

A report on

The Oaks Day Nursery

289 Chester Road
Oakenholt
Flintshire
CH6 5SE

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About The Oaks Day Nursery

Name of setting	The Oaks Day Nursery
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Kumaran Sambandam
Person in charge	Bernadette Hitchens
Number of places	49
Age range of children	12 weeks – 8 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	32
Number of children who receive funding for early education	9
Opening days / times	7.30am – 6pm Mon-Fri
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 not making a significant effort to promote the use of Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	25.03.25
Date of previous Estyn inspection	N/A
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	10/06/2025

Summary

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

Non-compliance

We notified the provider that the setting was not compliant with the Regulations, a notice was not issued, but these are identified as areas for improvement, and the RP/RI must address these.

Reg 29 Area for Improvement – The RI must ensure leaders carryout appropriate and frequent staff supervision.

Recommendations

- R1. Ensure that leaders address the area of non-compliance
- R2. Further develop the use of Welsh language throughout the setting
- R3. Provide greater clarity of roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability that reflect an equitable workload

What happens next

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

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Most children have opportunities to make choices and decisions about their play and learning. For example, they choose what they want to play with, which friends to play alongside and decide how they spend their time at the setting. They know practitioners respond well to their wants and needs, which results in most children expressing their opinions confidently. If children wish to have second helpings of food, show signs of being tired or do not wish to join in with a particular activity, this is respected and valued.

Most children are happy and enjoy attending the setting. They cope well with separation from their parents and carers and quickly settle to activities. Many have formed positive relationships with practitioners and feel secure and relaxed in their care. For example, they confidently ask for help, welcome cuddles and invite practitioners into their play. Most children are familiar with the setting's routines such as washing their hands before mealtimes and using cloths to wipe their face after eating. These predictable routines provide children with a sense of security.

Most children interact well and are developing healthy relationships with those around them. They smile and laugh together when playing with friends. With varying levels of support, most are beginning to co-operate and share resources successfully. For example, they successfully take turns sharing the sea creatures and invite their friends to play imaginatively when selling ice-cream. Most children are respectful towards practitioners, follow instructions well and are learning to take care of equipment and resources.

Most children are enthusiastic and engage in their play and learning purposefully, for example they enjoy taking on various roles when playing imaginatively. They excitedly explore musical instruments, shaking maracas and bells with concentration. Most children love to play outdoors, climbing and balancing and engaging with a range of equipment. A few are starting to show good levels of perseverance as they are eager to accomplish things themselves.

Most children benefit from many opportunities to develop their independence and are developing self-help skills well. For example, with support, children successfully pour their own drinks, set the table, serve themselves and tidy away their dirty cups and plates. Many have a go at putting their own coats on and many are learning to take care of their personal needs. These experiences help children feel confident and helps them gain a sense of achievement.

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

Nearly all children make consistent progress from their individual starting points across a wide range of developmental areas. They make strong progress in developing their communication and social skills and talk confidently with each other. They engage in meaningful conversations about their experiences, for example during discussions with family members before arriving and describing the smell of toast at snack time. During group times, nearly all children join in with familiar songs and are eager to share their ideas and choices of where to play next.

Nearly all children listen attentively and demonstrate well developed listening skills. They respond appropriately to questions and follow instructions during activities and routines. Nearly all children understand and respond to simple Welsh phrases such as 'golchi dwylo'. However, their breadth of understanding of the Welsh language is at an early stage of development.

Most children express themselves clearly using age-appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures. Many talk confidently about a wide range of topics and demonstrate a strong sense of curiosity in their play. Nearly all children develop positive relationships with one another and show enjoyment in sharing ideas, playing cooperatively and taking turns.

Nearly all children make good progress in developing their early literacy skills and engage enthusiastically in mark making activities in a variety of contexts, for example in the sand, in foam and on clipboards and easels outdoors. Many children show an interest in books, choosing them independently and sharing the content with friends. They handle books with care, turn pages correctly and comment meaningfully on illustrations and stories.

Nearly all children are developing good physical skills. They use a range of fine motor tools effectively. For example, they control pipettes in the painting tray, manipulate dough and use tongs to pick up toast at snack time successfully. Outdoors, all children demonstrate confidence in using large equipment, including bats and balls, digging with spades and pedalling trikes as they move freely in the large space. A few children independently engage in stretching and floor-based movement in the indoor area. Many children persevere and concentrate while filling and emptying water containers and rebuilding wooden block towers that have fallen over.

Nearly all children's creative development is progressing well. Many are confident performers who sing, dance and act use props within familiar scenarios. Nearly all children co-operate well with one another, showing increasing independence in everyday routines, for example as they clean playdough from the table, use the bathroom independently and tidy their toys away. Nearly all children are developing resilience, responsibility and a strong sense of belonging.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners implement effective procedures that actively encourage healthy lifestyles ensuring children's safety and promoting their well-being. For example, they encourage children to play outdoors regularly, offer them well-balanced nutritious food and keep accurate records of their attendance. Practitioners follow good cleaning and hygiene routines such as frequent hand washing, wiping of tables before serving food and ensuring that nappy changing procedures are carried out hygienically. Practitioners complete accident and incident records well and share this information with parents. Many have attended full paediatric first aid training. Leaders follow the required adult to child ratios and ensure that there are enough practitioners working each day to meet the needs of the children.

Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding procedures and attend regular training. They know it's their responsibility to report concerns and know what action to take if the need arises. Therefore, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Most practitioners follow the setting's behaviour management policy well. They ensure positive behaviour strategies play a central role, which helps create a supportive and nurturing environment. For example, practitioners value children's feelings if they are upset, use praise for trying hard and ignore unwanted behaviour. They provide gentle reminders such as to walk rather than run and remind children to pick up resources that have fallen on to the floor. This ensures that children know what is expected of them and teaches them to take care of equipment.

Practitioners are positive role models, kind and patient. They provide warm, supportive care and many know the children and the families well. They gently rock babies to sleep, wipe children's noses promptly and are sensitive to children's needs. Most practitioners are enthusiastic and support children's play effectively. Many know the importance of standing back and allowing children to work things out for themselves when appropriate.

Practitioners plan a range of engaging activities for children that meet most of their interests and promotes curiosity. For example, they provide sensory experiences for babies to support healthy brain development.

Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of children with additional learning needs and offer suitable support so that children can successfully access their play and learning. Leaders know to liaise with children's parents and consult specialist services if they require additional help and guidance.

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

Practitioners work together to plan engaging learning environments both indoors and outdoors, with a clear focus on following children's interest and responding to their curiosity. They are beginning to use observations effectively to follow children's interests and extend their play and learning. For example, after noticing a child's enthusiasm for the sea they decided to add sea creatures to the water tray to inspire imagination and a discussion about size.

Practitioners are dedicated and demonstrate a strong understanding of what works well in their rooms. They provide a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that support children's development across all areas of the curriculum. Activities are well thought out to promote curiosity, problem solving and imaginative play. Children are encouraged to explore freely and take appropriate risks. Practitioners arrange resources in a way that attracts children to experiment and explore in the sand, water and soil. They provide a variety of suitable items from the environment that help develop children's balancing skills as they use them constructively to build bridges to walk on.

Practitioners demonstrate a strong understanding of the curriculum. They carefully design spaces that offer rich, varied and stimulating learning opportunities. They ensure that children's literacy and numeracy skills are embedded through songs, rhymes and practical resources such as number story sacks, mark making tools and shape displays. Practitioners incorporate mathematical language naturally through play, for example they plan activities that develop an early concept of capacity in the sand and water effectively, and the construction area encourages discussion about shape, size and height.

Practitioners plan for the development of digital skills by introducing remote control cars and use walkie talkies to develop communication skills. Practitioners are beginning to introduce basic Welsh instructions and songs during daily routines. However, leaders do not plan a structured approach to ensure that Welsh is developed systematically and consistently across the setting.

Practitioners provide authentic role play areas equipped with recycled materials that are beginning to include resources that reflect diversity. Practitioners provide a variety of mark making and reading opportunities for children to develop early literacy skills both indoors and outdoors, for example a cosy den and a reading bench indoors and a sheltered story area outdoors. Practitioners model storytelling well, engaging children in purposeful discussions about the story, which supports their early language development effectively.

Practitioners plan experiences which engage children enthusiastically in creative art activities, where emphasis is placed on the exploration and self-expression rather than the

final product. Children's artwork is displayed around the room, reflecting the value placed on the creative process and the respect on the end product.

Assessment of children's progress is ongoing and meaningful. Practitioners observe, record and celebrate the progress made by all children, including those with additional needs. They work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that appropriate support is in place and care plans are personalised and reviewed regularly.

Interactions are a good feature of the setting. Practitioners know the children well and engage in good quality dialogue that promotes thinking and problem solving, for example asking why we need water in the sand and explaining through worthwhile discussion how it helps the castle stand up. They offer encouragement, explain behaviours and support emotional development through clear modelling of language and social strategies.

Environment: Good

Leaders successfully follow effective procedures to ensure the environment is safe for children. For example, there is a secure procedure to manage access to the setting through the main entrance and practitioners ensure all visitors are authorised and recorded in the visitor book. The garden is secure, with practitioners carrying out daily checks to ensure this area is safe before use. The setting is clean and well maintained.

Leaders complete written risk assessments for all areas of the environment including appropriate risk assessments for outings.

Leaders ensure that the setting is warm and welcoming. Areas are bright and inviting with natural décor which helps create peaceful learning areas. Over a very short period, practitioners have worked conscientiously and made extremely positive changes to the environment. They have re-arranged furniture and purchased new resources both inside and outdoors which have significantly improved children's learning experiences. Leaders ensure that resources provide children with a range of opportunities with activities that encourage exploration and development. For example, practitioners use role-play materials to develop children's social and imaginative play. They are developing the use of open-ended resources that encourage children to problem solve and invent their own play. Practitioners provide children with some real-life items in the home corners, which stimulate children's curiosity as they use these to make sense of the world around them. However, there are limited culturally diverse resources.

Practitioners understand the benefits of outdoor learning and are committed to using the garden daily. They ensure these areas are well maintained and create interesting opportunities for children to learn and explore. For example, practitioners encourage children to play creatively in the playhouses and help develop balance and co-ordination skills by offering them climbing opportunities.

Practitioners provide children with plenty of space to move, and most resources are well organised and within children's reach. Practitioners ensure there are suitable areas for children to relax or sleep as well as areas for them to be busy and active. Leaders ensure there are a suitable number of toilets and wash basins for the number of children attending. They ensure that coat pegs are located at the children's height, which encourages independence. However, two rooms currently share a nappy changing area, which can sometimes make it difficult to change nappies promptly.

Leadership and management: Adequate

Leaders share a clear vision for delivering high quality care and learning. They have made a few positive developments in response to self-evaluation and external feedback, including improvements to the outdoor environment and investment in new resources. These changes have contributed positively to children's experiences and demonstrate the setting's commitment to ongoing improvement. Support from local authority staff is welcomed and suggestions are actioned gradually over time.

Leaders meet regularly to review practice and make operational decisions. They ensure that qualified and experienced practitioners are employed and follow safe recruiting procedures. However, they do not always provide regular opportunities for all staff to contribute meaningfully to strategic planning, leading to a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. Self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are in the early stages of development. This has enabled leaders to make positive improvement in a few areas including improving the outdoor provision and developing children's social skills. However, there's a tendency to target too many areas resulting in a lack of focus and direction. Practitioner deployment is generally appropriate and, on the whole, meet the required ratios.

Leaders carry out annual appraisals with staff that reflect adequately on improving the settings practice and provide achievable goals. Supervisions are sporadic with little opportunities for meaningful dialogue with leader

Leaders benefit from positive relationships with parents who feel that they are kept well informed about their child's daily activities. They use social media apps appropriately to provide regular updates on their child's daily activities and how to support their child's learning at home. Leaders and practitioners are developing good links with the community and children benefit from visits to the local park and nature walks to the 'Pandy'. They are beginning to build good working relationships with local primary schools and share information about the children appropriately.

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