



*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**

**Acorns Nursery  
Rassau Resource Centre  
School Road  
Rassau  
Ebbw Vale  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP23 5PP**

**Date of inspection: May 2012**

**by**

**Mary Dyas**

**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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## About the setting

Acorns Nursery is an English-medium setting which meets in a former school building now Rassau Resource Centre. The nursery is based in a large airy room with direct access to a safe outdoor area. The previous manager retired in September 2011 after leading the setting for many years and management of the nursery was taken over by two joint leaders who had both been working in the setting for a number of years and had both attained Level four qualifications in child care.

The setting serves the local community and children move on to four different nearby primary schools. Rassau is one of the most deprived areas in Blaenau Gwent and the children come from a wide range of backgrounds. All speak English as their home language. The setting welcomes all children and makes good provision for those with additional learning needs.

The nursery is open from Monday to Friday for five mornings from 9.00 to 11.30 am and for two afternoons from 12.30 to 3.00 pm for children aged from two to five years. It is registered for up to 26 children per session and at the time of the inspection there were 52 children on roll of whom two were three-year-olds in receipt of funded educational provision.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in February 2010 and by Estyn in June 2006.

## Summary

<b>The setting's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- All children are happy in the nursery and make good progress in relation to their age and stage of development;
- The setting provides a good range of interesting and stimulating activities which engage the children and support their learning; and
- Relationships between children and adults are warm and caring.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The recently established leaders work well together with a shared vision for the continued improvement of the setting;
- The current self-evaluation document is effective and areas for improvement are being addressed. This is making a positive impact on children's learning; and
- All staff work well together as a strong team.

## Recommendations

In order to improve the setting needs to:

R1 Develop the evaluations of short term planning to ensure information from observations of children's learning not only reflects the stated learning intentions to inform planned activities but also identifies children's progress in learning

R2 Continue to develop the use of high order questioning to develop children's thinking skills; and

R3 Consider ways in which parents and carers might be provided with more information about the activities planned for their children.

### What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Good**

The nursery provides children with an interesting and appealing curriculum which successfully stimulates their imagination and sustains their interest. Planning is initiated by the managers who work closely with the staff team to meet the needs of both the group and individual children. The setting is beginning to involve the children in making decisions about future activities and about how activities can be enhanced.

Planned activities are well focused on providing interesting experiences to ensure all children are well challenged and actively involved. Practitioners informally evaluate the impact of the provision on children's learning and take immediate action; for example if an activity does not appear to be attracting children's interest or meeting the learning intentions. However, written evaluations of weekly planning are very general and, while next steps in planning are identified they do not always relate directly to the intended learning or to the needs of individual children.

The provision to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language, culture and traditions is good, including the celebration of St. David's Day. Practitioners use incidental Welsh systematically throughout the session and this is beginning to impact on children's independent use of the language.

The nursery has made good efforts to introduce the children to sustainability and recycling and have set up recycling of paper, plastic and cans. Children enjoy singing a recycling song together when they collect their left over snack for food recycling.

**Teaching: Good**

All staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of the Foundation Phase and have appropriate expectations of the children. They are very enthusiastic and this impacts positively on the children. They show good understanding of when to intervene and when to allow children to explore and experiment for themselves. Stimulating learning experiences are provided across all areas of learning and good use is made of the resources available, including the use of technology. Where teaching is good, practitioners are beginning to make use of open-ended questions to support and extend children's learning

Observational assessment is carried out on a regular basis and children's progress and wellbeing are tracked across all areas of learning. Parents are kept well informed about their children's educational progress and wellbeing through formal and informal meetings and end of year written reports

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Good arrangements are in place to ensure children's health and wellbeing and these have a positive impact on children's development. The setting provides a warm and safe environment for children to grow and learn. The interesting and enjoyable activities encourage children to want to find out more because their learning is fun. Good emphasis is laid on the importance of being kind and thoughtful to others and all children understand what is unacceptable behaviour. There are good procedures to ensure that children settle quickly when they start at the nursery.

The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to the safety of the children. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The nursery has good arrangements for early identification of children with additional learning needs and provides good support for those children in need of extra support. The co-coordinator for additional learning needs has worked closely with outside agencies to ensure children's needs are appropriately met. In order to provide appropriate activities for the small number of three year olds, all children work for short planned periods each day with their keyworker. This is a good feature of the setting and has had a clear impact on learning for all children.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is attractive and welcoming. All children are made to feel important and valued members of the group. It is a calm, busy and purposeful place where all children are fully included in all activities and are treated equally.

A good ratio of well trained and experienced practitioners meets the needs of all children. They are very well aware of the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum and highly committed to their continued professional development. Resources are of a very good quality and quantity and the setting benefits from being able to share resources with a nearby day nursery. All children have access to the range of activities provided both indoors and outdoors.

The children's learning experiences are enhanced by a good range of visits to the locality and beyond and also by visitors including a dancing teacher and a volunteer from the local church who comes to cook with the children..

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>
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<b>Good</b>
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**Leadership: Good**

The nursery managers have a clear sense of purpose and vision for improvement. They share a commitment to offering good provision that helps children to achieve their potential in all areas of learning and have created a positive ethos where both staff and children are valued and respected.

There is a good range of policies to ensure the children's safety and appropriate risk assessments have been carried out. An effective system is in place for the annual review of performance of practitioners. Practitioners work well together and regular meetings ensure that good communication is maintained.

The managers have only been in place for nine months and in that time have shown that they have a clear understanding of their roles. They work together effectively with their staff to deliver the Foundation Phase. National and local priorities have been met and the setting has taken good account of Welsh Assembly Government and Local Authority initiatives. The setting has recently achieved the ECO Schools Bronze Award.

**Improving quality: Good**

The setting has good processes to evaluate its strengths and areas for development. Practitioners demonstrate a clear commitment to continuing improvement. They make time to listen to children views and encourage parents to suggest improvements.

Practitioners reflect together with managers to identify issues for further improvement and to work together towards their implementation. For example, practitioners have identified the need to develop children's Welsh language skills and to provide opportunities for them to learn about sustainability and recycling. Leaders and practitioners respond well to advice and support, ensuring that changes result in improvements in children's standards and quality of provision. Practitioners make good use of Foundation phase training and have made some visits to other settings.

The setting's self-evaluation report is a useful document which links appropriately with the targets for improvement identified in action plans. The nursery has made good progress in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection.



### **Partnership working: Good**

A range of partnership activities contributes positively to children's progress and well being. The setting has good relationships with the parents and carers of children in their care and staff are always available to discuss any questions or concerns parents may have. The setting has begun to develop a home/school link focussing on the key skills of language and mathematics and parents are supporting this. There are no arrangements in place to keep parents informed about planned activities for their children.

Formal reports are provided for parents of three-year-olds as are opportunities for arranged meetings with their child's keyworker. Parents, when necessary, are fully involved in decisions about their children. A useful partnership is in place with the Local Authority and the link advisory teacher visits regularly to support and give advice. Practitioners reported positively about this support and there is good evidence that they have acted on the advice received to good effect.

The nursery is developing good links with the schools to which the children move on and also with the day nursery nearby.

### **Resource management: Good**

The setting has a good range of high quality resources which are well used to support the planned learning activities. Practitioners are effectively deployed to maximise children's learning and independence both indoors and out.

The managers manage the nursery finances rigorously and share spending decisions with the staff team. They are mindful of the impact of spending on the quality of provision and the progress children make. The setting gives good value for money

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received

### Responses to discussions with children

There is no commentary on discussions with children due to the small number of three-year-olds present.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

Mary Dyas	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](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	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 partnership's conditions of registration.
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	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.
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	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.

<b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<b>National (NDNA)</b>	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
<b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.