



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Little Acorns Day Care Nursery Ltd
Llynfi Enterprise Park
Heol Ty Gwyn
Maesteg
Bridgend
CF34 0BQ**

Date of inspection: 6-7 November 2014

by

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Reporting Inspector

for

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Context

Little Acorns is a private day care nursery registered in October 2006. It is situated in a purpose built unit on the Llynfi Enterprise Park in the town of Maesteg. Little Acorns is open daily from Monday to Friday and currently provides care and education for children aged between six weeks and four years. It also provides wrap around care for children up to the age of eleven years. In total fifty seven children are registered at the nursery. There are five members of staff responsible for the pre-school including the two nursery managers.

At the time of the inspection there were no four-year-olds and only five three-year-olds registered. A very few children were funded by the local authority. All the children are white British and speak English as their first language. There are a very few children who have additional learning needs.

The playgroup was inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in July 2014 and was last inspected by Estyn in May 2007.

Summary

The Setting's current performance	Good
The Setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Performance is good because:

- the setting provides an exceptionally good range of high quality learning experiences for children;
- learning activities provide good opportunities for children to practice and develop their skills;
- teaching is consistently good with examples of outstanding practice;
- children are safe, well cared for and supported effectively and
- the learning environment is highly engaging and is enriched by a superb range of visits and visitors.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects are good because:

- managers have a very clear vision for the setting;
- staff are highly committed to improving their own practice;
- the setting uses self-evaluation successfully to set suitable targets for development;
- there is a proven track record of securing improvement and
- the setting has worked hard to develop community partnerships that make a highly effectively contribution to enhancing its provision.

Recommendations

R1. Continue to involve children in planning their own learning

R2. Continue to develop more evaluative assessment for learning

R3. Develop the leadership role of practitioners

What happens next?

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

'Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.'

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Excellent

The setting provides a broad range of well-planned and highly effective learning experiences that meet the needs of the children exceptionally well. Indoor and outdoor activities give equal priority to all areas of learning and successfully address the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Curriculum planning is sufficiently flexible to enable practitioners to respond spontaneously to the changing interests of very young children. For example, when the children unexpectedly decide they would like a story in the 'cwtch cottage' with twinkly light, this can be easily accommodated.

There are superb planned opportunities for children to develop their curiosity, thinking and problem solving skills. An exceptional number of regular trips to local businesses, such as the supermarket, bank and post office and to the nearby woodland, fire their enthusiasm to learn more for themselves. This is an outstanding feature of the work of the setting.

The curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. There are frequent, regular, opportunities for children to practice their numeracy, literacy and ICT skills in their play. Practitioners plan well to support children with additional learning needs (ALN).

The setting promotes children's early mark making skills particularly well. There are effective routines that enable children to quickly recognise their names and those of their friends. Practitioners extend children's early reading skills successfully by regularly sharing stories with them. They provide good opportunities for children to enjoy a wide variety of books independently, including those they choose for themselves in the local library.

Practitioners consistently use the outdoor environment imaginatively to encourage children to experiment with new experiences. A good example is when children collect hailstones which they decide to keep in the freezer to play with another day.

There are extensive opportunities for children to hear Welsh spoken and to speak it themselves. Practitioners use the Welsh language very well and it forms an integral part of daily routines. Staff follow an effective learning programme to develop the children's Welsh language skills systematically. The setting promotes children's

understanding of Welsh culture and heritage very successfully through regular visits to the local area, as well as to Cardiff Bay and Cardiff Castle. They also celebrate national events such as St David`s Day and Welsh Speakers Day.

Practitioners successfully develop children`s understanding of other cultures when they celebrate Divali and Chinese New Year. The setting offers excellent opportunities for children to learn about life in other parts of the world when they study their `Friends around the World` topic.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is consistently good across focused tasks, enhanced and continuous provision and there are a few exceptional or outstanding elements. The way in which practitioners respond spontaneously at times to children`s ideas for learning is outstanding. For example, practitioners allow children to experiment with frozen hailstones collected earlier, rather than the planned activity. This results in high quality learning because the children are exceptionally well motivated and enthusiastic.

On another occasion practitioners were highly effective in organising a music session in response to the children`s own ideas. This activity offered a superb opportunity for children to develop exceptional control in using their chosen musical instruments to accompany a familiar song.

Practitioners have a very good relationship with the children and an excellent understanding of how they like to learn. They have an infectious energy and enthusiasm that inspires the children to do their best. They also understand when to guide the children and when to allow them freedom to experiment and learn from their mistakes. They use questioning very well to check understanding and develop the children`s ideas.

Children are assessed regularly and practitioners give them encouragement and useful feedback on how to improve. There are good systems in place to track children`s progress, however this information is not always used to inform planning. The setting provides parents with detailed annual reports and very comprehensive information on a daily basis.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Members of staff are excellent models of care and respect for others. They continually use comments like `impressive teamwork` or `great sharing` to encourage consistently high standards of co-operation and behaviour. There are very good systems that help children understand the difference between right and wrong. For example, the friendship tree that the children use to record kind deeds. There are excellent opportunities for children to develop their social skills when they take part in numerous trips and events or meet with visitors.

The setting supports healthy lifestyles and healthy eating successfully. There are effective personal hygiene routines that children willingly follow. The setting promotes the benefits of physical activity very well through outdoor play and walks as well as a broad range of sports and games. Children learn about the need to recycle and conserve energy.

Practitioners work sensitively with parents when their children are first admitted to the setting to ensure they feel safe and confident. There are good arrangements to identify and address any additional learning needs that children may have. There are effective links with health professionals and good support is available for children with ALN. The setting ensures that children with particular needs are exceptionally well supported when they make a phased transfer to their new school.

There are exceptional arrangements for children to develop their spiritual awareness through studying the natural world, for example when they monitor the life cycle of real butterflies and care for the guinea pigs. There are very good opportunities for children to learn about the lives of other people when they communicate with a child they sponsor in Uganda.

The setting provides good opportunities for children to develop a beneficial understanding of their own and other cultures. For example, they celebrate St David's Day and Divali, visit the local Chinese restaurant at Chinese New Year and take part in Welsh Speakers Day.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern. There are good procedures for managing the safety of the children at all times.

Learning environment: Excellent

There is a very stimulating ethos to the setting. This engages the children immediately and encourages them to be eager and inquisitive learners. Staff are highly attuned to ensuring that all the children have equal access to everything the nursery has to offer. They are very sensitive to any particular needs, for example dietary requirements. Practitioners make considerable effort not to make children feel different. When cooking, recipes are adapted for those children with dairy intolerance or the child's own ingredients are subtly modified so that nobody notices.

The accommodation for children is very good. There is plenty of space for them to play freely both inside and out of doors and make choices about what they would like to do. The nursery is exceptionally well-resourced. There is an extensive collection of stimulating and interesting toys and equipment for children to access themselves that supports their learning in all areas of the curriculum. The adults successfully arrange the learning environment in a way that encourages children to eagerly engage in mark-making, counting, investigation and creative activities. Quality displays of children's work, particularly their early writing, and their ideas for learning enhance the environment.

Outdoor provision is high quality and used very effectively to stimulate curiosity and experimentation. A tree house and an attractive cwtych cottage provide a perfect

opportunity for developing children`s creative imagination. There is easy access to a mountain trail, park and forestry and the setting uses this effectively to further enhance the learning environment. Practitioners make the most of opportunities to use real animals to promote care and respect for the natural world, for example when children observe the development of frogspawn and butterflies. There are plenty of opportunities for growing and planting.

An outstanding variety of educational visits into the local area offer children superb opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, when the children help to make bread at the local supermarket and then refine these skills back at nursery where they make their own loaves. The nursery provides exceptionally good opportunities for children to learn about the world of work when they welcome numerous visitors from the local community.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The managers have a very clear vision for the nursery and work hard to achieve this. They are successful in their aim to provide as many real life learning experiences for children as possible.

Managers and practitioners work well together as an effective team for the benefit of the children. They hold regular meetings to discuss children`s day-to-day progress, evaluate learning and plan activities. Practitioners appreciate the opportunity to share their ideas at these meetings and they feel that their views are valued. However, they are not always fully involved in planning long term strategies to raise standards for pre-school children.

Practitioners have clear job descriptions and understand their responsibilities very well. There are appropriate processes in place to manage their performance and to identify and support any training needs.

All practitioners are very experienced and well informed. They have an exceptionally good understanding of the Foundation Phase philosophy. They are reflective and keen to take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development to improve their performance.

The setting takes appropriate account of local and national priorities. Outdoor play and physical activity are given high priority and the setting places a strong emphasis on developing children`s literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

Improving quality: Good

Managers and practitioners gather a wide range of first-hand evidence to help them plan for improvement. They use this information successfully to set appropriate targets and meet together regularly to evaluate progress.

Managers visit other settings to gain new ideas and to share their own good practice. There are suitable opportunities for practitioners to meet with colleagues in other settings to develop their professionalism. This enables managers and staff to make changes that impact on outcomes for children.

There are effective systems that successfully seek the views of parents and carers as well as staff. The setting has recently begun to involve the children more effectively in saying what they would like to do in nursery. The setting regularly responds to the views of parents in making improvements. For example, the diaries have been refined to give more personalised feedback

The self-evaluation document is useful in correctly identifying what the setting does well. The setting's previous actions have led to improvement, for example their outdoor provision. However, targets for improvement are not always clearly linked to raising standards.

Partnership working: Good

Partnerships with parents are highly effective. The setting ensures that parents receive regular feedback that helps them feel confident that their children are happy and safe. Effective use of learning journals ensures that parents are involved in their children's education exceptionally well.

Little Acorns has made good progress with its plans to develop a closer working relationship with other settings, particularly the Welsh nursery, so that all staff can regularly share good practice. There is a positive relationship with the local authority advisory teacher and practitioners regularly attend group training sessions.

There are very good partnerships with local primary schools that ensure children make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education. Practitioners share a wealth of information about them with their new teacher. Practitioners liaise effectively with a range of voluntary organisations and support agencies that help them improve children's learning and wellbeing.

Links with the local community are outstanding. The setting holds an annual open day to which families, friends, neighbours and local businesses are invited. This contributes very effectively to a greater understanding of each other's needs. The regular educational visits that happen, as a result of these partnerships, make a significant contribution to high quality learning experiences for children.

Resource management: Good

Managers ensure that the setting has enough suitably qualified staff and resources to support children's learning well. The setting makes good use of staff expertise to ensure that there is consistently good provision in different areas of the curriculum, for example in Welsh and additional learning needs. Members of staff receive relevant regular training that successfully meets their development needs.

The setting makes very effective use of local resources to provide excellent opportunities for learning. It also skilfully utilises additional staff from other areas of its work, for example after school provision and holiday clubs, to further enhance provision for nursery children.

The funding manager has a good understanding of the budget and ensures that spending priorities have a clear educational purpose. Both managers ensure that local authority funding is carefully spent, for example on developing physical play. The resulting resources have made an outstanding contribution to learning.

Overall, the setting offers consistently good provision for pre-school children and gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Janet Heather Marsden	Reporting Inspector
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Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh.</p>

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.