



Inspection Report

KIN Nature Kindergarten

**Lower Whitecastle Buildings
Whitecastle
Nr Abergavenny
NP7 8UD**



Date Inspection Completed

28/09/2023

About KIN Nature Kindergarten

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	Kids in Nature Ltd
Registered places	12
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	This is the first inspection of the service
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	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.

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<u>Well-being</u>	Excellent
<u>Care and Development</u>	Excellent
<u>Environment</u>	Good
<u>Leadership and Management</u>	Good

For further information on ratings, please see the end of this report

Summary

Children's choices and opinions are highly respected, and children are treated with kindness and consideration. Children develop nurturing relationships and a sense of security. All play is child led and therefore is of real interest and meaning to the children. They are motivated, excited and fully engage in the play opportunities they discover. This leads to confidence, resilience and development in their independence skills.

Staff are committed in creating a safe and nurturing environment in which children will thrive. They manage children's behaviour exceptionally well and foster kind and caring relationships. They encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyle choices. Children are celebrated and their individual needs are very well met.

The environment is safe and stimulating for children whose safety and comfort are a priority for staff. Children are equipped with very effective wet weather gear so that they are not restricted in their play. There is easy access to resources so that all children can independently choose where and how they play. The environment is full of fun opportunities for children to learn and develop to their own potential. Children's toileting arrangement within the treehouse area do not currently provide an appropriate level of privacy. We have discussed this with the Responsible Individual (RI) who has already identified this issue and has suggested potential improvements.

Leadership and management of the setting is strong. Staff are recruited safely and are given the support they need to perform their responsibilities to a high standard. Due to the remoteness of the setting the RI needed to adjust some procedures to be more site specific and this has been done during the course of the inspection.

KIN Nature Kindergarten is totally child centred. Children have a very strong voice in how the service operates and how the service develops to meet their needs. All play is child led and staff encourage children to voice their opinions, consult meaningfully with children in age appropriate ways and act upon their views. For example, children noticed that spring water had dried up during a drought, and when it started flowing again, they wanted to construct a bridge over a waterlogged section of pathway. We saw photographs of children working together bridge building and then using the bridge.

Children are very happy, settled and relaxed. Newer children are supported by staff to explore the setting safely and become comfortable in their surroundings. Children told us "I'm excited to get to the forest" and eagerly play and chat with friends as they walk to the treehouse. Children play and explore very well independently, but also happily seek out staff to interact with, and staff respond kindly and patiently to their requests. Older children patiently read a story to another child, delighting in how they can tell them about 'Six crows with a gardening hose!' Children quickly learn rules to keep them safe, such as "No picking, no licking" and children know to look for specific coloured ribbons tied on trees to guide them safely along pathways. Children's resilience is built through dealing with the physical nature of the setting.

Children are developing a deep awareness of the world around them. Their play and exploration springs from direct connection with nature and the elements. Children are thoroughly engaged in their play, planting, building dens, observing nature and the impact of seasons and weather on their environment. We saw children planting winter pansies and seeds, discussing the essential things needed for plants to grow. Other children played with a long water channel fed by natural spring water, filling and emptying large pipettes into a hollowed out tree trunk. Some children chose to play on the slack line, bouncing up and down aware of their growing sense of balance and ability to navigate safely from one end to the other, without falling off. All play is child led and because of this, children are able to follow their interests and are totally invested in their play and learning. Children love to use their imagination telling us of the goblins hiding at the 'nest' area and a sense of awe and wonder permeates all of their play.

Children are given lots of time and encouragement to do things for themselves, build confidence in their own abilities, become resilient and problem solve. Children are supported to change into and out of their wellies and waterproofs themselves, carry their own rucksacks and put their lunchboxes away. They are encouraged to learn good hygiene and wash and dry their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. Children learn to attend to their own toilet needs in line with their age and stage of development.

Care and Development

Excellent

Staff are highly motivated and are passionate about their work. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep children safe and healthy within the play environment and through the habits and behaviours that they foster within the children. They have very good settling in procedures so that they can properly assess children's capabilities whilst in their care. They know children's allergies, dietary requirements and medical needs. Staff have a clear understanding of the safeguarding procedures. Staff complete records relating to accidents, incidents, pre-existing injury and medication, promptly sharing these with parents. Staff champion all round healthy lifestyles. For example, they promote healthy eating, emotional well-being and resilience, alongside the health benefits of being immersed in nature with constant outdoor play and fresh air. Children are taught fire safety and regularly practice fire drills and reverse evacuations under staff direction. Staff have excellent relationships with their colleagues and communicate very well with each other; this ensures they supervise and support children appropriately at all times.

Staff have a very good understanding of the children's needs and how to promote positive behaviours. They treat children kindly and with a great deal of dignity and respect. They encourage children's curiosity and problem solving skills. One parent was very pleased with the principles and values that the nursery cultivates. They told us that their children learn to share at their own pace and in a meaningful way. Therefore, children develop an understanding of why it is important to share, as opposed to it being an external rule imposed upon them. One child told us spontaneously, "Playing nicely gets me lots of new friends" whilst another child told us "The animals have to be happy" demonstrating a growing compassion for the world around them.

Staff observe children and complete baseline and spontaneous observations for individual children and group learning. These observations are well recorded and assist staff in meeting children's play, learning and developmental needs. Staff support mixed age groups playing together, developing group working and team working skills. The development of imagination and creativity are highly valued as this leads to improved problem solving skills. Children's specific needs are identified and any additional help or advice from outside agencies is sought as necessary. Staff have undertaken 'Culture Capital' training, appreciative of children's backgrounds and of the culture of their surroundings. For example, links with local agriculture has led to local honey being used as a learning opportunity, and a local wood sculptor making furniture for the children out of trees sourced from the woods.

Environment

Good

The setting is safe and well managed. Staff greet children at the boundary of the setting. Here, there is a well equipped shelter for children to change into good quality wet weather gear, play or use toilet facilities, before walking to the forest. All visitors are greeted and signed in and staff oversee the safe handover of children. Once all children have arrived and have been registered the boundary gate is locked. Staff complete daily checks of all areas and comprehensive risk/benefit assessments are in place and regularly reviewed. Staff respond dynamically to weather, seasonal and environmental changes in order to ensure that children are warm, dry and safe in their play. Natural boundaries are encouraged to indicate trails and keep children safe: pathways are mown through tall grasses, coloured ribbons are tied to trees to indicate routes and vegetation is allowed to grow tall along boundaries, naturally managing children's whereabouts. Staff carry walkie talkies, effectively communicating with one another to ensure the location of all children is known and that a member of staff has eyes on the child throughout the session. For example, when a child leaves the mud kitchen to play up at 'the nest' staff communicate the child's movements via the walkie talkie. Staff explained that they observe new children's movements and will place cones across pathways to remind children of how far they can safely explore. All activities and equipment are risk assessed. The benefits of risky play are managed well. For example, children are only allowed on the slack line, once they can independently pull themselves up onto the ropes. Staff then help them to navigate the line clearly explaining techniques and safety rules.

The setting minimises its impact upon nature as much as possible. A treehouse within the forest is the main base and is accessed by children and staff walking through a field and woods. Portable toilets and hand washing facilities are located at the entrance and at the treehouse. Midway between these points are a set of composting toilets and hand washing facilities. Staff transport drinking and hand washing water to the treehouse. Hand washing water is decanted into portable hand washing stations with a temperature gauge to ensure water is the correct temperature. A variety of options are being explored to rearrange toileting facilities at the tree house setting, in order to better manage children's privacy. Children have access to a wide range of resources with an emphasis on exploring and using their natural surroundings. There is also a well equipped mud kitchen, fed by natural spring water, den building, a poly tunnel for planting, woodworking and art work. Within the treehouse there is a cosy area to sleep, small tables, carved stools and seats for children to relax, read books and complete puzzles etc. As there is no electricity, lighting is battery operated and fairy lights are draped from structures within the tree house to create a cosy atmosphere during winter months. Children have access to a field when more open and spacious play such as running is needed.

Resources are of a high quality and play equipment is favoured with sustainable/ natural materials. Staff manage the environment well to ensure the play resources are safe,

suitable and have the potential to spark curiosity and support children to reach their full potential.

Leadership and Management

Good

Leadership is effective and managers are motivated and passionate about the provision of care, and development of the service. They communicate and share their vision with the staff, who also embrace the aims and values of the service. Leaders are supportive and committed to ensuring that the whole workforce implements good working practices. Policies, procedures and guidance are of a high standard and reviewed regularly. Due to the remote nature of the setting, the RI has agreed to make the medication and telephone procedures more transparent and site specific. Currently because of concerns regarding network coverage, staff have been carrying their own mobile telephones in case of an emergency, as outlined in the setting's Use of Mobile Devices Policy. However, this arrangement is unsuitable as it could pose a safeguarding risk and so leaders are developing a new procedure. Also, as the setting is a considerable distance on foot to the main road, the medications policy/risk assessment is currently being updated by the RI.

Leaders undertake a very thorough annual review of the service and consult with parents, staff and children. They consider and reflect upon this information very well. This informs priorities for development of the service over the forthcoming year. Improvements to the service are tangible and have a positive impact upon children's experiences. For example, the tarpaulin roof on the treehouse has been replaced with a sturdier tin roof for better protection in wet weather.

Recruitment and induction procedures are thorough and equip staff to do their job well. All staff have at least a level 3 childcare qualification, paediatric first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding training. All staff have a current Disclosure and Barring Safety (DBS) check. Regular supervision is given to ensure staff understand their role and responsibilities and records demonstrate these are meaningful and support professional development. Staff access supplementary training regarding additional learning needs, gold standard healthy snack award, early years woodwork, Wellcome (speech and language), forest school and story-telling. This ensures staff can meet the needs of children in line with current childcare practices and knowledge and legislation.

Staff understand the importance of building good relationships with parents and the local community. Communication with parents and carers is very well maintained and supported with technology. Parents we spoke with are very happy with the app, which gives them real-time information about their child. Parents also report a very high level of satisfaction with the service and the care their children receive.

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. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
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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.

National Minimum Standards	
Standard	Recommendation(s)
Standard 22 - Environment	Ensure toilet facilities provide children with privacy.

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.

Best Practice
Recommendation(s)
Ensure the medication and telephone policies and procedures are site specific and reflect any particular risk assessments due to remoteness of location.

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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