



Childcare Inspection Report on

Acorns Nursery

**Rhos Y Fedwen Primary School
Honeyfield Road
Rassau
Ebbw Vale
NP23 5TA**



Date of Publication

12 March 2019

Welsh Government © Crown copyright 2019.

You may use and re-use the information featured in this publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government License. You can view the Open Government License, on the National Archives website or you can write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk
You must reproduce our material accurately and not use it in a misleading context.

Description of the service

Acorns nursery is based in a classroom in Rhos y Fedwen primary school in Rassau, near Ebbw Vale. The service is registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to provide day care for a maximum of 20 children aged between two and five years. The nursery operates morning and afternoon sessions each week day for 49 weeks of the year, with a lunch club for children who wish to stay longer. The maximum length of time any child may attend is four hours. Children can access nursery funded education each morning. A wrap around service is provided for children attending Rhos y Fedwen and other local preschool nurseries. The service is managed by two registered persons (RPs) who also run the service on a day to day basis. This is predominantly an English language service, but with some use of the Welsh Language. The service was last inspected by Estyn in November 2017.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Children are happy and settled. They are able to form very good relationships with the mainly long standing, small staff team which helps them feel secure and confident. They are excited to take part in the good range of interesting activities provided, both indoors and outside, which are suited to their age and stage of development. The indoor environment is calm and encourages children to make choices about their play; the outdoor area inspires children to be active and is used well. The service is adequately managed and the RPs work effectively with staff and a range of partnerships to ensure the setting continues to develop and outcomes for children are positive.

2. Improvements

The nursery has made a number of improvements since the previous inspection:

- The outdoor play space has been developed to include the addition of a mud kitchen, large planters and a covered section with sand pit and construction area;
- the indoor play space has been reorganised and redecorated to provide a less cluttered and calmer environment, and
- staff continue to attend training to develop their professional knowledge.

3. Requirements and recommendations

We found the service was non compliant with the regulations relating to staff supervisions. Staff were not receiving formal supervisions in addition to their annual appraisal.

We made a number of recommendations to develop the service and improve outcomes for children. These are highlighted within the report and listed in more detail in section five.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children are happy and settled at Acorns and have developed very good relationships with the small, consistent staff team. They are excited to take part in the good range of play and learning opportunities provided and are confident to make their own decisions about their activities.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children are able to make choices and their views and feelings are respected. The sessions are mainly free play and children can follow their own interests, whilst being well supported by staff. Children can easily find the resources they need and move confidently between the different play areas. They are confident to tell staff what they would like to do and make their own choices. For example, one child wanted to make a second card following the craft activity; staff happily supported their choice. Children are encouraged to make decisions within their activities, such as which colour card or paint they would like, or how they would like to build their train track. Most children join in happily with group activities, but they can choose not to if they prefer. During circle times they are happy to express their ideas, knowing staff will listen and take account of their wishes or ideas for songs for example. Children can choose to play indoors or outside and staff support them well with their decision.

Children's voice is integral to this service.

1.2 To what extent do children feel safe, happy and valued?

Children are very settled and comfortable with the staff. They have developed good attachments with the small and consistent staff group. They approach staff confidently if they need extra reassurance or cuddles. Staff are responsive to children's needs and know them well. For example, staff are sensitive to those children who show a preference for a particular carer and organise themselves so they can provide nurturing and sensitive care effectively. This helps children feel relaxed and confident. Children know the routine which helps them feel secure. Their work is celebrated through displays, which together with activities such as creating the 'igloo', helps them feel valued and a sense of ownership of the environment. Older children are forming friendships and enjoy creating their own games, happily inviting staff to join in with their play, dancing with them to their favourite music.

Children are relaxed and feel secure.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children are developing good social skills and interact well with each other and the staff. They are able to take turns well. For example, during a craft activity they waited patiently to choose their colour card and happily took turns to mix the paint. They enjoy social occasions such as snack and meal times, and older children in particular enjoy chatting and engaging with the staff and their peers. Children cooperate well with staff to, for example, wash their hands before snack time. They respond well to gentle intervention from staff if they are any minor disputes. Older children play co-operatively together and are beginning to show concern for their friends. For example, one child put their arm around another during a story time session.

Children interact well with their peers and staff.

1.4 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Children are happy and enjoy their play and activities. They are very involved in what they are doing and spend time on their tasks. For example, some children were very engaged with the ice and paint. With support from staff, they mixed colours, painted shapes and explored the ice. Children show lots of interest in their play. They were eager to go outdoors and jumped up and down with excitement. Outside, children had great fun on the bikes, in the sand pit and on the climbing frame. They spent time in the mud kitchen, cooking and looking for worms, singing songs with the staff while they played. They enjoy circle times and engage keenly in the activities such as choosing items from the box or responding to questions from staff about the story. Children especially enjoy the physical play at the end of the sessions and have a great time stamping their feet, singing and dancing with the staff.

Children are very engaged in their activities and enjoy their play and learning.

1.5 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?

Children are able to take part in a good range of activities which help them learn new skills. The activities engage their interests, which together with skilful interactions from staff, help promote their learning. Children are developing their self-help skills and are becoming increasingly independent. They wash their hands, sometimes with a little support, and manage their snacks and lunch well by themselves. They confidently help themselves to the resources and the accessible, clearly labelled boxes help them to tidy up easily. They can recognise their coats and are increasingly able to put them on independently. However, children do not always have the opportunity to develop their self-help skills enough during snack times. For example, pouring their own drinks or buttering their own crumpets.

Children are motivated and enjoy a good range of play opportunities which help them progress.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Staff are committed to supporting children and promoting their learning, development and well-being. They know the children very well and provide very sensitive and responsive care. They join in with children's play at the appropriate times to help them develop their language skills and sense of wonder. They implement the relevant policies well and work with parents to ensure children's health and welfare is promoted.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff are suitably trained and implement the required policies and procedures appropriately to ensure that children's health and welfare is promoted. They are familiar with the relevant policies and implement them appropriately. Staff have attended training in child protection and are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about a child. The group have undertaken an audit of infection control and as a result have provided a nappy changing procedure which staff implement suitably. Staff are aware of children with allergies and take appropriate steps to protect children's health. However, allergens in the food provided are not recorded. The nursery follows schemes and implements activities to promote all aspects of children's health. For example, the staff have organised sessions with parents to support them with ideas for healthy lunch boxes, and staff ensure children enjoy healthy snacks such as crumpets and fruit. Children are encouraged to learn about the importance of dental hygiene and staff support them to clean their teeth regularly. Since the previous inspection, staff have provided children with a water station, so children can easily help themselves to a drink throughout the day. Staff encourage children to take part in lots of physical play. They make sure children have access to coats and wellingtons so they can go outdoors even in inclement weather. They follow suitable procedures for taking children out on local trips and transporting them in cars to ensure children's safety. However, risk assessments for local outings and car journeys are not provided to show all hazards have been identified and appropriate measures put in place to mitigate any risks. Staff all hold up-to-date, appropriate first aid qualifications and ensure accident logs are completed appropriately. Fire drills to leave the building are practised regularly with the children so they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Staff promote children's health, safety and welfare well.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

Staff are consistent in their approach and promote children's social skills very well. They are kind and gentle when talking to the children and each other which creates a relaxed and happy atmosphere. They use positive and sensitive strategies to help children manage difficult feelings such as sharing. For example, staff encouraged children struggling to share a jigsaw by calmly supporting them to work together as a team, modelling the required behaviour and praising them for their efforts. Staff sit with children at meal and snack times to model good social skills. They provide opportunities for children to practise taking turns such as circle times and offer lots of praise and encouragement when children try and do things for themselves. Staff know the children well and the high levels of support, praise and encouragement from staff promotes children's self-esteem and encourages their self-confidence.

Staff use consistent and positive strategies to promote children's interactions effectively.

2.3 How well do practitioners promote children's play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?

Staff are committed to helping children develop and make good progress. They follow good systems to monitor children's progress and plan activities which engage their interests and promote their skills. They interact very positively with the children and encourage their sense of wonder. For example, staff at a craft activity helped children think excitedly about what colour they would make if they added white to red; staff working with children in the tough spot with ice and different colour paints helped the children think about how the ice felt and what happens as it warms up. Staff engage children in lots of conversations to help promote their language skills. For example, staff model play in the home corner whilst talking with the children about the different vegetables and different healthy foods. Staff encourage children to sing songs as they play and sing along with them. Staff help set challenges for children and support them to succeed. For example, staff challenged and supported children in the construction area to see if they could work together to build a track. Staff know when to intervene with children's play and when to support from a distance and allow children to explore uninterrupted. Staff try and support parents to help their children at home. For example, they send home packs with games to play and use social media to show parents the activities their children are taking part in at the group to encourage conversations at home. The nursery encourages children to learn about their community and enrich their experiences through visits to, for example, the local supermarket and opticians. Staff invite visitors to the setting to enhance children's learning, such as the fire service and road safety officer. They use festivals such as Divali and Chinese New Year to help children learn about different cultures. Staff use Welsh well with the children through circle time activities and simple questions. They work closely with outside agencies such as health visitors and educational psychologists to support children with additional needs.

Staff support children's learning play and learning well.

3. Environment

Summary

The playroom is welcoming and calm, and different play areas and resources are thoughtfully set out so children are excited to come into the group and play. The outside area encourages children to be active and enjoy messy and creative play. Overall, the RPs and staff implement good systems to ensure the environment is safe.

Our findings

3.1 How well do leaders ensure the safety of the environment?

Overall, staff follow appropriate procedures to ensure the environment is safe. Staff can control who enters the room and the gate leading from the outdoor play area is secured when children are playing outside. Daily checklists are followed to ensure hazards are identified and risks mitigated, and staff are vigilant in making sure the premises remains safe throughout the day. For example, spilt sand is swept up promptly. Written risk assessments for the premises showing hazards identified and the measures put in place to mitigate the associated risks were not provided. This was addressed during the course of the inspection. The group has sole use of a room within Rhos y Fedwen primary school and there is a Service Level Agreement in place so the RPs can be assured the appropriate safety checks for the building are carried out. To improve this further we discussed ensuring copies of these checks are kept by the group. The premises is cleaned daily by the school and the kitchen has been awarded a level 5 food safety rating, showing appropriate procedures are in place to maintain a safe environment and protect children's health.

Overall, staff implement suitable measures to ensure the environment is safe for children.

3.2 How well do leaders ensure the suitability of the environment?

The RPs have worked hard to develop the learning environment and create a calm space with interesting areas for play. Baskets are clearly labelled with pictures of the resources and are placed at child height so children can find what they want to play with easily. There is plenty of space for children to enjoy circle times and physical play and cosy areas where children can relax. The environment generally promotes children's independence. For example the washrooms are easily accessible and low level coat hooks allow children to hang their belongings up by themselves. However, children cannot easily access their coats during the session as the door leading to the foyer is a fire door and cannot be left open. This also means children are unable to move freely between the indoors and outside, although staff manage this well so there is minimal impact on the children. The RPs have made significant improvements to

the outside play space. The different areas encourage children to explore and enjoy lots of active and messy play. There are also areas for mark making and construction and places for children to plant vegetables and herbs to enhance their learning.

The environment provides a welcoming, calm and interesting play space which promotes children's learning and overall, supports their independence.

3.3 How well do leaders ensure the quality of resources and equipment?

Resources, furniture and equipment for both indoors and outside are of good quality and are appropriate to children's age and stage of development. The play resources are carefully selected to encourage children's play and learning and allow them make choices easily. Outside, staff ensure children have access to many natural and real resources such as leaves, mud, grass, wood and crates. The music station is made from re-used, real resources and children are able to use household materials within their play. For example, they have whisks and wooden spoons to use in the sand. The group have developed the use of IT resources with children. For example, small recorders were used to help children re-listen to the story of *The Gruffalo*. Resources to help children learn about diversity and promote their cultural awareness are introduced in line with specific topics such as Chinese New Year. The RPs ensure specialist equipment and play resources are provided or adapted for children with identified additional needs. Staff follow good procedures to ensure toys and equipment are cleaned regularly.

The RPs and staff ensure the resources and equipment of are of a good standard, are interesting, and promote children's learning and involvement.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

The RPs work very closely with staff to create an environment which supports a strong team spirit. This enables the RPs to implement good improvements and ensure positive outcomes for children. Record keeping is adequate but requires some improvement. The RPs foster good relationships with a range of partners and strive to work closely with parents to help them support their child's developing skills.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

Leaders have a clear vision for the service and they are well supported by staff to bring about improvements and implement changes. Overall, the statement of purpose provides a good picture of the service, although some amendments were needed to provide clarification for parents. These were addressed during the course of the inspection. Policies generally reflect the service and these are implemented well by staff to ensure children are safe and their well-being is promoted. We notified the RPs the service did not comply fully with the regulations. This is because daily attendance registers did not include the actual times of attendance of staff and children, and leaders did not undertake regular supervisions with staff. The RPs agreed to review the arrangements for staff supervision. Following the inspection they told us they have initiated discussions with their early years advisor to bring about the required changes in relation to supervisions. Daily attendance registers were amended appropriately following the inspection. CIW is therefore not taking any further action.

Leadership is adequate.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

The RPs have developed a purposeful system of self evaluation which reflects on what the service does well and areas for improvement. They work very much as a team with staff to involve their views and ideas for improvement and work together to implement these. The group encourages parents to give their ideas to improve the service. Children's views are sought as an ongoing process. The RPs work closely with the early years advisor, outside professionals and the local authority to bring about meaningful changes to improve outcomes for children. The annual review report outlines the setting's strengths and areas for development clearly. However, it doesn't clearly show contributions from staff, parents and outside professionals or how children's ideas are followed up. The setting's development plan sets out how the areas for improvement will be achieved well, and these are evaluated for their effectiveness at the end of each year. As a result, the service continues to make worthwhile improvements.

RPs implement an effective system for monitoring their service and identifying meaningful and achievable improvements.

4.3 How effective is the management of practitioners, staff and other resources?

RPs work very closely with staff and there is a strong ethos of support and teamwork. There are suitable procedures for the recruitment of staff. However, staff files could be better organised so evidence of the most recent training attended is easier to locate. New staff receive appropriate support so they are familiar with the routines, policies and their responsibilities. There is a suitable policy in place to support their induction. However, there is no documentation to evidence that the induction is carried out successfully. Staff are suitably qualified and the annual appraisal system supports staff to identify further training needs. The RPs and staff meet each morning to discuss any issues and ensure they are confident and clear of their roles that day. However, there are no systems for formal staff supervisions to show how staff are supported in addition to their annual appraisal.

RPs and staff work closely together and there is a good sense of teamwork which results in high staff moral and improving outcomes for children.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

The RPs work effectively with a range of partners including the local authority, local primary schools, and the early years advisor. This help make positive contributions to children's well-being. The RPs meet regularly with local schools to ensure arrangements for children to move on the next stage in their learning are effective. They have developed very good links with the school in which they are based so children can visit their new setting and become familiar with the nursery staff before they move on. They welcome the support of the local authority and early years advisor to help develop their setting. They work closely with outside professionals to support children with additional needs such as Portage. They foster positive relationships with parents and offer support and ideas to help parents enrich their children's learning experiences at home. For example, they encourage parents to attend a weekly story session with them at the school, and they send home weekly packs to help parents support their child's development, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy. They also make suggestion to parents about current activities in the local community which would provide good experiences for their children. The group has good links with the local community and regularly visits the local police station, library, and parks to enrich children's learning experiences.

The RPs value the importance of effective relationships with a range of partners to support children's well-being and development.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Areas of non compliance from this inspection

We notified the RPs the service was not compliant with the following regulation:

- Regulation 29 (3)(a) - Employment of staff: This is because the RPs had not ensured that staff receive formal supervision to support their practice.

We have not issued a non compliance notice on this occasion because there was no significant impact for children using the service. We expect the RPs to take action to rectify this issue and it will be followed up at the next inspection.

5.3 Recommendations for improvement

- Review arrangements for snack time so children have greater opportunities to develop their self-help skills;
- record allergens in the food provided;
- provide a risk assessment for outings, to include information about walking with children and transporting them in cars, and risk assessments for the premises;
- review policies and procedures to ensure they accurately reflect current practice at the setting;
- reflect the views of parents, staff, professionals and children in the quality of care review so they can see clearly how their views are influencing the development of the service, and
- provide an appropriate checklist to evidence good practice in relation to staff induction, and review staff files so relevant information is easier to locate.

6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full inspection undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. One inspector undertook two visits to the service, over two days.

- We observed children undertaking their activities and the care provided by the staff;
- we used the Short Observation Framework for Inspection (SOFI) tool to assess the quality of interactions;
- we spoke with one parent and one grandparent at the service to obtain their views;
- we looked at an extensive range of records and documents including staff files, policies and procedures, children's records and planning;
- we looked at the premises, risk assessments and other documentation relating to safety measures and took account of the security measures in place;
- we spoke with the RPs and staff present during the inspection and reviewed to obtain their views, and clarify information about the running of the group and future plans and
- our findings were fed back to the RPs, and all recommendations and non compliance were discussed.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website:

www.careinspectorate.wales

About the service

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Person	Melanie Madden Leanna Davies
Person in charge	Melanie Madden Leanna Davies
Registered maximum number of places	20
Age range of children	2 – 5 years
Opening hours	9 am – 11.30 am 12.30 pm – 3 pm Lunch time 11.30 am – 12.30 pm Monday to Friday, 49 weeks of the year
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	30 September 2016
Dates of this inspection visit	25 and 28 January 2019
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	Yes
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	This is a service that does not provide an "Active Offer" of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of people/children who use the service. This is because the service is situated in a primarily English speaking area. However, we recommend that the service provider considers the Welsh Government's "More Than Just words" strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care.
Additional Information: This service is registered to provide the free childcare offer for 3 to 4 year olds.	