



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

A report on

Little Acorns at Christ the Word

**Christ the Word Catholic School, Cefndy Road
Rhyl
Denbighsire
LL18 2EU**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Little Acorns at Christ the Word

Name of setting	Little Acorns at Christ the Word
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Dawn Anderson
Person in charge	Craig Taylor
Number of places	69
Age range of children	2 - 11
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	12
Number of children who receive funding for early education	2
Opening days / times	08.00 to 18.00 term time and holidays.
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.'
Date of previous CIW inspection	12/12/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection	This is the first inspection.
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	20/02/2024

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Well-being	Excellent
Learning (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	
Care and development	Excellent
Teaching and assessment (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	Excellent
Environment	Good
Leadership and management	Excellent

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop the outdoor area to further enhance experiences that engage and challenge children effectively

What happens next

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

CIW and Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a case study on its work in relation to promoting independence, for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Nearly all children contribute superbly to how they play and learn. The voice of the children is exceptionally strong. They choose their own resources, which enables them to make effective choices and develop their play well. Nearly all young children enjoy making decisions. For example, they push up their sleeves and wash and dry their own hands without any support when their hands are dirty. Children choose where and when to play, using both the indoor and outdoor learning environments effectively. Practitioners respect their choices and listen to their ideas consistently.

Children of all ages settle exceptionally well and feel secure as they play alongside their friends confidently. Nearly all enjoy their play and are excited playing with toy pigs in muddy water and transferring them to clean water to give them a wash. Children as young as two make their needs known exceptionally well and have developed their own way of communicating using non-verbal signs. They demonstrate their skills, such as using the cameras to take photographs of their friends, successfully. Nearly all children join in with songs and show they are happy by spontaneously singing and dancing while waiting for their tooth brushing.

Children of all ages interact with each other and practitioners exceptionally well. They take photographs of their friends and help them to put on funny glasses with much amusement when these are upside down. Many children are extremely kind and thoughtful to each other and will help with putting on a coat or letting a friend take a turn on a bike. Most are interested in what their friends are doing and even the youngest children proudly show another way of coming down the slide. Children are

aware of rules, such as reminding a friend not to touch the toothpaste while waiting to brush their teeth.

Nearly all children are active and learn through play. They are curious and experiment with water, noting that the harder they splash, the higher the water rises. Children are exceptionally considerate, and their delight is apparent when five of the youngest children sit in the car. They work together highly effectively until everyone in the car has a seat they have chosen and is happy. Children enjoy opportunities to develop physical strength such as carefully carrying water in a bucket to wash the car.

Nearly all children develop independence remarkably well, including the youngest children. They cut vegetables and prepare melon for snack with minimal support. Nearly all children select their own snack and, when they have finished, recycle what is left. All children wash their own plates and mugs knowing the best way to let them drain is upside down.

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

There is no report on children's learning. This is because the number of three or four-year-old children present at the time of the inspection that do not receive funded education elsewhere was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners support children's health and well-being highly effectively. They attend a suitable range of courses and follow good practice relating to safeguarding children. They know what to do if they have concerns about a child. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners pay excellent attention to all aspects of hygiene. For example, they wear hair nets and aprons to prepare a healthy snack. Practitioners ensure water is available if children do not bring their own drinks. They ensure that children's allergies are recorded and displayed with a photo of the child so that everyone can enjoy their snack safely. Practitioners keep effective, clear records and keep parents informed consistently. For example, they record children's health care needs, attendance and minor injuries clearly and accurately, which supports them to provide an outstanding level of care to the children.'

Practitioners provide excellent support for children, for example when they arrive at the setting. They give children plenty of time to settle and play. Practitioners are thoughtful, calm and gentle with the children and always use positive behaviour management strategies highly effectively. As a result, they support children and meet their individual needs exceptionally well. They speak and sign to children sensitively and use praise well. Practitioners often use Welsh effectively. They compliment the children for good chopping and tell them they are strong. This encourages the children to persevere longer with their task of cutting carrots. Practitioners are vigilant attending to children's needs, for example retying shoes laces. They remind children of simple rules such as being careful not to splash their friends and to put on an

apron, so they don't get wet. They know instinctively when to stand back and allow children to discover on their own.

Practitioners promote children's play, learning and development exceptionally well, often using good humour to the delight of the older children. Practitioners adapt the provision to respond effectively to children's additional learning needs. For example, a child did not want to go outside so a practitioner stayed inside and they played together with the farm, making the child feel safe and happy. Practitioners know the children superbly well. They complete a one-page profile to identify any additional needs and visit them at home before they start. This ensures that they can provide an exceptional level of care for them. Practitioners know when to join in or intervene with an offer of help. They recognise a teaching moment effectively, such as asking the children what they can hear and then listening to birds singing.

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

Practitioners have a very affectionate and warm relationship with children and treat them with care and respect. They know the children extremely well and use their knowledge of child development effectively to support them to make progress from their starting points.

The principles of the Curriculum for Wales are reflected very strongly in the quality of the practice that practitioners provide for the children. They create an engaging indoor learning environment that is thoughtfully designed to develop children's skills effectively through play. Practitioners expertly respond to children's interests and abilities to provide meaningful learning experiences. For example, following the children's recent interest in farms, adults add farm vehicles and farm animals to the construction area.

Practitioners model language very well and skilfully know when to intervene to extend the children's vocabulary. They develop children's creative and numeracy skills successfully through valuable authentic experiences, such as role-play. For example, practitioners take delight in joining the children to hunt for a superhero and use simple positional language to describe where the superhero could be hiding.

Practitioners ensure that there are high quality opportunities for children to develop their literacy skills. There is a cosy book area where practitioners read stories to the children with warmth and enthusiasm. Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities for children to develop their mark making skills, using a range of media such as chalk, different sized paint brushes and felt tip pens.

Practitioners provide purposeful opportunities for children to use digital equipment in their play. For example, whilst playing on a laptop, the children model self-registration by calling out other children's names and inviting them to answer in Welsh.

Practitioners are consistent and extremely skilful in their approach to managing behaviour. As a result, there is a calm and happy ethos. Practitioners develop children's social skills very effectively. They encourage children to be kind and to share resources.

Practitioners support children to develop a sense of awe and wonder effectively. They provide opportunities for children to observe and care for their pet giant land snail. They encourage children to actively explore their surroundings and children delight in discussing minibeasts they find outside with practitioners.

Practitioners develop children's awareness of diversity in the wider world by celebrating festivals such as Chinese New Year. They ensure that diverse and authentic representation is offered through storybooks and in their learning environment. Practitioners actively promote the cultural heritage of Wales by celebrating Saint David's Day and Saint Dwynwen's Day. Welsh artefacts are displayed purposefully around the setting. Practitioners promote the Welsh language very well, using simple Welsh phrases in their interactions with children. Welsh songs and rhymes are used effectively to support routines, for example during tidy up time or when the children are brushing their teeth.

Practitioners develop a strong sense of belonging within their community. For example, they organise beneficial visits in their local area for the children and they display pictures of local landmarks in the setting. They also display pictures of the children's families to help create a further sense of belonging.

Practitioners have adopted a team approach to planning, which is highly effective to provide learning experiences that engage children well. They use valuable observations to purposefully plan the next steps in children's learning and to make beneficial changes in the environment. For example, following children's recent interest in using scissors, practitioners provide further opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills effectively. They provide a range of resources including different types of scissors, paper, mark making equipment and glue.

Practitioners provide sufficient opportunities in the outdoor environment for children to develop their physical skills. However, practitioners do not always plan well enough to provide beneficial learning experiences for children in the outdoor area. Practitioners provide parents and carers with beneficial information about their children's development orally, in progress booklets and via a secure social media platform.

Environment: Good

Leaders ensure that the environment is safe for children, including ensuring that the building is secure and children are supervised well. Risk assessments on site and off site effectively identify any potential hazards and keep children safe, including an outing sheet when they visit the beach or the castle. Leaders maintain a daily cleaning log with good attention to infection control. They ensure that the setting is clean with an effective level of daily hygiene. They carry out and record regular fire drills, which show that leaders and practitioners are aware of how to evacuate safely in the event of an emergency.

Leaders provide an effective play and learning environment with plenty of space to move around. They display a few pieces of children's work to give them a sense of achievement and belonging. Leaders ensure that the setting is organised to provide a space where all children have equal access to activities and areas of the provision. Leaders make sure that children are well cared for in a supportive and relaxing

learning environment, which considers children's interests and their individual needs well.

Leaders ensure that children have easy access to a range of resources and equipment that are of good quality and mostly recycled, such as a table and seats made from wooden crates. Fruit for snack preparation, flowers for still life drawing, sand and water lend themselves to sensory and discovery play effectively. Outside, leaders provide loose parts for building, tubs for planting and a mud kitchen with metal utensils, pots and pans. A decommissioned toaster and microwave add a real-life element to the children's play. Leaders provide areas for balancing, sliding and digging, which are easily accessible and enable children to develop physical skills. Leaders reflect a diverse community effectively with figures and stories and by celebrating traditions from different countries. Practitioners use resources effectively to keep children's interests, for example adding chocolate powder to make muddy water for the toy pigs. Leaders supply suitable low wooden tables, chairs and rugs in an uncluttered environment to enable everyone to work at their level of choice and enjoy their play and learning together.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders are extremely enthusiastic and passionate about the work of the setting. They manage and support staff exceptionally well and there is a very strong culture of collaboration. As a result, leaders and practitioners work exceptionally well together as a team, which creates a positive, happy and caring ethos.

Leaders set high expectations for themselves and practitioners. As a result, practitioners are extremely effective in supporting children's well-being, learning and play. Leaders have a clear vision for the setting, which is based on Christian values and reflected in their statement of purpose.

Leaders and practitioners use a range of self-evaluation systems very effectively to review their work. As a result, they confidently know what the setting does well and can identify areas that they need to improve. Leaders and practitioners use information from a range of sources to write a reflective self-evaluation report and to develop an effective setting improvement plan. Leaders are also supported by a range of partners that help them to evaluate and improve the quality of the provision and children's outcomes effectively. For example, they work alongside practitioners from the local school to further develop the quality of the play and learning environment and provision for the children. Leaders and practitioners highly value all support and advice they receive and use it as part of their self-evaluation processes.

Leaders use available grants very wisely to buy resources to support children's learning experiences and to improve the environment and provide relevant training for practitioners. For example, they used the Early Years Development Grant purposefully to support children's speech and language skills.

Leaders ensure that there is a range of useful and detailed policies and procedures in place to support practitioners to keep children safe. Leaders have regard for regulations and national minimum standards when reviewing policies and procedures. There are comprehensive procedures for staff recruitment and for ensuring staff suitability. Practitioners are highly valued and leaders prioritise the

well-being of staff. Leaders support practitioners effectively through regular appraisals and supervisions.

Leaders place great emphasis on developing a highly skilled team of practitioners. They ensure all practitioners can access a range of useful training opportunities that enable them to keep up-to-date and build on their skills. Leaders have worked in partnership with the local authority early education team and other settings in the area to implement the Curriculum for Wales successfully and to share effective practice with other settings.

Leaders and practitioners have excellent partnership with parents and carers. They arrange home visits before many of the children start at the setting. They make effective use of a parenting app to share observations of the children and provide updates about the service. Leaders have an open-door policy, enabling parents and carers to talk to staff daily. Parents and carers can visit the setting every term to discuss their child's progress. Leaders implement effective transition arrangements that support children to move confidently to their primary education.

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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