

A report on

Abacus Day Nursery

Newmarket House
26 Lion St
Abergavenny
NP7 5NT

Date of inspection: October 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Abacus Day Nursery

Name of setting	Abacus Day Nursery
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Sarah Storey
Responsible individual (if applicable)	N/A
Person in charge	Sarah Storey Sophie Davies Shani Grey Hannah Griffiths Kelly Howells
Number of places	32
Age range of children	0-8 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	6
Number of children who receive funding for early education	4
Opening days / times	8am – 5.30pm Monday- Friday
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	No
Date of previous CIW inspection	01 November 2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection	December 2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	21/10/2025

Summary

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

Non-compliance

We notified the provider that the setting was not compliant with the Regulations, a notice was not issued, but this is identified as an area for improvement, and the RP/RI must address it.

- We identified serious non-compliance in relation to Leadership and Management and we have issued a priority action notice to the provider.
- Information on all non-compliance is included in the Action and Improvement Summary report, which will be sent separate to the report by CIW.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for children to learn and celebrate different cultures and backgrounds
- R2 Develop practitioners' confidence in using basic Welsh vocabulary during daily activities
- R3 Further develop practitioners' understanding in areas such as the curriculum and assessment arrangements to improve planning for learning
- R4 All non-compliance should be addressed

What happens next

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Estyn and the Chief Inspector of Care Inspectorate Wales are of the opinion that focused improvement is required in relation to this setting. The setting will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. CIW and Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Well-being: Adequate

Many children are confident in choosing where and when they play. They choose activities that interest them and use resources purposefully. For example, children pretend to make ice cream in the home corner and serve it to their friends seated at a nearby table. The majority of children express themselves well, such as saying when they need to use the toilet. However, a few younger children show frustration when their play choices are not fully supported by practitioners. A minority of children become frustrated and disengaged when their play choices are not facilitated by practitioners. Nearly all children enter the playrooms happily and settle quickly, seeking out their friends, favourite activities and toys. Many show their enjoyment through smiles and laughter. For example, they delight in watching a large digger in the road outside or finding shells to play with, placing them in the water tray. Many children are content and relaxed in the environment and with staff they know well. Older children take pride in looking at their craft displayed, which helps to foster a strong sense of belonging.

Many children successfully develop an understanding of right and wrong. For example, when children sit on the table their friends remind them to sit on a stool. The majority of children use good manners and listen well to clear instructions from practitioners. Most children are learning to take turns, and a few younger children are beginning to understand how to share. Many children interact positively with each other, often involving others in their play, for example when using scooters to race around the outside space together. The majority of children are content to play for short periods either alone or alongside each other. However, a minority of children do not share resources sufficiently well and do not receive the support they need to develop this skill.

Many children enjoy their play and are developing new key skills suitably. The majority of children are developing their language skills and make improvements in their speech and social skills. Many children are learning to be resilient and persevere with tasks until they succeed. For example, they cut their baked potatoes at lunchtime and use the tongs to serve themselves. Most children enjoy experimenting with water, transporting it in containers and show great interest in letting it run free like a river. Nearly all older children use the toilet facilities independently and are starting to learn to put their coats on to play outside. They are learning about the importance of developing good health and hygiene routines and all children wash their hands routinely at key times.

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

There is no report on children's learning. This is because the number of three or four-year-old children present at the time of the inspection that do not receive funded education elsewhere was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Care and development: Adequate

Practitioners build trusting relationships with the children and their families. Most practitioners implement the setting's policies and procedures effectively. They follow effective hygiene procedures, washing their hands regularly and encouraging children to learn good hygiene habits. Practitioners provide scheduled opportunities for children to go outside to benefit from fresh air and exercise. They ensure that children have access to water to remain hydrated and provide children with healthy food choices. Practitioners are aware of the procedure to follow in an emergency and conduct regular fire drills. There are appropriate incident and accident recording systems in place and they are shared with parents effectively. First aid training for practitioners is current and suitable for the ages of children. The safeguarding policy meets requirements. Practitioners have completed safeguarding training and understand their responsibility to safeguard children from harm, including how to respond to child protection concerns. Practitioners follow systems and procedures to safeguard children which are generally sufficient. However, some risks assessments undertaken by leaders do not safeguard children sufficiently. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding do not fully meet requirements and are a cause for concern.

Practitioners are kind and patient with children which enables them to build secure attachments to their care givers. They are good role models, and most practitioners interact positively with children throughout the session. For example, they sit with children during snack time, modelling good social and communication skills. Most practitioners share a positive approach to managing children's behaviour and follow the setting's policy suitably. They use a warm and gentle approach in their interactions and are consistent in giving praise and acknowledging children's efforts. Most practitioners use a range of strategies to promote positive behaviour successfully such as distraction and positive reinforcement techniques. However, a minority of staff do not intervene quickly enough in giving appropriate guidance to children about their behaviour.

Practitioners have a clear understanding of children's individual needs, abilities, and preferences. They make regular observations of children's achievements and use this information to plan suitable learning and play experiences. Most practitioners provide children with a range of opportunities to promote their learning and development appropriately. However, a few practitioners do not always ensure that activities offer

sufficient challenge or make best use of opportunities to enhance children's play and learning.

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

Practitioners establish warm, nurturing relationships with children, showing genuine interest in children's lives. Initiatives such as sending home a teddy bear and asking parents and carers to fill a bag with autumnal items, enhance communication between home and setting, supporting children's sense of belonging well.

Practitioners provide a broad range of stimulating learning experiences both indoors and outdoors, that capture children's interests appropriately. Regular outdoor activities, including the use of new bikes and trikes, promote physical, social and emotional development effectively. Areas such as the sensory garden and a dedicated block play shed that exhibit photographs of the children's houses, encourage children to explore and investigate appropriately.

Practitioners use appropriate questions suitably to promote children's thinking and language development. They provide children with time to respond in conversations and encourage independence in learning through exploration and discovery. Practitioners respond to children's requests to read a book and enjoy sharing stories enthusiastically. They provide a variety of suitable opportunities for children to mark-make and develop early writing skills. Practitioners are beginning to use basic Welsh words and phrases as their confidence develops. However, they make limited use of Welsh songs and rhymes or opportunities to use Welsh vocabulary frequently throughout the session to promote children's bilingual skills. As a result, children's understanding of Welsh is at a very early stage of development.

Practitioners take advantage of many opportunities to develop children's early mathematical concepts through first-hand play experiences well. For example, they discuss length and shape as they play with acorns and have opportunities to use digital equipment purposefully. The provision of weekly music sessions enriches children's language and creative skills.

Practitioners are beginning to plan with a clearer focus on individual targets and developmental needs. They are beginning to identify patterns in children's play and use this information appropriately to provide activities that support individual children's development. For example, they provide nuts, bolts, clips and screws to develop children's fine motor skills. However, practitioners do not always use planning and their knowledge of child development consistently well enough to clearly identify next steps in learning. As

a result, practitioners do not always ensure that all children make sufficient progress across all areas of learning.

Practitioners collaborate on weekly planning, drawing on photographic evidence and learning journals to inform their discussions. They are beginning to reflect on their practice, considering how changes to observation and assessment procedures influence children's progress and development

Practitioners are increasingly focusing their observations on the development of children's skills. They respond positively to useful guidance from the local authority and demonstrate a willingness to strengthen their understanding of assessment. Recently introduced 'responses' to observations, provide helpful direction for supporting children's skills development. However, practitioners do not have a secure enough understanding of developmental progression to ensure that assessment and next-step planning consistently support all children to make strong progress.

Practitioners collaborate appropriately to respond to children's emerging needs and interests. Where this is most effective, they plan activities and experiences that respond to children's curiosity and enquiries, helping to make learning more meaningful and child centred. For example, they focus learning activities around a large spider found in the garden, which captured children's interest and encouraged exploration and discussion. Practitioners make effective use of the setting's location to extend learning into the local community. Visits to places such as the supermarket, park, library and castle foster children's curiosity, sense of awe and wonder, and their understanding of where they live. Practitioners use vocabulary from different languages as a way to ensure improved communication and give children a sense of belonging. However, practitioners do not make best use of the diverse community of where children live or reflect this well enough in the resources and books within the setting. As a result, meaningful opportunities for children to learn and celebrate different cultures and backgrounds are limited.

Environment: Adequate

Leaders provide a warm and welcoming environment where children feel happy, secure, and are ready to play and learn. They accurately record the arrival and departure times of visitors and children. Leaders ensure that the environment both indoors and outdoors is clean and organised to enable children's independent, safe access to resources. In general, leaders put appropriate measures in place to maintain the safety of the environment. This includes providing practitioners with a range of suitable risk assessments to guide them in their practices. However, not all risks are mitigated. Leaders carry out and record regular fire drills, ensuring practitioners and children know what to do in the event of a fire. They also ensure that required safety checks for gas and electricity are completed as required.

Leaders ensure that the environment offers beneficial facilities to care for children. Play spaces are equipped with good quality and suitably sized furniture for the varying ages of children. The layout of the play space supports children to move around freely in their designated areas. Nappy changing facilities are accessible and appropriately equipped. However, toilet training of younger children is impacted as toilet facilities are on the lower floor so not immediately accessible to younger children when needed. Whilst children's hand washing is well supported by practitioners, there is not consistent access to warm running water for children aged under two years. Younger children's sleep area is clean and appropriately equipped. Leaders have accessed grant funding and undertaken improvements to enhance the facilities for children. For example, stair carpeting has been replaced, wooden resources and new bikes, trikes and safety equipment such as bike helmets have been purchased which has clearly enhanced children's enjoyment, play and learning. Leaders are motivated to continue to develop the environment. However, some maintenance issues, which leaders should address promptly, had not been responded to.

Leaders provide a suitable range of resources and toys that are of good quality and promote children's curiosity successfully. A variety of natural materials, such as shells, leaves, acorns are easily accessible and are included in activities, which encourage children's creativity and curiosity well. The extensive outdoor environment provides many enriching play opportunities and experiences for children to enhance their physical abilities and engage in imaginative play. Furthermore, it allows them opportunities to interact with nature, such as planting and finding insects.

Leadership and management: Poor

There has been a period of instability within the setting, which has resulted in staff members stepping up to take on leadership roles to guide and support practitioners. The person in charge has shown professionalism and resilience in the leadership at the setting during this time. They have worked well with the local authority to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the role and seek advice and support when needed. As a result, the setting continues to run smoothly for practitioners and children.

Leaders are beginning to reflect on what they do well and what needs improving at the setting through their self-evaluation processes. This alongside attending worthwhile local authority and network training events helps leaders to keep up to date with new developments and see good practice from other settings. Leaders ensure that daily record keeping is of a good standard and that policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and understood by practitioners. However, leaders did not ensure that all risk assessment fully identified or mitigated all risks. In addition, they do not always ensure that their responses to significant maintenance issues are responded to in a timely manner. As a result, a priority action notice has been issued, and the provider must take immediate action to address these matters.

Recent staff changes at the setting have impacted on the number of experienced practitioners able to lead in a few areas of the provision. Leaders organise suitable professional development that supports practitioners to understand and implement most of the setting's procedures. However, they have not always ensured that professional learning focuses well enough on understanding areas such as the curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Leaders provide practitioners with supportive and consistent supervision and appraisal. However, staff files are not organised well enough which impacts upon leaders' ability to have proper oversight of information and to update and respond to changing needs of staff. We expect the provider to make improvements.

Leaders have established effective systems for gathering the views of parents and children. They use this information thoughtfully to make positive changes to provision and communication. For example, the introduction of an app has allowed parents to follow their child's day in real time. Changes to the recording of accidents and injuries show that leaders take safeguarding responsibilities seriously and work closely with parents to maintain children's safety and well-being.

Leaders make good use of available funding to improve the learning environment. Over recent years, they have used grants wisely to purchase high-quality, purposeful resources that enrich both indoor and outdoor learning. Leaders continue to develop their understanding of curriculum and assessment procedures to enhance their understanding of planning and assessing. However, practitioners do not always plan activities that meet the needs of all learners and make best use of resources.

Leaders have developed strong partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that children with emerging needs receive appropriate support. Leaders work effectively with parents and carers to ensure that children settle quickly at the setting, and they also share relevant information effectively with local schools to aid children's transition to school. Parents and carers appreciate the caring approach of staff and the regular communication they receive about their child's day. Partnerships with organisations that provide storytelling activities and weekly music sessions add valuable creative and cultural experiences that children enjoy greatly.

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

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