Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

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

# A report on

# Little Acorns Preschool (Caerphilly) Ltd

## Derwendeg Primary School
## Hengoed Road
## Cefn Hengoed
## Hengoed
## CF82 7HP

## Date of inspection: June 2024

## by

## Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

## and

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

# About Little Acorns Preschool (Caerphilly) Ltd

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of setting | Little Acorns Preschool (Caerphilly) Ltd |
| Category of care provided | Full Day Care |
| Registered person(s) | Claire Greenway |
| Responsible individual (if applicable) | Claire Greenway |
| Person in charge | Claire Greenway |
| Number of places | 28 |
| Age range of children | 2-5 years |
| Number of 3 and 4 year old children | 25 |
| Number of children who receive funding for early education | 7 |
| Opening days / times | 9am to 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 does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture. |
| Date of previous CIW inspection | 24/03/2023 |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection | 24/02/2016 |
| Dates of this inspection visit(s) | 25/06/2024 |

## Summary

| Theme | Judgement |
|---|---|
| **Well-being** | **Good** |
| **Learning**<br>**(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)** | **Good** |
| **Care and development** | **Good** |
| **Teaching and assessment**<br>**(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 Improve opportunities in learning and daily routines to enable children to become more independent

R2 Develop the planning, assessment, and observation procedures to ensure that they focus more closely on children's progress across the developmental pathways

R3 Strengthen the links between self-evaluation and improvement plans to ensure that the setting evaluates all work 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 arrive happily and enthusiastically at the setting. They separate well from their parents, showing they feel safe and content in the care of practitioners. They form positive relationships with the practitioners who know them well, and in an environment where they feel comfortable. Nearly all children are familiar with routines and expectations at the setting, and having consistent practitioners caring for them adds to their strong sense of belonging.

Many children have a voice and choose where and how to spend their time. They move freely around the indoor and outdoor play spaces. They choose resources to enable them to follow their interests, such as clothes, bottles, and blankets to care for baby dolls. Children communicate their thoughts and ideas with staff as they talk about their experiences confidently. For example, they discuss building castles out of soil with practitioners and discuss the best way to stack magnetic tiles.

Most children co-operate and interact well with each other and enjoy being together and playing alongside friends. For example, they enjoy blowing and chasing bubbles outside. Children of all ages play respectfully together as they learn to understand the needs of others. For example, they understand they may have to wait to access certain activities and with a little support from staff readily accept this and find alternative resources.

Children show enjoyment and interest during their play as they follow their own interests. As a result, nearly all children engage with activities throughout a session successfully. For example, they spend time hiding in boxes excitedly, eagerly waiting for members of staff to knock on the boxes and find them. Many children share their knowledge effectively and feel a sense of pride as they do so. For example, children chat about how cocoons will turn into butterflies with enthusiasm.

Children have free access to all resources indoors and outside. Overall, they move around the room choosing what items they would like to play with or finding items to enhance their play experiences. A majority of children access toilets independently. Many children develop self-help skills when practitioners support and encourage them to try things, such as washing their hands after eating. However, they do not take advantage of valuable opportunities to promote children's independence further, such as during snack times and arrival and collection times.

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

Many children make good progress from their individual starting points, particularly in developing their communication and physical skills. For example, they discuss the roles they will play when caring for dolls and decide how to organise a café to sell cakes to their friends. Many children demonstrate high levels of perseverance and

concentration as they play, such as when building bridges to join train tracks together.

Many children develop their communication and literacy skills well, including those who are at the early stages in developing their language. They communicate readily with one another and the adults around them and share their views on things that interest them effectively. For example, they talk about who lives at home with them and what they like to eat for lunch. They enjoy singing familiar rhymes and respond to simple questions effectively as they play. Many children enjoy looking at books and handle them appropriately. They listen to stories read to them by adults in small groups and share observations of what they see in the illustrations readily. A very few children understand that letters carry meaning. Many children develop making marks skills successfully. They enjoy using a variety of implements to draw pictures of their families and make paintings of butterflies. A very few children are interested in their names and ask practitioners to write them on their work.

Many children join in with Welsh songs and rhymes and are beginning to respond to simple questions and directions effectively. For example, they respond appropriately when asked to wash their hands for snack time. They name colours and a few children count in Welsh enthusiastically.

Many children use mathematical language confidently during their play and exploration. They talk about heavy and light blocks and small and big caterpillars. Many children enjoy exploring numbers and count items around them reliably. They count scoopfuls of sand and sprinkles on cupcakes. They talk about empty, nearly full and full containers of soil as they plant bulbs.

Many children develop digital skills effectively as they play and explore. They operate interactive toys skilfully and with support they use a laptop computer to research the things that interest them. A few children use a digital camera to take photos of their friends. Many children solve problems as they occur naturally in their play and work well with their friends to find solutions. For example, they find out which tools are effective in making playdough flat. Most children develop their physical skills successfully and enjoy being active. They ride bikes and scooters with increasing control and co-ordination and use climbing walls, tunnels, and slides with agility and confidence. They develop strength and dexterity effectively, such as when using tongs to pick up pieces of toast and threading ribbon through a frame. Many children develop their creative skills successfully, when enjoying activities such as painting patterns on butterflies and making observational drawings of them. They make music using large instruments in the garden and make up imaginative stories with their friends appropriately.

**Care and development:  Good**

Practitioners are aware of their responsibility to keep children safe. They implement the setting’s policies and procedures appropriately and all know the actions to take if they have any safeguarding concerns. They record accidents and incidents and

parents sign them to evidence practitioners share them. Practitioners conduct regular fire drills, and children are aware of the procedure to follow in an emergency.

Practitioners fully understand the child protection policy and the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Practitioners promote healthy lifestyles well and provide healthy food choices including fruits and water or milk to drink at snack time. They encourage children to brush their teeth and apply suncream when necessary. Practitioners ensure children have regular opportunities to be active and get fresh air as they access the outdoors daily. There are appropriate cleaning routines, including regular handwashing and cleaning tables before practitioners serve food and they wear protective clothing when changing nappies.

Practitioners are consistent in their interactions with children. They communicate appropriately with children, showing interest and enthusiasm in what children have to say. For example, they encourage children to talk about their families and who lives with them. They support children to develop their communication and social skills effectively. They play alongside them and talk about what they are doing, using appropriate language for the children's ages and stages of development effectively. Practitioners celebrate children's achievements and use praise to celebrate good behaviour, such as when they share.

Practitioners have adopted some new strategies for planning. They consider the interests of the children and provide appropriate activities and resources to reflect this. For example, when children were showing great interest in the soil, practitioners noted and planned a planting activity for the following day. They are developing planning systems and are extending children's development and skills through their play and the resources they provide.

Practitioners know children well and implement effective strategies, routines, and experiences to meet their individual needs. Staff implement routines to help children feel relaxed and understand what will happen next. For example, they let them know when it is time to collect their bags to go home.

The setting promotes equality well, ensuring that all children have access to all areas of learning. Leaders have appropriate arrangements in place to support children with additional needs. For example, they provide care plans for individual children, involve specialist agencies when needed and work in close partnership with parents and carers. As a result, the setting meets the needs of all children appropriately.

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

Practitioners have a good understanding of how children learn through play and exploration. They provide them with opportunities to explore a wide range of stimulating activities in the indoor and outdoor areas that promote their learning and development successfully. Practitioners provide children with interesting resources that encourage them to be curious and explore them independently. For example, they follow an identification chart to find different species of caterpillar in the garden. Practitioners allow children sufficient time to become engrossed in what they are doing and make appropriate use of opportunities to extend children's learning, such

as asking them to retell familiar stories and when discussing what food farm animals eat.

Practitioners plan worthwhile opportunities to promote children's communication skills. Practitioners are good language role models, and they actively encourage children to respond to questions and express their views and opinions, such as when deciding the parts they will play in the role play area. Practitioners provide cosy reading areas, where children relax and enjoy listening to stories alone or with others. They encourage children to engage in mark making activities, such as drawing caterpillars and butterflies and using chalks on large boards to draw their families.

Practitioners support children to speak Welsh and provide them with beneficial opportunities to develop their skills. For example, they encourage children to count objects, name colours and respond to simple instructions, such as washing hands and getting their bags. Practitioners support children to sing songs and rhymes and choose snack items in Welsh effectively.

There are suitable opportunities for children to develop their numeracy skills, such as using natural materials to count and recognise numerals around them. Practitioners encourage children to use mathematical language as they explore activities, such as talking about full and empty pots of soil. Practitioners provide children with a wide range of resources to develop their digital skills, such as an interactive board on which to play number games, walkie talkies and digital cameras to take photographs of the things that interest them.

Practitioners provide valuable activities to allow children to be physically active and to develop their fine and gross motor skills. For example, they ensure opportunities for children to play fishing games with magnetic fishing rods or to travel around on scooters and tricycles.

Practitioners provide a range of learning experiences that promote children's moral, spiritual and cultural development well. For example, practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children as they encourage them to plant vegetables and watch them grow. They encourage children to show consideration for living creatures such as when putting out food for birds.

Practitioners are beginning to record observations of children's development and achievement and are using the information to plan activities that interest them. However, practitioners do not make observations regularly enough or in sufficient detail to plan individual children's next steps and to monitor their progress using the developmental pathways effectively. Practitioners provide parents and carers with useful summaries each term about children's progress and achievements.

**Environment: Good**

Leaders ensure that the environment is secure and suitably maintained to provide a safe place for children. Practitioners are aware of the setting's health and safety procedures and implement them effectively. For example, they complete appropriate

risk assessments to ensure they identify all hazards and ensure they are managed effectively. All visitors are recorded on arrival and the attendance of children and practitioners is logged accurately. The entrance to the setting is controlled and there is no unauthorised access. This ensures that all people in the building are accounted for and demonstrates adult to child ratios meet requirements.

Leaders provide children with a welcoming and well-decorated environment. The design and layout of the indoor room promotes children's curiosity well and allows them to play and learn successfully. They ensure that children have access to inviting resources to encourage them to engage in physical activities that support and develop their movement and co-ordination. Leaders provide children with a vast range of resources that are suitable for their ages and stages of development, with the outside area providing greater opportunities for children to develop a wide range of skills. Practitioners plan appropriately to ensure that children use the outdoors learning spaces regularly.

They create a sense of belonging by providing them with individual coat pegs and they display children's work to celebrate their achievements effectively. There is access to suitable facilities including toilets and nappy changing areas. The recent inclusion of the sensory room has allowed children to engage in a wide range of experiences that stimulate their senses successfully.

Storage is at a suitable height for children to access equipment independently. For example, blocks are kept on low shelves for children to select the ones they require to make buildings. A wide range of natural materials and real-life objects effectively enhance provision and encourage play and learning. They show enthusiasm and real interest in the activities they choose, such as using torches, magnifying glasses and binoculars to explore the world through first-hand experiences.

**Leadership and management: Good**

Leaders share a clear vision for the setting and aim to provide children with a safe and stimulating environment where they learn and develop to the best of their abilities. They work with practitioners purposefully to lead the setting and support the care and development of children successfully. Leaders meet regularly with practitioners and provide clear communication, which results in the smooth running of the setting. There is a clear statement of purpose that provides an accurate picture of the setting, and leaders ensure that a suitable range of relevant policies and procedures are in place.

Leaders and practitioners are committed to improving the setting. Leaders make suitable use of external reviews and support from the local authority advisory teacher to inform the self-evaluation process. They consult staff, parents and carers successfully and take their suggestions and opinions seriously. Leaders identify the majority of targets for improvement accurately from this process and use the information well to plan the actions that they will take to address the areas for improvement. However, they do not always use these processes rigorously enough to identify and prioritise all important areas for improvement. Leaders make effective

use of grants to enhance provision. For example, they purchase resources to make parental engagement packs that support children's learning at home effectively.

Leaders follow suitable induction processes and ensure that practitioners have up-to-date job descriptions, which include clear information about their roles and responsibilities. They implement an effective system for practitioners' supervision and appraisal that leads to agreed targets. They identify beneficial opportunities for practitioners to develop professionally, for example by arranging training on Curriculum for Wales, the benefits of block play, and supporting children with additional needs. Leaders ensure the outcomes of training with all practitioners, and they agree on ways to implement what they have learned successfully. For example, they have developed beneficial block play areas, where children develop their mathematical and critical thinking skills effectively.

The setting has established worthwhile partnerships that contribute positively to children's learning and development. They build strong relationships with parents and carers. The setting holds worthwhile sessions for parents and carers to support their children's learning, such as pumpkin carving and bulb planting. Practitioners communicate with them effectively through using social media to share photographs of their children's activities during the day.

Leaders make beneficial use of the advice and guidance from partners, such as the local authority's advisory teacher and health professionals. For example, the advisory teacher supports them to develop assessment arrangements and to make improvements to the learning environments. Leaders have developed useful links with the local community which enhances children's learning successfully. For example, they visit the local hairdresser, a nearby farm and a science discovery centre to celebrate science week. These links support children's learning well and enable them to experience a sense of belonging to the wider community. The setting has valuable links with the local school. Practitioners use the grounds and library and attend sports events to support children's learning. There are effective transition arrangements, which ensure that children move on to the next step in their education smoothly.

## 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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Publication date: 28/08/2024

| 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 | |

| 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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