Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Little Acorns Playgroup

Hubberston & Hakin Community Centre
Church Road Hubberston
Milford Haven
SA73 3PL



Date Inspection Completed

15/01/2025

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About Little Acorns Playgroup

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Sessional Day Care
Registered Provider	Little Acorns Playgroup Pembrokeshire
Registered places	30
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	This is a post registration inspection.
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	**Good**
Care and Development	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and Management	**Good**

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

Summary

Children are confident, happy and enjoy their time at Little Acorns. They have a strong sense of belonging and are developing positive relationships and friendships. Children have good opportunities to make choices and take effective decisions about what they want to do. Children are encouraged and supported in developing skills of independence.

Staff are professional and motivated. They understand and implement policies and procedures effectively to keep children safe. Staff are kind towards children, providing positive interactions to ensure children feel valued and happy. They consistently use positive behaviour management strategies to very good effect. Staff are skilled in supporting children in their play and learning.

There are a range of policies and risk assessments in place which are successfully implemented, thus ensuring the environment is clean, safe, and well maintained. The environment, both inside and outside, promotes children's play, learning and development. There are a good range of resources that motivate and promote curiosity.

Leaders at the setting have a strong vision for the future and ensure they manage their team with effective support and continuous training. They are enthusiastic and ensure they offer a high standard of care to the children. Leaders have developed positive relationships with parents and carers and work closely with them to ensure effective care and support to all children who attend Little Acorns.

Well-being — Good

Children are happy and thoroughly enjoy their time at Little Acorns. They have a strong voice at this setting and have a good choice of play opportunities and resources. Children move freely from one activity to another and are asked what they would like to do next. They feel comfortable and confident to tell staff what they want through verbal and non-verbal communication. For instance, when a child does not want to take part in carpet time registration anymore their choice is supported and respected. They have good opportunities to make choices. For example, children choose which language to sing the welcome song in and can play outside or inside throughout the session.

Children are happy, settled and most cope well with separation from their parents. Some children are excited and run into the setting on arrival, keen to explore the activities on offer. They have good bonds of affection with staff who are kind, gentle and warm. For example, children who are upset are quickly comforted by staff and soon settle happily. Children are familiar with the daily routines, which also helps them feel at ease in their surroundings. Children understand they move to teeth brushing following registration for example and join in enthusiastically with the songs and actions.

Interactions between children and staff are consistently positive and often humorous. Children smile and fully engage with a member of staff as they share a book about animals together. Children chatter away to staff and receive appropriate and genuine responses. For example, they talk about the pets they have at home and the children's contributions are clearly valued. Children interact well with each other. Some children are beginning to take turns and share whilst others are beginning to develop empathy. For example, children shared out musical instruments making sure that their friends could join in.

Children are interested in their play and learning. They enjoy a range of interesting opportunities and have the freedom to safely explore the indoor and outdoor environment. We saw children enthusiastically participate in a number of engaging tabletop activities and actively join in with action songs in Welsh and English during carpet time. Children have opportunities to follow their own instincts, ideas, and interests. We saw children involved in imaginative play in the home-corner for instance, immersed in their game.

Children have good opportunities to develop their independence skills. They confidently access their bags, storing away pictures they have made to take home, for instance. Children access toys and resources freely and choose where to sit at snack time. They behave well at snack time and ably feed themselves. They pour their own drinks and choose which food they would like from the picture menu. During this time, they chat to each other and to staff who sit with them making this time a sociable occasion.

Care and Development — Good

Staff understand and implement policies and procedures to promote healthy lifestyles, personal safety, and wellbeing. Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities to protect children, confidently responding to safeguarding scenarios and show awareness of the internal safeguarding procedures. However, some strengthening of safeguarding knowledge of external procedures is required. Staff supervise children well, paying close attention to ratios and carefully monitoring the numbers of children inside and outside. Staff have a good understanding of allergy management, keeping up to date allergy information to hand during snack time. Appropriate accident and incident records are in place and staff also record existing injuries a child may have. Appropriate procedures are in place to record the administration of prescribed medication although the person in charge confirms this happens infrequently. Staff implement robust hygiene routines and follow nappy changing practices appropriately. They keep accurate records of the children and staff attendance.

Staff display a good understanding of the behaviour management policy and consistently implement positive behaviour management strategies. The policy details how children are involved in discussions around what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff engage with children in this way, entering into discussion with children about the benefits of 'walking feet' indoors with children adding that, *"you can run outside."* They use gentle tones and positive reinforcement with the children. We heard staff saying, *"good sharing, that has made me happy"* and encouraging good manners throughout the session. They promote and scaffold positive behaviours with children such as turn taking and sharing. Staff have a strong understanding and knowledge of the children's development, which reflects on how they manage children's behaviour. They reflect professionally on children's developmental progress and recent training opportunities which have impacted positively on their practice. Staff are consistently responsive; they genuinely listen as they chat and laugh alongside children, it is clear they respect their views. Interactions are very positive, demonstrating warmth and kindness. They know the children well and have extensive knowledge of their needs.

Staff are committed to providing a good range of play and learning activities. We saw staff supporting and extending children's understanding in their play and learning. For example, introducing new vocabulary when looking at books together and using universal strategies, such as basic sign language to further develop understanding. This is a real strength of the staff team. Staff have a sound understanding of when to interact and when to let play unfold. Staff use Welsh throughout the session to further extend development. We heard songs and greetings in Welsh and listened to children joining in. They assess and record children's development and progress displaying a thorough understanding of the purpose of collecting such information. Staff recognise when children may have additional needs and take purposeful action. They make effective use of the support and expertise available to them from external agencies.

Environment — Good

Leaders have comprehensive policies in place and ensure that the environment is suitably safe, secure, and well maintained. They complete effective and accurate general risk

assessments, which are regularly reviewed, and any identified hazards are swiftly addressed. Daily checks are completed on areas such as the fencing and gate to the outside play area ensuring children are safe and protected. The setting is clean, tidy, well maintained and very welcoming. Effective cleaning routines are in place which ensure that the environment is well managed in terms of infection prevention and control. The premises both inside and outside are secure and there is a system in place to record any visitors to the setting. Leaders ensure they carry out an appropriate number of emergency fire drills at varying times.

Leaders make certain the environment has very good indoor play space which children freely explore. They ensure the environment meets most of the children's needs and enables them to reach their full potential. The spacious playroom is divided into interesting areas which support children in their play and learning. For example, children have opportunities for role-play in the home corner which promotes multi-cultural awareness using diverse resources such as dressing up clothing and foods from different cultures. The children benefit from seasonal wall displays and children's work is routinely displayed which strengthens their connection to the space. Leaders ensure that the outdoor play space is used frequently and enables free flow play. Although the outside area is modest in size, careful consideration and planning, as well as interesting and varied resources and play equipment, challenge and stimulate children's curiosity and interest.

Leaders provide a wide range of good quality, developmentally appropriate play and learning resources to ensure children have a good variety and choice. Staff promote play opportunities through varied tabletop activities, craft activities and tasks which develop fine and gross motor skills. Children can access the toys and resources easily, as they are stored at low level or within their reach. Staff ensure that resources are well maintained and in a good condition. Leaders provide suitable furniture and resources to support children's independence. There are a suitable number of children's toilets and nappy changing facilities available, which are clean and well maintained.

Leadership and Management — Good

Leaders are effective in the way they manage and operate the service and are committed to ongoing improvements. They have a strong vision that they share effectively with others and regularly review. Leaders of the setting play an active role in the day to day running and have a good understanding of the staff, children and the care they provide. They update the setting's policies and ensure staff implement these in practice. Leaders maintain and share an effective statement of purpose. This enables prospective parents to make an informed decision about using the service. People who run the setting have worked very positively with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) during the course of this inspection.

There are strong procedures in place for self-evaluation of the setting. The quality-of-care review is a purposeful document which strives to consider and implement suggestions raised by parents which drive improvement at the setting. For example, the most recent report outlines one such change, *'inviting parents to come into the group to collect their child allowing more opportunity for feedback…'* The people who run the setting implement safe recruitment procedures to safeguard children and staff files were mostly complete. Following this inspection, an audit of all staff files was swiftly completed, and leaders confirm that all staff files now contain all requisite information. They have a clear system in place to ensure that staff's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are up to date. Leaders carry out regular supervisions and annual appraisals providing support and an opportunity to discuss any issues which may arise. Leaders ensure staff receive regular training keeping them up to date with new initiatives to further their professional development.

Leaders and staff have developed meaningful and positive relationships with parents and carers. There are very effective systems in place to keep parents well informed about their child's time at the setting. Thorough verbal handovers are exchanged between staff and parents at the start and end of sessions. Feedback received from questionnaires of parents as part of the inspection process were very positive. Effective communication, thorough support and a caring staff are highlighted as particular strengths. Parents comment that, *"the interaction between the staff and children is wonderful to witness. They really take their time to determine the individual needs of each child and really do cater for those individual needs",* and *"they include all children from different backgrounds and cultures and start from the child's strengths not weaknesses".*

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)
	No NMS Recommendations were identified at this inspection

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)
Strengthen staff understanding of safeguarding processes in line with the setting's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

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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