



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru  
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

# Childcare Inspection Report on

**Acorns Nurseries**

**Alma House  
Lighthouse Road  
Duffryn  
Newport  
NP10 8TG**



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## **Description of the service**

Acorns Nurseries is one of several private nurseries owned by Acorns Nurseries Ltd. It is situated in the Duffryn area of Newport and is registered with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to provide care for 48 children under 12 years of age. The nursery operates from a large converted building with separate play rooms for each age group and two dining/art and craft rooms. The nursery operates each week day between 7.30am and 6.00pm providing full and part-time care, all year round. Acorns Nurseries Ltd have nominated a responsible individual (RI) and employ two part time persons in charge (PiC) to run the nursery on a daily basis. The main language of the service is English with incidental Welsh included daily.

## **Summary of our findings**

### **1. Overall assessment**

Acorns is a very well managed service. Children are happy, confident and make good progress in line with their age and stage of development. The building is maintained to a very high standard and is warm and welcoming. A well qualified and committed staff team provide nurturing care. Paperwork is of a very good standard and meets the requirements of The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010 and National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for Children (2016) (NMS). The PiCs and staff team were fully engaged with the inspection process and were open and transparent throughout.

### **2. Improvements**

Recommendations from the previous inspection have been implemented:

- The statement of purpose has been updated and
- children's assessments include information about on-going progress and next steps for development.

### **3. Requirements and recommendations**

There were no areas of no-compliance identified during this inspection. Good practice recommendations are referred to in the body of the report and are summarised at the end.

# **1. Well-being**

## **Summary**

Children are happy and settled at the service. They have formed good relationships with adults who care for them. There are plenty of opportunities for children to follow their own interests and their contributions are valued.

## **Our findings**

### **1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?**

Children at the service have a voice and all attempts to communicate are valued.

We saw that children were consulted appropriately and their ideas and evaluations of activities were included in the topic planning. Children had many opportunities to follow their own interests and were able to make their own decisions as they knew the options available to them. Conversation was encouraged and children were confident to communicate as they knew they would be listened to. We saw children approaching practitioners to ask for help or just to have a chat. At lunch time we saw that children were keen to sit with the staff and engaged happily in conversation. We saw that one child who didn't like the meal provided was given an alternative, demonstrating that children's preferences are respected.

Children's communication is valued and their opinions are taken into consideration.

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

Children at the service settle well and cope with separation from their parents.

Children had clearly formed good bonds with their key workers which gave them a sense of security. Routines at the service were well established which ensured that children develop confidence. Children played happily together and with staff who obviously knew them well. Younger children and babies were confident to seek affection from familiar people and were responded to warmly. Older children were confident to ask staff for help when needed demonstrating that they feel valued and know that their needs will be responded to. We saw that in the entrance foyer there was a 'WOW Tree' which was used to celebrate children's achievements and special occasions. This gives children a sense of pride and belonging.

Parents can be confident that children feel safe, happy and valued at the service.

### **1.3 How well do children interact?**

Children interact very well with staff and peers.

We saw that children engaged well with activities and persevered for appropriate lengths of time. They played happily together or alongside each other depending on their stage of development. In the pre-school group we saw two children happily sitting on the sofa together, sharing a book and chatting about the pictures. We saw that children were polite

and were beginning to understand the rules of behaviour. Gentle reminders of good manners were given by staff such as please and thank you and children responded well to these.

Interactions at the service are very good and children are developing an understanding of their feelings and how to express their needs.

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

Children are motivated and express enjoyment at their play and learning.

We saw that children persevered for an appropriate length of time and maintained an interest in their tasks. Older children joined in enthusiastically during story time, answering questions and making comments on the story. We saw younger children playing with toys to develop skills such as stacking and they were confident to bring us their toys to show us. Babies were given lots of opportunities to be stimulated and responded very well with smiles and laughter. There were many opportunities throughout the day for children to take part in free choice play. This was interspersed with adult led activities and quiet times when children could relax. During free choice, adults played alongside the children, supporting and facilitating appropriate play, which children responded to very well.

Children are well motivated and enjoy their play and learning.

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

Children are provided with a good range of opportunities that help them develop and become independent.

Emphasis was placed upon developing children's self help skills. At lunch time children were provided with age appropriate cutlery and were supported to use it. Older children used the toilet independently and were reminded of the importance of hand washing. Children were able to move around and explore the environment independently, choosing activities and following their interests. They knew where resources were situated and were able to access them freely. We saw that children were engaged with activities and were keen to overcome challenges. We saw that younger children persevered with stacking bricks and placing shapes into sorters whilst sympathetically supported by staff. Older children worked together and helped each other with putting on dressing up clothes. We heard members of staff asking '*Would you like some help with that?*', supporting but not hindering independence.

Children are developing a good level of independence and gain a sense of pride from their achievements.

## **2. Care and Development**

### **Summary**

The service places great emphasis on keeping children safe and healthy and safeguarding is a priority. Staff have a good knowledge of policies and procedures and these are followed consistently. There is a suitably qualified, motivated and conscientious team who support children well.

### **Our findings**

#### **2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?**

Staff are fully aware of their role in keeping children safe.

Providers have ensured that new staff understand all policies and procedures and conversations with staff demonstrated that these are followed consistently. The child protection policy was detailed and included information on 'Prevent' which is a government initiative to identify signs of radicalisation and extremism. The service employs a cook who provided children with a healthy, varied menu and was fully aware of all allergens. We noted that children thoroughly enjoyed the food served. On the day of our visit children were served with a Christmas dinner which looked very appetising. There were plenty of opportunities throughout the day for children to be physically active, particularly in the outdoor play area which is well utilised. Records showed that monthly fire evacuation drills had been undertaken and we recommended that, whilst these are recorded, additional detail is recorded to include names of staff and children present. We saw that all insurance and safety certificates were up to date. Staff records demonstrated that staff have been trained in paediatric first aid and there was a clear policy for administering medication.

Parents can be confident that staff are committed to keeping children safe and healthy.

#### **2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?**

Staff manage interactions well and have clearly formed good relationships with the children they care for.

Staff had a good understanding of child development and managing behaviour. We saw that the behaviour policy was consistently followed and heard lots of praise for positive behaviour. On the day of our visit behaviour was very good but when reminders were needed this was done calmly and sympathetically. Staff were good role models, speaking to each other politely and with respect. We noted that staff positioned themselves very effectively and had a good awareness of what was happening in the rooms. At lunch time we saw that a member of staff noticed that a child on a different table was in need of some support and drew the attention of the staff member sitting at the table to this. This demonstrated that staff work together and support each other to ensure that children receive the support they need.

Interactions are managed very well by staff, helping to create a positive ethos at the setting.

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

Staff know the children well and are responsive to their individual needs.

We heard that opportunities were taken for language development in English and Welsh throughout the day. We heard older children initiating the use of Welsh language. One child said to a member of staff '*Oren, this one is oren*'. This demonstrated that incidental Welsh is part of the everyday routine and children are becoming confident to use it. We heard staff talking to younger children and babies and developing language through singing and rhymes. Detailed topic planning, based on Foundation Phase principles, ensured that children were provided with a good range of activities to help them develop. Within activities, key workers had ensured that next steps were accounted for. However, we recommended that next steps should be developed in order to highlight the skills being addressed and not just the activity. Staff kept observations of when skills had been achieved and regular observations, both ad hoc and monthly, helped to inform planning. We saw that throughout the day staff gave children opportunities for free choice and times for relaxation alongside planned activities. This allows them to lead their own learning through following their interests. We spoke to a member of staff trained to deliver Forest Schools activities. We were told that children would be having hot chocolate and toasting marshmallows over a fire the week after our visit and we saw that children had been collecting sticks and preparing them for the marshmallow toasting. Staff had evaluated activities and children's comments were recorded for the purpose of evaluation. Babies had individual daily diaries which included information on food, sleep and toileting and these were shared with parents at the end of each session.

Staff understand child development and meet individual needs well although consideration should be given to the skills to be targeted in planning for next steps.

### **3. Environment**

#### **Summary**

Children are cared for in an environment that is secure, warm and welcoming. It is well resourced and decorated and maintained to a very high standard.

#### **Our findings**

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

Leaders ensure that the environment is safe and meets the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare.

The premises and outdoor play areas were seen to be secure and visitors were required to sign in at the reception area. Emergency evacuation procedures had been practised regularly and recorded and a comprehensive range of risk assessments were in place. When hazards had been identified these had been acted upon in a timely manner. Records we saw noted work completed and any follow up action required. The service employs a full time housekeeper and this means that the building was maintained to a very high standard of cleanliness. Information for dealing with emergencies was clearly displayed around the building and we saw that all safety checks and insurance policies were up to date.

The environment is secure and very well maintained.

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

Leaders ensure that the environment is suitable for the age range of the children they care for.

Great care had been taken to ensure that the building had a welcoming, homely feel with curtains to windows and décor being maintained to a high standard. The building was seen to be arranged appropriately to provide children with a good range of play opportunities and whilst there were some limitations due to some smaller rooms, consideration had been given to the daily timetable to ensure children had access to as many activities as possible such as designated block play and art and craft rooms. The outdoor play space was a real strength with designated areas for a very good range of activities such as the use of bikes and trikes, mud kitchen, sand pit and Forest Schools activities. This allowed children to follow their own interests as well as being physically active. We noted that there were opportunities to develop the amount of children's work displayed around the building and recommended that this should be considered as this would demonstrate to children that their work is valued and would enhance their sense of pride and belonging.

Overall, the environment is warm and welcoming and allows children to follow their interest. However consideration should be given to increasing the amount of children's work on display.



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

Resources and furniture are of good quality and appropriate for the age and developmental stages of the children.

Resources in each of the rooms were easily accessible to children allowing a good level of independence. Storage containers were labelled in English and Welsh. We saw that resources were clean, well maintained and in sufficient quantity to allow children a good level of choice. Multicultural resources were seen to be available and there were a good number of Welsh language books.

Resources are plentiful and of good quality.

## **4. Leadership and Management**

### **Summary**

Leadership and management of the service is very effective. The leadership team are highly motivated and have a clear vision for the service. This is shared with staff and action plans for improvement are effectively implemented.

### **Our findings**

#### **4.1 How effective is leadership?**

Leaders ensure that the service complies with the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare and regularly exceeds them.

The PiCs were enthusiastic and conversations demonstrated that they were committed to providing a quality service. A comprehensive and up to date Statement of Purpose was in place and provided an accurate picture of what the service offered. We saw a very good range of detailed policies and procedures ensuring that the service operates smoothly on a day to day basis. Staff records showed that staff are well qualified and leaders had ensured that training such as safeguarding and paediatric first aid had been kept up to date. The staff team were conscientious and worked together effectively. Staff reported that they felt well supported and knew who to go to if they had concerns. The nursery was not able to provide an “Active Offer” of the Welsh language, although we heard lots of incidental Welsh being used throughout the service.

Leadership is highly effective and ensures that the service is very well run.

#### **4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?**

There is a strong culture of self evaluation and improvement of the service.

A comprehensive quality of care report has been produced and there were very good systems in place, such as questionnaires, to gather the views of children, parents and practitioners. Leaders had ensured that good practice had been highlighted and areas for development had been included in an action plan for improvement. Targets for improvement were seen to be effectively implemented, for example, the development of Forest Schools. During the inspection we noted that staff and leaders were fully engaged with the process, open to suggestions of how to improve the service and willing to try different ways of working.

The leadership team undertake highly effective self evaluation and planning for improvement.

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

Management of staff and resources is very effective.

The recruitment process was seen to be robust and we saw that staff files contained all of the required information. We saw that new members of staff had an induction program and policies were shared and signed. All practitioners had defined roles and responsibilities which were outlined in job descriptions. Registers and observations showed that staff / child ratios meet the national minimum standards. Targets for staff had been set during one to one supervision/meetings and records showed that they were reviewed regularly. Training needs had been discussed during staff supervisions and we saw that staff had undertaken training in addition to what was expected such as Makaton and Forest Schools. This demonstrates a commitment to the on-going professional development of staff and this is a strength of the leadership team. We saw detailed staff meeting minutes which contained relevant agenda items and action points identified at the meetings. Safeguarding was an agenda item for every meeting ensuring that this was given high priority and remained a focus. Staff meeting minutes included a 'Jar of Brilliance' which allowed staff to make positive comments about colleagues, demonstrating that leaders value the staff and place a strong focus on their well-being.

The nursery is compliant with the necessary child care regulations and National Minimum Standards and in many cases exceeds these standards. Therefore management is very effective.

### **4.4 How effective are partnerships?**

Partnerships at the service are well established.

Children's contracts showed that detailed information is gathered about children's individual needs and preferences prior to children starting. Parent views had been regularly gathered and used to inform the self evaluation process. We saw that newsletters were regularly produced and information was shared in a timely way. We noted that display boards in the entrance had relevant information including menus and insurance/registration certificates. These also included home link information which suggests activities that parents could do with children at home to support what they are doing at the nursery. A staff display offered details of training, qualifications and photographs of staff members. We were told by parents that they receive excellent information. Babies had daily diaries that record information such as sleep, feeding and nappies and during hand overs key workers took time to tell them what their children had been doing. A display in the entrance foyer also provided information about group activities that children had participated in.

Partnerships at the service are well developed and highly effective.

## **5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection**

### **5.2 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections**

None

### **5.3 Recommendations for improvement**

- Develop records to include names of children and staff present during fire evacuation drills;
- next steps in learning should be developed in order to highlight the skills being addressed and not just the activity and
- children's work should be displayed.

## **6. How we undertook this inspection**

One inspector undertook an unannounced inspection visit as part of our normal schedule of inspections. A total of eight hours was spent at the nursery. The following methodology was used to gather evidence for this report:

- Observations of care routines and practices;
- discussion with the PiC and practitioners;
- discussion with one parent;
- consideration of questionnaires received;
- conversation with several children;
- visual inspection of both inside and outside play areas;
- consideration of information held by CSSIW;
- sight of a range of policies and procedures and
- consideration of information held in staff personnel files and children's developmental files.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website [www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk)

## About the service

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Responsible Individual	Martyn Hogg
Persons in charge	Victoria McTiffen Brenda Ford
Registered maximum number of places	48
Age range of children	6 weeks to 5 years
Opening hours	Monday – Friday 7.30am – 6.00pm
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous CSSIW inspection	20 March 2015
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	15 December 2017
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	No
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: None	