the provision was responsive to children's individual needs.

Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

The table(s) below show the area(s) for priority action and/or those for improvement we have identified.

Summary of Areas for Improvement	Date identified
Children may be at risk of harm because environmental and health and safety risks are not consistently identified, assessed and mitigated.	14/08/26
Children may be at risk of harm because the provider failed to notify Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and parents of a significant environmental incident. This limits regulatory oversight and reduces opportunities to monitor practice, identify wider risks and support ongoing improvement. The failure to inform parents also means they may be unaware of potential hazards to their children's health and safety and are unable to make fully informed decisions about their children's care and attendance.	14/08/26

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

National Minimum Standards

Where we find the provider is not meeting the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care but there is no immediate or significant risk for people using the service, we highlight these as Recommendations to Meet National Minimum Standards.

We expect the provider to take action to address these and we will follow these up at the next inspection.

Standard	Recommendation(s)
	No NMS Recommendations were identified at this inspection

Best Practice

Where we think it helpful, we may make best practice recommendations. These are to encourage settings that are doing well to become even better at helping children thrive.

Recommendation(s)
Ensure staff sign in and out of each room when providing lunch cover or working in different areas of the nursery.

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