Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Little Acorns @ Ysgol-Y-Graig

Ysgol Y Graig Primary School
Pontycapel Road Cefn Coed
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 2RD



Date Inspection Completed

07/01/2025

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About Little Acorns @ Ysgol-Y-Graig

Type of care provided.	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	Little Acorns @ Ysgol-Y-Graig
Registered places	19
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	This was the first inspection of this setting.
Is this a Flying Start service?	Yes
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	This service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of Welsh language and culture.

Well-being	**Excellent**
Care and Development	**Excellent**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and Management	**Good**

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

Summary

Children thrive at the setting. They have noticeably clear bonds of affection with staff and are making excellent progress in their development and social interactions. Children are confident in the daily routines, explore their environment enthusiastically and make choices about how they spend their time.

Staff work extremely well as a team to ensure all children are safe and enjoy their time there. They have sound safeguarding knowledge and use very effective infection control and risk management procedures. Staff are highly responsive to children's needs and manage interactions positively. They place great importance on active, child-led play supported by thoughtful interactions. They plan, observe and track children's development skilfully to ensure that every child achieves their potential.

Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure the environment is safe and secure. They ensure facilities are attractive, accessible, and well maintained. Leaders provide ample resources and staff ensure that indoor and outdoor areas are set up with a wide range of stimulating, age-appropriate resources that meet children's needs well.

Leaders are committed to providing an extremely high quality service for the children and families that attend. They have clear policies and procedures in place and a Statement of Purpose which accurately represents the day to day running of the service. The experienced staff team are enthusiastic and take pride in their work.

Well-being Excellent

Children have excellent opportunities to make choices about how they play. They are confident to go to staff to request resources through verbal and non-verbal methods as they know that staff will understand their attempts to communicate. For example, they can choose what musical activity they want on the interactive board by pointing or pick a book for staff to look at with them. Children decide they want to play outdoors and come in when they want to.

Children are happy and feel highly valued at the setting. They readily look to staff members for support and reassurance if needed, for example if they have an accident, and demonstrate close relationships by sitting on staff laps and enjoying a cuddle. Children are familiar with daily routines and this predictability makes them feel very safe and secure. They have a deep sense of pride as they are nominated as 'helpur heddiw,' giving out crockery at snack time. They demonstrate a wonderful sense of belonging as they look at their pictures and craft on the wall, as well as taking part in activities that explore their feelings.

Children are quickly developing an understanding of the rules of behaviour and nearly all children cooperate successfully. Those children that need support with this respond positively to staff intervention and can change their behaviour appropriately. Children interact very well and play kindly together. Some demonstrate the actions of dances for new children to follow. They enjoy engaging with each other as they play in the home area and chatting with their friends and staff at snack time, listening to what others are saying.

Children have exceptionally good opportunities for all types of play. They concentrate on activities for age-appropriate lengths of time, for example finishing making a spider in play dough. They are very active and squeal with laughter when they have a snowball 'fight' with staff in the outdoor environment and chasing each other around pretending to be dinosaurs. Children use developing language as they talk about items in a bucket such as a fluffy rabbit hat with long ears that staff could move. There was lots of laughter as they answered questions and sang songs together.

Children develop a wide range of skills as they play and develop their independence. Staff encourage and give children the confidence to do things independently before they intervene. For example, children persevered and worked together to retrieve a ball which had gone under a piece of equipment, knocking it back and fore until it came out. Children access their own coats from their labelled pegs and are learning to put them on with support, and they can help themselves to water from a dispenser if they are thirsty. They wash their hands before snacks, confidently butter their own crackers and pour their own drinks.

Care and Development — Excellent

Staff have an excellent understanding of their responsibility to keep children safe and healthy. They follow clear hygiene practices such as cleaning tables before and after snack times. Staff wear aprons and gloves during nappy changing. They manage allergies effectively through following a clear policy and individual health plans if required. They complete accident, incident, and pre-existing injury records well and leaders carry out detailed analysis of these to identify any trends. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and have completed the relevant training to meet the current requirements of the National Minimum Standards. They have a very good understanding of their roles in protecting children. All staff members have paediatric first aid qualifications.

Staff care for children in a very warm and nurturing manner and clearly know the children well. They skilfully encourage children to share toys such as dinosaurs and books and support all children to engage in activities. Staff encourage children to engage together during circle time activities such as ‘What is in the Bucket’ where they respectfully guess the items and choose a song to sing together. Staff demonstrate politeness and good manners so that children begin to understand expectations of social behaviour and children respond to this really well. They work together to ensure they have a very gentle and consistent approach to managing behaviour, in line with the setting’s behaviour management policy. Staff use skilful language to guide children to consider their actions and think how they can act differently, for example, ”That isn’t something we do here is it.”

Staff support children’s imagination and learning naturally as they play alongside them. For example, counting and developing their language and communication skills as they add legs and eyes to their spider they had made from dough. They introduce many Welsh phrases and words which children understand and are developing children’s understanding further as they sing and engage in circle time. Staff provide a range of differentiated planned activities which run alongside impromptu activities focused on children’s interests and questions. Staff evaluate activities and resources and develop these thoughtfully in accordance with the children’s responses and needs. For example, the whole group joined in singing ‘happy birthday’ to a doll, as a child told them it was the dolls birthday. Staff implement effective systems to observe children and plan for their next steps in play, learning and development. They support children with additional learning needs successfully with support from outside agencies as required.

Environment — Good

Leaders ensure that the environment is safe and secure by following well thought out policies and procedures. Staff ensure that the external gate and doors are locked, and that visitors always sign in to the setting. Leaders have undertaken detailed risk assessments for the building and specific activities, and they ensure that these are reviewed regularly. Thy liaise closely with the school authority to ensure any identified maintenance issues are addressed and building systems such as fire, electrical and gas are serviced and tested in line with requirements. Staff undertake regular fire drills to ensure children know how to exit the building safely in an emergency. Leaders ensure a hygienic environment by completing an audit of infection risks and putting in procedures and resources to mitigate any identified risks.

Leaders and staff work hard to create an inviting, child friendly and stimulating environment both inside and out. They set up areas very well to meet the needs of children and promote curiosity and independence. Staff ensure areas allow children to move freely and access most resources easily. Staff open the doors to the outside for some of the session, providing children with free-flow access to opportunities to develop their physical and creative skills in the fresh air. Children access low-level pegs for their personal belongings, which supports them to be independent and recognise the need to look after their own coats and bags. There are clean and accessible toilets, handwashing, and nappy changing facilities adjacent to the playroom. Staff use a kitchen area for food preparation, and this is directly off the playroom, allowing them to still view the playroom as there is a half door that is kept locked.

Children have direct access to many varied and interesting resources that aids their development effectively. Staff lay out resources thoughtfully to promote children’s interests and discovery. For example, there is a comfortable chair in a quiet area where there are calming resources and items to explore how they feel. Staff ensure that children have access to a variety of textures and materials to aid their sensory development. They use some real-life and natural resources, including multicultural items and displays, to create an environment that supports diversity. Children enjoy the mix of soft and hard furnishings to ensure their comfort as they play and learn.

Leadership and Management Good

Leaders are very experienced and manage the service effectively. They have a clear vision for their setting and are passionate about their role. Leaders have a detailed statement of purpose that they review regularly to ensure it reflects an accurate picture of what the setting has to offer. They review policies and procedures regularly and have further considered policies such as the administering medication and dealing with a lost child policies during this inspection. Staff keep clear records of the times they work and when children attend, showing that there are enough qualified and experienced staff to care for children well.

Leaders carry out a thorough annual review of the quality of care provided at the setting. They use a variety of methods to obtain feedback from staff, parents, children, and other professionals involved with the setting to identify strengths, set targets, and highlight areas for development. Leaders are committed to providing an improving service and keep themselves updated with changes in the childcare sector. They share a clear complaint policy with parents.

Leaders and the staff team work closely together to provide a high-quality care package for children and their families. They implement a robust recruitment procedure that ensures all required information is available to evidence that staff are suitable to care for children. Leaders value the staff team that has worked together for a while, helping to ensure consistency of care. They provide extensive training opportunities such as Welsh language, diversity and many aspects of health including additional learning needs. Leaders keep records showing that they complete annual staff appraisals, and one to one supervision meetings are regular. Staff confirmed that they enjoyed their job, feel extremely well supported and have many opportunities to keep their knowledge updated.

Leaders and staff have good partnerships with other professionals such as health visitors, speech and language therapists, and early years advisors that support them to provide the best and most appropriate care for children. They work closely with the school to support highly effective transitions for children. Staff work closely with parents, gathering comprehensive information from them regarding their children’s needs and agreeing a contract. Staff ask parents for written permission for matters such as taking photographs and applying sun cream. However, they had not requested permission for children to receive treatment in an emergency. Leaders said they would address this as a matter of urgency. Staff invite parents to come to the setting to engage with their children on occasions, such as making Christmas craft.

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	

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 10 - Healthcare	Written parental permission must be obtained in advance regarding any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment.

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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