



Inspection Report

Little Trees St Arvans

**St Arvans
Chepstow
NP16 6DN**



Date Inspection Completed

04/10/2023

About Little Trees St Arvans

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	Dean Close Little Trees Day Nurseries
Registered places	92
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	10 May 2019
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.

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<u>Well-being</u>	Good
<u>Care and Development</u>	Adequate
<u>Environment</u>	Adequate
<u>Leadership and Management</u>	Poor

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

Summary

Children settle well and have suitable opportunities to make choices. They enjoy attending and eagerly participate in a broad range of stimulating and purposeful play and learning experiences that motivate and engage their interests. Children with additional needs receive excellent support and all children develop good independent skills.

Staff supervise the children appropriately and overall manage behaviour appropriately. In the main, staff have adequate knowledge of child protection procedures. There are robust health and hygiene procedures in place and some staff follow these well. Staff support children's play well and use questioning to extend their learning effectively. However, staff seldom plan meaningful learning opportunities for children's outdoor play.

The people running the setting ensure there is high quality equipment in each room appropriate for children's age and stage of development. The preschool room has a wide variety of stimulating play resources that are well set up to encourage children's curiosity. However, improvements are needed to ensure all playrooms are equipped with sufficient resources and that outdoor spaces are appropriately maintained. There are robust security measures in place but risk assessments do not identify or address all hazards.

The people running the setting are not compliant with many regulations. Whilst they have produced comprehensive policies and procedures these are not consistently applied in practice. The people running the setting have inclusive systems in place to monitor the quality of the service. However, they did not have full oversight of the setting to ensure poor practices were identified or addressed by the person in charge, placing children at increased risk of harm. Overall, staff enjoy their job, and many parents praise the staff's commitment and dedication to meeting their children's needs.

Most children make lots of choices and decisions about their play. We observed children throughout the nursery choose whether to join in a planned activity or select other resources to play with. We observed children in the preschool room playing with big wooden blocks, using their imagination in the role-play room, while others chose to empty pumpkins for Halloween. Children express themselves confidently and communicate their needs in a variety of ways. For example, babies hold out their hands when they want a cwtch and use gestures and facial expressions to convey their needs. Children with additional learning needs have a strong voice because their key person interprets their non-verbal clues and behaviours extremely well.

Children are happy and settled. A bespoke programme of settling-in visits helps nurture any new children and sensitively supports their separation from parents. Although children routinely move to other rooms to maintain the correct staff-to-child ratios, they are building some close relationships with friends and familiar staff. Preschool children actively seek out those they wish to play with and younger children happily join in group games and activities.

Overall, children interact positively with their friends and staff and know the daily routines well. Gentle reminders to share and clear explanations from staff, support children to learn expected behaviours. Children cope well with transitions throughout the day through frequent reminders about what comes next, helping them to feel safe. For instance, children help to tidy away the toys when requested and happily sing along to the 'tidy up' song as they go. Children eagerly sit for story time but this is regularly interrupted as children are asked to go and wash their hands for lunchtime.

Children enjoy attending, are motivated and sustain interest in what they do. They thoroughly enjoy stories and bringing them to life with props. The children were totally engaged and excited, searching for items that were relevant to the story. Afterwards we observed children spend time retelling parts of the story, using their imagination well. We also saw photographs showing the babies enjoying yoga and having fun with paint. Children thoroughly enjoy making bird feeders with pinecones, soft lard and bird seed, exclaiming how the birds and squirrels will have something to eat.

Children show a good level of independence. They serve themselves breakfast and learn to butter their own toast. At lunch time children help themselves to food from the serving bowls on the table. When finished we saw some children scrape their left-over food into the waste bowl. Children play and take risks at their own pace. For instance, we saw some children eager to explore the gloop, while others were more tentative and used spoons until they felt more confident. Children are positive in using their Welsh language skills, singing familiar songs as they play.

Care and Development

Adequate

The people running the setting have thorough systems in place to keep children safe and healthy but some improvements to practice is required. Many staff respond well to safeguarding scenarios and many have now completed safeguarding training. In the main, staff understand the policy. However, on occasions some staff do not always follow the policy. Staff have good awareness of fire and emergency procedures to evacuate the children promptly and safely and supervise the children well during play and daily routines. Staff have good awareness of fire and emergency procedures to evacuate the children promptly and safely and supervise the children well during play and daily routines.

Staff show good knowledge of children's individual dietary needs and monitor mealtimes closely. The people running the setting ensure there is a wide range of healthy, nutritious meals and all staff wear disposable aprons and gloves at mealtimes. Some staff follow robust hygiene and infection control measures. For instance, changing their aprons and gloves and thoroughly cleaning the changing mat, and washing their hands after each child's nappy is changed. However, this is not consistent across the nursery. For example, children wash their hands before mealtimes but then sit and play on the floor before eating their lunch. Staff ensure medication is stored securely in the office. However, the policy does not clearly reflect current best practice.

The people running the setting have a detailed and informative behaviour management policy in place. Overall, staff interact and care for children in a kind and patient way and use lots of positive language to praise their achievements. This enhances children's self-esteem and confidence. In the main, staff support most children's needs very well. However, not all staff are always consistent in the strategies used to manage inappropriate or challenging behaviour.

Staff interact and engage in the children's play nicely and tailor their support during planned activities according to children's needs. For instance, whilst talking about making pumpkin soup children took their pumpkin to the home corner to cook it. They then take it to the shop where staff ask to buy some pumpkin soup, skilfully following the children's lead. Staff question children and introduce new language well and staff model play with younger babies effectively. Activity planning follows the children's lead and overall, extends their interests further. For example, staff nurture children's love of books, making playdough for children to create aliens from a favourite story. Staff complete appropriate observations to identify children's achievements and gaps in their learning. However, outdoor play is limited and staff seldom plan for children's outdoor learning. We saw no toys or activities set out in the large back garden to allow children to participate in outdoor activities.

Environment**Adequate**

The people running the setting ensure the premises are secure, clean and all necessary safety records, certificates and policies are in place. Entrances to the new, self-contained baby unit and main nursery are kept closed and closed-circuit-television is monitored throughout the setting. Staff closely supervise the arrival and collection of children and check who is at the door before opening. The people running the setting have ensured written risk assessments are in place but not all hazards are included or assessed. For example, younger children being carried up and down the stairs and all the exposed tree roots in the garden. We saw many baskets stacked on top of each other, on a shelf, above the nappy changing table. These had no lids, posing infection control issues and some baskets were leaning over, increasing the risk of them falling on children or staff during nappy changing. While no immediate action is required, this is an area for improvement and we expect the provider to take action.

The people running the setting make sure there are suitable facilities and play spaces for all children. The new baby unit is fresh and welcoming with dedicated rooms for both baby groups to play and learn safely. The layout of the main nursery provides spacious play areas with dedicated carpet and messy play areas in each room and an inviting sensory room. Staff display children's artwork and birthday boards and photographs decorate the walls throughout the nursery. This helps children feel valued and included. The newly renovated bathroom includes a new nappy changing cubicle, which gives children sufficient privacy. However, this does not extend to those children using the potties as these are clearly visible to anyone walking past. Safety gates and low-level picket fences are used well throughout the nursery to divide areas and keep children safe. Whilst the layout of the premises affords direct access to an outdoor play area from the playrooms, outdoor play is not given high priority and both gardens are unappealing. The preschool garden and equipment are dirty, very messy and poorly maintained, limiting children's authentic learning experiences. For example, the mud kitchen and water trough are filthy and there was no water for children to use. People running the setting have not maintained the allotment, which was covered in weeds, plants had died and there were tools in this area.

The people running the setting provide good quality equipment in each room, appropriate for each age group. They ensure there is a good range of resources to enable the preschool children to access all aspects of the Curriculum for Wales and experience different learning experiences. However, this does not extend to all age groups, where some resources were limited. The people running the setting have provided new comfortable mats for children to sleep on but there was insufficient bedding for the numbers of children sleeping. As a result, some children did not have a sheet or material that covered their sleep mat.

Leadership and Management

Poor

The people who run the setting are committed to providing a quality service for children and their families. However, significant improvements are needed to ensure the service is compliant with regulations. The responsible individual has the required records and documentation in place but not all are completed consistently. Registers accurately show children's attendance, but registers for staff and management are incomplete. They do not show who is present at the setting or caring for the children at any one time in the event of an emergency or safeguarding concern. This is placing children at risk. We have therefore issued a priority action notice. The provider must take immediate action to address this issue. Policies and procedures are very detailed and clearly outline practices and any changes to these are shared with staff. Discussions, observations and a review of records show these are not always understood or implemented appropriately.

The previous person in charge did not follow the setting's detailed policies and procedures after staff had referred safeguarding matters to her and, as a result, had failed to address numerous cases appropriately, in a timely manner, in line with Wales Safeguarding Procedures. This is placing children at increased risk of harm. We have therefore issued a priority action notice. The provider must take immediate action to address this issue.

The people running the setting have systems in place to review practice and assess the quality of care annually. They seek feedback from staff and have discussions with various children to help inform the annual review. Parents share their views through annual questionnaires. Although the responsible individual is aware that improvements are needed, they do not have full oversight of how the service is being managed. As a result, poor practices and non-compliances had not been identified or addressed. Therefore, the systems in place to monitor practice are not robust. Staff we spoke to support the new person in charge and regional manager and are hopeful key improvements will take place in the future.

The people running the setting have comprehensive recruitment policies and procedures in place. However, staff records highlight that although recruitment procedures and suitability checks are conducted, there are some gaps and the policies and procedures are not always implemented in full. Staff inductions are not always completed or are very basic. This is an area for improvement and we expect the provider to take action.

Records show people running the setting failed to monitor and supervise new staff consistently as part of their probation or undertake regular supervision and appraisal to review staff's performance. Consequently, poor practice is not being identified or safeguarding concerns addressed, placing children at risk. We have therefore issued a priority action notice. The provider must take immediate action to address these issues.

The people who run the setting ensure there is a high proportion of qualified staff, some of which are experienced and have worked at the setting for several years. There has been a high turnover of staff but people running the setting ensure that the required ratios of staff to children, in each room, are being met. There are contingency arrangements in place to cover staff absence, including regular use of agency staff. However, the deployment of staff is not effective, as both staff and children are regularly moved from room to room. This can be unsettling and impacts on the key worker system working effectively.

Overall, partnerships with parents and the local community are strong. Many parents speak highly about the setting and praise many of the staff for their help and support. All parents we spoke to praise the online system used to share photographs and observations of their children and some basic information about their day. They told us they receive lots of information about the setting when their child starts but daily communication is inconsistent. For example, parents do not always know who their child's key worker is, which rooms their children have been in or the staff caring for them. The people running the setting have established good links with the local community. The setting recently took part in 'Art on the Railings', submitting children's pictures to be displayed around the town for parents and everyone to see.

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
30	The responsible individual must ensure that the daily attendance register is completed consistently to show who is present, and who is caring for the children at any one time.	New
22	The responsible individual must ensure safeguarding practices are robust, knowledge is improved and procedures are implemented at all times.	New
29	The responsible individual must ensure new staff receive sufficient induction and all staff have regular supervision to improve their knowledge, and support and monitor their practice and performance.	New

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. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
28	The responsible individual must ensure that recruitment procedures are always implemented robustly.	New
25	The responsible individual must ensure that risk assessments are thorough and identify and address all hazards to children.	New

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)
Standard 9 - Behaviour	Ensure staff manage behaviour consistently and always use suitable developmentally appropriate strategies to manage different behaviours.
Standard 23 - Equipment	Improve the range of toys and play materials available in both Adventurers groups, the sensory resources in Explorers and that there is sufficient bedding available for the number of children sleeping.
Standard 22 - Environment	Ensure the outdoor area is well maintained and provides more varied opportunities and experiences for children to learn outdoors.
Standard 6 - Working in partnership with parents	Improve and update the information shared with parents including who their children's allocated key person is and when they are moved around the nursery to maintain ratios, so that they are kept fully informed about their children's care.
Standard 18 - Quality assurance	Improve the systems in place to monitor the quality of the service so that practice issues and any non compliance are identified and addressed.
Standard 11 -	Review the medication policy to ensure it reflects current best

Medication

practice.

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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