



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
Oak Tree Centre
Fforddlas
Rhyl
LL18 2DY**

Date of inspection: May 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 an English medium setting established in June 2005 which now forms part of an integrated children's centre serving the West End area of Rhyl, Denbighshire which is a designated 'Flying Start' zone. The locality is one of the most deprived areas in Wales.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales have registered the setting, which is open daily, for 77 children under the age of 8. At the time of the inspection, 59 children attended, of whom 26 are aged three and funded by the local authority. The setting admits children of all abilities and backgrounds and at the time of the inspection 13 children were on the special educational needs register. A very few have a statement of special educational needs.

English is the language spoken in the homes of most of the children, a number having moved to Rhyl from various inner city areas. The setting also provides for children from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Children are taught by a well-qualified room leader who has been in post since 2005 and up to seven other staff members.

The setting previously inspected by Estyn in May 2008. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales last inspected the setting in October 2013. A childcare coordinator manages the childcare centre on behalf of the local authority.

Summary

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

Current performance

Current performance of the setting is good because:

- Practitioners work very effectively as a team and make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning;
- there is good provision for developing literacy and numeracy skills;
- of the quality of teaching;
- practitioners provide good opportunities for children to be active in their learning;
- standards of care, support and guidance are effective; and
- the stimulating learning environment fosters good relationships.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- High quality leadership provides a clear direction for the setting's development;
- all practitioners fulfil their roles effectively and work well as a team;
- the process of self evaluation is well established;
- the setting has a good track record of improvement; and
- there are excellent partnership arrangements.

Recommendations

R1. Improve standards in Welsh

R2. Further develop a consistent approach for recording children's daily achievements

R3. Ensure setting improvement plan impacts directly on pupil outcomes

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?

Good

Standards: Good

Children enter the setting with a range of skills. As they tackle the wide range of activities provided for them, most children work in line with their ability and achieve well in relation to their starting point.

Most children's communication skills are developing well. Nearly all speak clearly, use an increasing vocabulary and readily initiate conversations and ask questions. They show a keen interest in books and understand that print conveys meaning. Most children listen intently to stories read to them by practitioners. They enjoy discussing what happens to the main characters and anticipate what is going to happen to them next in the story. For example, a few children, in the reading corner, were able to recount accurately the story of Jack in the Beanstalk. The children's early writing skills are developing well. They understand the purpose of writing and extend their early mark making skills learnt by using paint, pencils and their fingers effectively in the various areas of learning.

Children readily sing Welsh songs and use familiar vocabulary to count and describe colours in structures activities. However, very few use incidental Welsh spontaneously during play.

Most children' make good progress in the acquisition of early mathematical skills. They develop a good understanding of money, and many are able to confidently order numbers to 10. Many children show a good use of mathematical language such as big, small, heavy or light. For example, a few children were able to accurately predict whether the water collected from a puddle would be transferrable from a small container to a large container.

Children make appropriate use of opportunities to take photographs, or use a telephone or CD player in their activities. Most have good fine and gross motor skills.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children settle quickly into the daily routine and appear, happy and inquisitive learners. They have a close relationship with the practitioners and trust in their guidance. Most children have a good understanding of keeping healthy through what they eat and the physical activities they undertake.

Nearly all children behave and cooperate well during activities and are happy to share equipment and toys. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are keen to undertake new experiences. The children's social awareness and skills develop effectively through day-to-day activities and visits to the local community.

Older pupils concentrate and persevere with tasks for a long time such as when the water trough collapsed. A small number of children spent a considerable amount of time trying to get water to flow correctly into the bucket.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The setting provides children with a wide range of good quality and interesting learning experiences across all areas of learning. All practitioners contribute effectively to produce meaningful curricular plans, which strongly reflect the principles of the Foundation Phase. These build systematically on the children's current knowledge, understanding and skills.

The provision for the development of the children's literacy and numeracy skills are good. Children are encouraged to take an interest in books through regular reading activities organised by practitioners. There are good opportunities during the continuous provision for children to develop their early writing skills. Activities such as sorting and matching and experimenting in sand and water make an effective contribution to enhancing children's developing numeracy skills.

The wide range of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment, which is regularly available for children, makes a strong contribution towards developing their skills in this area.

Children benefit by organised learning experiences, which include visits to the local community and visitors visiting the setting.

Practitioners consistently encourage children to use their knowledge of basic Welsh words in their learning and play sessions. They develop children's awareness of the traditions, history and culture of Wales effectively through activities, which include celebrating St. David's day.

Through role-play and tasting foods from other countries, children become more aware of their role as global citizens. There are good opportunities for children to learn about re cycling and to take an active role in the setting's activities.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a good knowledge of the Foundation Phase curriculum, they work effectively as a team and make a significant contribution to children's education and personal development.

Practitioners have high expectations of each child according to their stage of development. As a result teaching is stimulating and successfully engages all children. Practitioners generally make effective use of a range of good quality questioning in order to develop children's thinking and learning skills. The flexible teaching and organisation ensures good opportunities for children to make their own decisions about their learning. This develops their independence and self confidence. For example, the activity planned for one of the sessions changed as a result of the interest shown by the children of the rather large puddle, which appeared over night following thunderstorms.

Practitioners have a close working relationship with the children, they know every individual well and are fully aware of their personal and educational needs. As a result assessment procedures on the whole are good. During activities practitioners collect evidence of children's development in the form of post it notes. These are collated and entered into the children's personal learning journal. However, all practitioners do not consistently use this practice. Learning journals are of good quality and provide an effective record of progress across all areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

There are effective arrangements for informing parents about their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Provision for promoting children's health and welfare, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Practitioners take great care to ensure that the safety of the children in their care is of paramount importance. There are good informal arrangements for all children to appreciate what is expected of them and to know what is right and wrong. They understand the principles of good behaviour and consideration for others.

There are secure arrangements for ensuring that all children and adults are free from any physical or emotional harassment. Every child is encouraged to participate fully in the life of the setting and to undertake responsibilities, such as putting things away neatly at the end of sessions or handing out resources.

Transition into the setting is smooth as there are ample opportunities for the younger children to mingle with the pre school group. There are also excellent links with the

neighbouring primary school ensuring the children move on to their next stage of education with the minimum of disruption.

There are suitable arrangements for supporting children with additional learning needs and there are effective lines of communication with all the key agencies.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where all children receive equal access to the curriculum and all activities provided. All practitioners succeed in creating a positive ethos within the setting. The homely atmosphere and the friendship provided ensure that a tolerant attitude pervades through the setting. Practitioners successfully employ positive behaviour strategies, which eliminate any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour.

The setting has a very healthy adult to child ratio. All practitioners are suitably qualified.

There is generally a good supply of quality resources in all areas of learning. These resources are carefully matched to every individual's development and learning needs. The displays of children's work contribute to creating an attractive indoor learning environment.

The building and the accommodation is of good quality and used extensively. Good use is made of the local area to enhance children's understanding of the area they live in. Visitors to the setting support and enrich the children's learning experiences.

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

The setting is well led and managed. The responsible individual has a strategic view of the entire integrated children's centre. She has line manager responsibility for the various operational leaders such as the childcare coordinator, who is responsible for day to day management of the childcare setting and that of a large number of practitioners. Within each room there is a separate room leader. This devolved leadership is particularly effective in moving the setting forward.

All practitioners fully understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team, sharing values, aims and objectives. The pre school team have been fairly stable over the last few years.

Staff appraisal systems are clear and effective and result in the identification of every individual's training needs. This has impacted positively on the quality of provision provided.

Practitioners collaborate closely, share agreed values about learning, behaviour and relationships and ensure that the Foundation Phase as well as other local and national priorities, are implemented successfully. There is strong emphasis on equality, safeguarding and providing good learning opportunities for children.

Improving quality: Good

Arrangements for self-evaluation are particularly effective and firmly embedded. Practitioners know their setting well and regularly evaluate the quality of the provision and how well the children are achieving. The setting's self evaluation is based largely on first hand evidence. It pays careful attention to parental views and benefits substantially from the professional advice of the local authority advisory teacher.

The setting's self evaluation document is of good quality, largely evaluative and clearly identifies areas for development. These areas for improvement become priorities for improvement in the setting's improvement plan. These plans identify the person responsible for leading the action and the success criteria well. They also contain realistic timescales and appropriate cost implications. However, within the improvement plan too much emphasis is placed on 'jobs' as opposed to improving outcomes for children.

The childcare coordinator and room leader monitor the plan and children's outcomes on a regular basis. They evaluate improvements in provision and the impact on children's knowledge and understanding successfully.

Partnership working: Excellent

The setting has an excellent range of partnerships, which successfully improve children's outcomes.

As an integrated children's centre with childcare provision practitioners and children alike, benefit directly from first-rate support and advice. As the only centre of its type in North Wales the responsible individual and childcare coordinator have developed highly effective partnership arrangements with other similar centres in north east

England and Cardiff. This has resulted in sharing of information, which has impacted successfully on children's outcomes and their wellbeing.

Parents, in the questionnaire replies and during discussions expressed very high levels of satisfaction and were appreciative of the standards of care and the quality of education available.

The partnership arrangement with the local primary school is outstanding. Children from the setting regularly attend functions in the school and teachers from the school are regular visitors to the setting. The centre provides wrap around care for many children under the age of eleven and as a result collaboration and partnership arrangements are very effective in ensuring the children move on to their next stage of their education with the minimum of disruption.

The co-operation between the setting and the local advisory teacher makes a substantial contribution to improving quality of the provision and raising standards.

The introduction of a mobile crèche during last winter's floods in St Asaph and Ruthin is an outstanding feature. The setting dealt effectively with a whole range of different outside agencies in order to benefit the families in these storm-affected areas. The experience the practitioners gained from such experiences has had a positive impact on children's wellbeing.

Resource management: Good

The setting has developed effective strategies for managing staff and resources. Practitioners regularly have access to training courses, which fulfil their needs and that of the children. They regularly share ideas and make effective use of the excellent partnership arrangements to visit other settings or early years settings to develop and improve their practice. The leadership team evaluates these arrangements effectively.

Spending is matched well to the setting's priorities and objectives. There are good systems in place for keeping spending under review. In view of the positive outcomes for the children, the effective provision, strong leadership and excellent partnership arrangements, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	25	21 84%	4 16%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		80%	20%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	25	19 76%	6 24%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	25	19 76%	6 24%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	13%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	24	16 67%	8 33%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		80%	18%	1%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	25	11 44%	14 56%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		69%	27%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	25	21 84%	4 16%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		79%	18%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	25	20 80%	5 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		82%	15%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	25	16 64%	9 36%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		73%	22%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	25	23 92%	2 8%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	25	15 60%	8 32%	1 4%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		64%	24%	1%	0%		
I am kept well informed	25	12	13	0	0	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
about my child's progress.		48%	52%	0%	0%		gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		63%	30%	5%	1%		
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	25	19	6	0	0	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		76%	24%	0%	0%		
		80%	18%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	25	11	12	0	0	2	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		44%	48%	0%	0%		
		62%	29%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	24	13	10	1	0	0	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		54%	42%	4%	0%		
		71%	23%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	25	14	11	0	0	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		56%	44%	0%	0%		
		62%	30%	4%	0%		
The setting is well run.	25	22	3	0	0	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		88%	12%	0%	0%		
		82%	17%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Peter Anthony Roach	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.