Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Acorns Nursery

Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary School, Honeyfield Road, Ebbw Vale Blaenau Gwent NP23 5TA

Date of inspection: November 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

About Acorns Nursery

Name of setting	Acorns Nursery
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Melanie Madden and Leanna Hodgkins
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Melanie Madden and Leanna Hodgkins
Number of places	20
Age range of children	2-4 Years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	10
Number of children who receive funding for early education	1
Opening days / times	Monday- Friday 9am-3pm
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	23 February 2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection	November 2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	12/11/2024

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Well-being	**Good**
Learning **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**n/a**
Care and development	**Good**
Teaching and assessment **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Develop practitioner's skills in recording and analysing their observations of children.

R2 Revise records and documents to reflect current practice

R3 Develop supervision and appraisals to support improvement in priority areas effectively

What happens next

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Nearly all children have a strong voice. They confidently make choices and decisions about what affects them, choosing activities and resources they wish to play with. They freely decide to play inside or outside throughout the session. Nearly all children express themselves through verbal and non-verbal communication well, as they know practitioners listen and respond to them positively. All children have strong, close relationships with practitioners and receive support and comfort if needed, which helps them to feel safe and valued at the setting.

Nearly all children feel secure, happy, and comfortable. They interact and play alongside others appropriately for their stage of development. For example, a few children work together effectively to search for 'treasure' in the sand pit. Nearly all children are confident communicators. For example, they proudly talk to practitioners about the artwork they have created. Nearly all children show empathy and care towards one another. They greet each other and practitioners fondly when entering the setting

Nearly all children are active and engage in their play and learning effectively. For example, they enjoy making playdough and building with blocks under staff supervision. Nearly all children listen and follow instructions well. They are confident to seek help from practitioners when they need it. Nearly all children are aware of the settings routines and follow them effectively, for example following instructions and

safety messages when using the workbench and tools. They respect and take care of equipment and resources.

Nearly all children develop their independence and self-help skills well. They access the bathroom and wash their hands independently or with support if needed. They serve their own food at snack times and pour drinks. They use cutlery competently, such as spreading soft cheese on crackers and cutting their own fruit and vegetables. Nearly all children take responsibility for their belongings, for example putting their coat on for outside play and hanging them up when they have finished.

Learning (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): n/a

There is no report on children's learning. This is because the number of three- or four-year-old children present at the time of the inspection that do not receive funded education elsewhere was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Care and development: Good

Leaders and practitioners have a good understanding of how to protect children and know what to do if they have any concerns. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Leaders and practitioners work well together to keep children safe and healthy. They follow the setting's procedures in relation to hygiene, health, and safety. The setting has appropriate policies in place, which undergo regular review. Practitioners supervise children well and complete all relevant records in relation to accidents, incidents, existing injuries, and medication appropriately, which are countersigned by parents and leaders. Leaders undertake regular fire evacuation and lockdown drills, so practitioners and children know what to do in an emergency. Practitioners provide healthy snacks for children, along with milk or water to drink. Leaders have suitable systems to support children who have allergies and dietary needs.

Practitioners are kind, caring, nurturing and interact with children in a warm, gentle and inclusive manner. This creates a positive, happy, calm, and engaging atmosphere. A consistent, small, tight-knit team, promote strong secure attachments. A key worker system is in place which ensures practitioners know the children and their families well. As a result, children and families feel safe and happy. The setting's behaviour management policy supports practitioners to develop positive relationships with children. They give bilingual praise for good behaviour and remind children of the rules of the setting well. Practitioners engage and interact with children throughout their play. They promote an interactive social time during meals, where they sit alongside children at the table and engage them in conversation.

Practitioners engage with children and extend their play successfully. For example, they count and model colours bilingually and promote conversations during play. They are good role models and are responsive to children's needs. Practitioners introduce new vocabulary, to enhance children's understanding. For example, when making dough, they ask children what they could do to make it less sticky and encourage children to make suggestions. Practitioners regularly share books with children. They ask questions and discuss stories, purposefully, which develops children's interest in books and a love for reading. Practitioners use Welsh often in

their interactions with children at the setting. This helps to develop and support children's Welsh language skills well. Practitioners support children who have emerging and additional needs well. They effectively work in partnership with parents and carers, engaging with a range of services as required.

Teaching and assessment (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Good

Practitioners provide a welcoming learning environment both indoors and outdoors, inspiring children's curiosity and engagement successfully. They understand how to support children's learning and development through play and encourage them to explore, try things out and challenge themselves.

A strength of the setting is its provision for outdoor learning. All staff support children's learning in the outdoor area with enthusiasm. Such as a well-resourced mud kitchen supporting children's holistic learning successfully. A thoughtful range of natural resources assists children's mathematical understanding and vocabulary well. Practitioners have developed provision for physical development carefully to promote the progression of children's skills. For example, they provide a range of wheeled vehicles and climbing equipment that offer varying degrees of challenge for children. Practitioners provide many inviting opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills, for example threading, hammering and mark making with a range of tools. As a result, most children make good progress in this area.

Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is effective. Practitioners support the development of children's communication and language skills well. They model new vocabulary through stories and in authentic contexts, such as when children visit a local pet shop. Practitioners reinforce and extend children's language skilfully. For example, they model specific vocabulary and engage children in conversation naturally when playing in the role-play pet shop.

The setting provides worthwhile provision to support the development of children's thinking and creative skills. Practitioners provide resources that enable children to explore a variety of media and techniques such as working with clay or mixing paint. They ensure that children experience opportunities to take part in regular dance sessions and listen to different types of music such as male voice choirs. This develops children's expression and appreciation of the arts successfully.

Practitioners are beginning to reflect and build on children's interests within learning experiences. They observe children's play and make a few adaptations to provision in response. For example, they provide string and a 'pond' after noticing children pretending to fish. This supports and extends children's learning well.

A range of experiences encourage children's spiritual, moral and cultural development effectively. Practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children as they encourage them to examine the inside of a pepper during snack time or observe the minibeasts they find in the garden. They are beginning to promote children's curiosity about their own and others' beliefs effectively. For instance, they share stories involving different kinds of families. This enables children to see themselves reflected in the setting and nurtures their sense of belonging successfully. Practitioners support children to understand the importance of caring for

living things well. For example, children regularly feed the birds or look after seeds they have planted.

Practitioners provide plenty of opportunities for children to hear the Welsh language throughout the session. They model simple language patterns clearly and engage children in activities such as counting and naming colours effectively. Practitioners encourage children to join in singing a range of Welsh songs and rhymes, which supports the development of their Welsh language skills purposefully. They plan a range activities that promote the cultural heritage of Wales. The setting celebrates events such as St David's Day, when children make Welsh rarebit or taste test different Welsh cakes.

Practitioners develop strong relationships with children and identify their interests and strengths successfully. They observe children regularly and make note of their achievements. However, the setting's use of this information to enhance children's learning and development is at an early stage. Overall, practitioners' skill in analysing their observations of children is underdeveloped.

Environment: Good

Leaders ensure that the indoor and outdoor environments are safe and secure. They have a wide range of thorough risk assessments, which reduce risks effectively. They ensure that the required safety checks are complete and readily available. Practitioners follow procedures in relation to visitors and daily environment checks, including the outside area prior to play consistently. The premises are clean and well maintained. Practitioners ensure that hygiene procedures are complete, such as sanitising tables prior to meals. Appropriate protective clothing is worn, as and when needed. The toilet and nappy changing facilities are appropriate, and practitioners follow guidelines to ensure children's privacy and dignity.

The environment is welcoming and offers a range of opportunities for children to play, learn and move between indoor and outdoor areas. Leaders provide a range of interesting equipment and resources, within the open plan room and outdoor area, which offer children the opportunity to play imaginatively, physically, and creatively. Many of these resources reflect the natural environment and real-life objects, and in turn promote children's natural curiosity and empowers them to engage in purposeful play. Nearly all resources are at low level and furniture is appropriately sized. The provision and layout of the room allow children the opportunity to access equipment independently allowing for self-led play and problem-solving.

The outdoor environment provides a variety of experiences, including sensory areas, role play and woodwork bench. Children confidently make independent choices about where they play and the resources they would like to use. Leaders provide designated areas for children to store their personal items. Bilingual displays show children's photographs, work, and achievements attractively. This supports a sense of belonging and promotes their self-esteem successfully. Leaders use a variety of play and learning materials effectively to promote children's awareness of cultures and communities as well as their Welsh heritage.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders share a clear vision for the setting to provide welcoming, engaging provision, where children feel a sense of belonging and reach their potential. They demonstrate a passion for their work and ensure that children are settled and well cared for. Leaders communicate with practitioners effectively and have developed a strong team ethos where all staff feel supported and valued.

The setting makes beneficial use of external reviews and value guidance from the local authority advisory teacher to inform their self-evaluation process. They consult children, parents and carers suitably and take their views seriously. Leaders have developed a culture of reflection and improvement, which results in ongoing improvements in outcomes for children. For example, practitioners have improved role-play provision indoors and outdoors by adding authentic resources. This has increased children's engagement and is supporting their development across the curriculum successfully.

There is a clear statement of purpose providing an accurate picture of the setting. Leaders ensure a suitable range of relevant policies and procedures are in place. Leaders follow effective recruitment processes and ensure that all practitioners have a helpful induction. However, aspects of the setting's documentation and record keeping are outdated or have limited detail, which reduces the effectiveness of the information. For example, practitioners' job descriptions lack detail about their roles and responsibilities. Leaders carry out regular supervision and appraisal meetings with staff, which lead to agreed targets for improvement. Practitioners find discussions during these meetings helpful. However, targets are too broad and do not yet focus sharply enough on the setting's priority areas.

Practitioners feel highly valued and are comfortable in approaching leaders. They are keen to develop their own practice and commit to ongoing training. Leaders invest in beneficial opportunities for practitioners to develop their skills through a range of professional learning. This has a positive impact in many aspects of the settings provision. For example, practitioners support children's communication and language development well after attending a communication course.

Leaders ensure that practitioners reflect on the outcomes of training and agree ways to implement any areas for improvement identified. For example, they have developed provision through introducing a woodwork bench and increasing the number of authentic resources throughout the learning environment after training on effective early years teaching approaches.

The setting makes effective use of grants to enhance provision. Recently, leaders have allocated grant funding to improve the outdoor environment and improve the representation of diversity within the setting. Many new resources now represent a range of people from different ethnic backgrounds, family structures and those with disabilities.

Leaders have established successful partnerships that contribute well to children's learning and development. Practitioners build strong relationships with parents and carers. The setting holds beneficial sessions for parents and carers to support their children's learning. These are planned carefully to ensure that they are relevant and

engaging. For example, parents and carers learn about the sugar content of snack foods through taking part in a quiz. Practitioners keep parents well informed about the activities children are doing and the progress they are making through a communication app and regular progress summaries.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from CIW and Estyn's websites (http://careinspectorate.wales) (www.estyn.gov.wales)

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
Poor	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required

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Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	**What each means**
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

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

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this	N/A

	inspection	
25	The Registered Persons (RPs)must ensure that there is a system in place to maintain oversight of safety checks for the premises and ensure that all the relevant certificates are obtained for their own records.	Achieved

Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

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