



Inspection Report

The Alphabet Tree

**The Alphabet Tree Day Nursery
Unit 6 Block D Varlin Court
Western Industrial Estate
Caerphilly
CF83 1BQ**



Date Inspection Completed

12/02/2024

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About The Alphabet Tree

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	The Alphabet Tree Ltd
Registered places	81
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	2 May 2019
Is this a Flying Start service?	Yes
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.

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

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

Summary

Children are very happy, settled, and confident to share their views. They make friends with ease and interact well with one another. Children thoroughly enjoy the activities available to them and learn to become independent.

Staff are professional and motivated. They have a good understanding of how to keep children safe and healthy and implement the setting's policies and procedures effectively. Staff are patient, kind and caring. They support children's learning and development well, offering a purposeful range of activities led by children's interests and developmental needs.

The environment is clean, welcoming, and child friendly. Leaders ensure risk assessments are in place and regularly updated. The environment is well organised to stimulate and support children's play and learning. A good range of indoor and outdoor resources promote children's all-round development.

Leaders are motivated and dedicated to delivering high quality childcare. They provide lots of encouragement and support to staff. Required policies and records are in place. Parents speak highly of the setting and the care their children receive.

Children are happy, settled and make many decisions about how they spend their time. They choose from the fun activities and toys on offer, following their own interests. For example, babies freely explore their playroom choosing from a range of toys and follow their individual sleep and bottle-feeding routines. Children of all ages express themselves confidently. They are listened to, which makes them feel valued and promotes their self-esteem. Planned activities consider children's interests and ideas, which puts their 'voice' at the heart of the setting.

Children arrive at the setting eager to see staff and their friends. They have warm and positive relationships with staff and know that staff will help and support them. Children know the daily routines well, which helps them feel settled and at ease in their surroundings. For example, they know to wash their hands before snack and mealtimes and enjoy daily circle time activities such as singing rhymes and counting.

Children behave and interact well for their ages and stages of development. They happily play alone or alongside their friends as they learn to share and work together. For example, older children readily share resources such as play dough and role play equipment. Children are beginning to understand the needs of others and consider their friends feelings. We heard one child say to their friend, "*let's do it again, you go first this time,*" as they practiced walking over balance beams.

Children thoroughly enjoy their play and the activities on offer. They develop a wide range of skills as they explore their playrooms, engrossed in their chosen activity. We saw babies discovering how to make different marks with crayons and delight in the different sounds a variety of shakers made. Older children immerse themselves in rich play experiences as they use a wide range of real-life resources such as china plates and cooking utensils during role play. They engage their imaginations and make sense of their world as they pretend to prepare, cook, and serve food to their friends and a staff member.

Children have good opportunities to develop their independence. They follow their own interests for extended periods of time which allows them to consolidate skills and make decisions. Children learn to do things for themselves, such as pouring their own drinks and helping to serve food at mealtimes. Children of all ages help to tidy away their toys at given times. Older children are confident at washing and drying their hands, while younger children do so with guidance.

Care and Development**Good**

Staff have a good understanding of how to keep children safe and implement policies and procedures effectively. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and the action they need to take should they have a concern about a child. Staff accurately complete relevant records in relation to accidents and incidents. They conduct regular fire drill practices with children to ensure they know how to leave the building safely in the event of an emergency. Staff keep registers of attendance for themselves and children, and any visitor's attending the setting. Information on individual allergies is up to date and displayed clearly in all rooms. However, staff do not always follow procedures to meet children's dietary requirements. In addition, the allergy policy does not clearly outline all measures in place to safely manage children's allergies. Overall, staff keep children safe and healthy and have effective procedures in place to promote a healthy lifestyle. Staff follow infection control procedures by washing hands after changing a nappy and before preparing food. They maintain a hygienic environment, regularly washing tables, cleaning cups/bottles and brushing floors. The snacks and meals provided are nutritious and staff offer milk or water regularly throughout the day.

Staff are patient, caring and kind when interacting with children. They deal with any inappropriate behaviour quickly and calmly to avoid it escalating. For example, when a child began to take a book off another child, a staff member quickly intervened and distracted them by offering them a different book. Staff use praise appropriately to celebrate children's achievements, helping them to feel a sense of pride in what they are doing. They speak respectfully to each other and are good role models for children. Staff join in with children's play when it is appropriate to do so and talk regularly to extend their learning and make their experiences sociable. During lunch time we saw staff chatting to older children about how this week is a special celebration week so that's why they were all dressing in different clothes.

Staff plan stimulating activities and opportunities for children to learn. They conduct observations of the children, so they are aware of their interests and individual needs. Staff use this information to plan for children's next steps in development and track their progress, dating when skills are achieved. In addition, staff compile a photo journey book which includes photographs of children at play. However, staff do not date the photos in these files, doing so would show when children achieved those skills. Staff promote the use of the Welsh language well. We heard staff using simple words and phrases with the children at circle time and throughout the day.

Leaders provide an environment that is safe. The entrance to the setting is secure with all doors and gates kept locked. Leaders ensure all essential building safety checks are up to date and complete daily checks of all areas. The setting recognises that risk taking is important to a child's development and they encourage children to have real life experiences. However, risk assessments of real-life objects such as glass and delicate items do not state how the staff teach children to use the items appropriately and safely to avoid unnecessary risks. Leaders told us that staff role model how to handle items such as glass and china in their daily practice with children.

Leaders provide children with an indoor and outdoor environment that is spacious, child friendly, light, and bright. The well-maintained environment provides children with a warm and welcoming atmosphere from the moment they arrive. Photographs of children and their families and attractive displays celebrate children's work and gives them a sense of belonging. There are different rooms available which allow children to be grouped according to their age and stage of development. This provides the space children need to play and learn at their own pace. Indoor rooms have quiet corners and calm lighting, giving children the opportunity for rest and relaxation as well as stimulating play. Toilet and nappy changing facilities are clean and easily accessible. The dedicated sleep room in the baby department provides a safe and quiet place for children to sleep undisturbed whilst still giving staff easy access to check on them.

Leaders provide a broad range of stimulating resources that allow children variety and choice within the different rooms. Furniture, toys, and equipment are of good quality and are developmentally appropriate to children. We saw a variety of resources that support fine motor skills, from stacking toys and chunky crayons in the baby room to loose parts play for the pre-school children. Outside is a large and inviting space where children can explore and learn about the world around them and develop a range of skills. This includes mud kitchens, bikes and trikes, slides, a shelter, and a spacious playhouse. Although there is a range of outdoor resources at the setting, we saw that not all areas were accessible for children. For example, the playhouse was closed, the slides were wet, and younger children were unable to access the mud kitchen area. This limited children's choices whilst playing outdoors.

Leadership and Management

Good

Leaders are enthusiastic and motivated to provide a high-quality service. There is a clear statement of purpose providing parents with information about how the setting runs. However, the document does not reflect recent changes such as, the provision of flying start places, the current postal address for CIW and the new Curriculum for Wales. Leaders regularly review policies and procedures and ensure staff implement these well in practice. They are knowledgeable about their regulatory responsibilities and operate above the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare.

Leaders monitor the quality of the service and plan for improvements effectively. They regularly seek feedback from parents, children, staff, and outside agencies. Leaders use this information to write an annual quality of care report which identifies strong practice and areas for development. For example, "*visitors to the nursery often comment on how calm and relaxed the setting is. We feel that having a stable and consistent team of staff plays a big part in this*". The report includes positive feedback from parents which demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the service provided.

Leaders prioritise staff wellbeing and value their staff team. For example, staff have free access to support packages which include expert advice in areas such as bereavement, stress, money management and parenting. Regular team building events are also organised. As a result, staff are very happy in their roles, enthusiastic, motivated and enjoy their work. Staff files are very well organised, and evidence all relevant checks to ensure staff are suitable to work with children. Staff receive regular supervisions and annual appraisals, which enable them to identify their strengths and areas for development. Leaders deploy staff effectively ensuring they meet staff ratios to deliver safe and effective care.

The setting has established positive relationships with parents. Parents receive regular feedback on their child's day via a digital app, daily verbal feedback and newsletters. In addition, leaders invite parents to attend parents' evenings and various events such as Christmas parties, children's graduation, sponsored walks, cakes sales and raffles to raise money for charity. Leaders develop beneficial partnerships with local authority advisers and support agencies such as speech and language and health visitors. They invite visitors into the setting to enhance children's learning experiences such as music and dance groups, the local fire service and an organisation who offer animal handling experiences.

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
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

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
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
28 (2) (b) [ii]	The provider has not ensured that sufficient checks have been undertaken in relation to the suitability of workers.	Achieved

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 24 - Safety	Review risk assessments to ensure they identify all measures in place to minimise hazards to children's safety.
Standard 1 - Information	Update the statement of purpose to reflect the introduction of Curriculum Wales, postal address for CIW, and information regarding flying start places.

Where we think it helpful, we may make best practice recommendations. These are to encourage settings that are doing well to become even better at helping children thrive.

Best Practice
Recommendation(s)
Ensure all staff are aware of the procedures for managing children dietary requirements and update the allergy policy to clearly outline procedures.
Date photographs in children learning journals to clearly evidence progress and development.

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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