NURSERY INTELLIGENCE · BLAIRGOWRIE INSIGHTS

Example Nursery Intelligence Report

An External Intelligence Briefing for Nursery Owners & Leadership Teams

Acme Day Nursery & School

Sturry · Canterbury · Kent

Promising	Medium	Awaiting first inspection	160
Overall Position	Overall Risk	Ofsted status	Registered places

An external intelligence briefing for the owners and leadership team — bringing together information from dozens of public sources into one document: what's changed, why it may matter, and questions worth raising at a leadership meeting. This report presents findings, not recommendations — the leadership team is best placed to decide what, if anything, to do with them.

EXAMPLE REPORT

Based on public data · names anonymised

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Prepared by Blairgowrie Insights · July 2026

All figures sourced from Ofsted, Companies House, the Department for Education, the Office for National Statistics, Coram Family and Childcare, Canterbury City Council, Kent County Council and named industry sources — see Section 8 for the full list

EXECUTIVE DASHBOARD

Acme Day Nursery & School — position as of July 2026

OVERALL POSITION

Promising

— with one pivotal near-term event

Overall risk: Medium

This briefing draws together seven areas of external intelligence — set out in Section 2 — that most affect Acme's position over the next 12–24 months. Acme carries a genuinely strong reputation — an Outstanding inspection history at the site, a respected founder, and 122 parent reviews — but the current registered entity has not yet had its first Ofsted inspection, which is the most significant open question in this report.

FIVE FINDINGS WORTH NOTING

- **First inspection outcome.** A confident, well-evidenced first inspection would turn historic reputation into a current Ofsted report card. 'Exceptional' evaluations are rare for private nurseries, so even one would stand out locally.
- **Founder credibility.** Nigel Body's national profile and NDNA role are a genuine recruitment and marketing asset, currently under-used externally.
- **Sturry housing growth.** A proposed 150-home development at Lime Lane could add local demand if approved.
- **Digital reputation lead.** 122 daynurseries.co.uk reviews and a 9.96/10 score are well ahead of nearby competitors.
- **Pricing below the average.** Day rates sit just below the England average, so a fee review would not on its own take Acme into premium pricing.

FIVE RISKS WORTH NOTING

- **First inspection pending.** Ofsted normally inspects newly registered settings within 30 months, so Acme's first report card could arrive at any point up to around May 2027.
- **Marketing ahead of the register.** Website and award badges reference Outstanding status earned under the site's previous registration, not the current one.
- **NI + NLW cost inflation.** No matching funding support for private providers; wage floor up 22% since 2023.
- **Kent's natural population decline.** Deaths now outnumber births in the county, and ONS projections expect this to continue.
- **Contested local housing plan.** The Lime Lane proposal has drawn 1,400+ objections; approval and timing are uncertain.

WHAT'S LIVE RIGHT NOW

- The first inspection under the new registration (registered November 2024) has not yet taken place.
- Website and marketing materials currently reference Ofsted history that predates the current registration.
- A decision on the Lime Lane 150-home planning proposal is still pending.

These and other findings are set out for discussion in Section 7, Leadership Agenda.

DATA CONFIDENCE: *High for Ofsted, Companies House, DfE and ONS figures (primary official sources). Medium for competitor staffing/occupancy and daynurseries.co.uk figures (published only where a source discloses them). Not available from public sources: Acme's own P&L, current occupancy rate and waiting-list depth — a direct working relationship with the nursery would close these gaps. Full methodology in Section 8.*

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1 Executive Briefing

Acme Day Nursery & School occupies a single, long-established site at High St, Sturry, on the eastern side of Canterbury — 160 registered childcare places, open 7:30am to 6:30pm, historically catering from birth through to age seven. The site itself is not new: what changed, in late 2024, was who runs it.

A Nursery With Two Registrations

The premises operated for several years as Happy Nurseries, part of Mega Nurseries — a Kent group of 18 settings built up since 1988 by its founder, Nigel Body. Under that registration the site earned a full Outstanding judgement across all four inspection areas (quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management) at its last inspection in February 2023.

In October 2024, Nigel sold 17 of his 18 Mega Nurseries, together with the group's training centre, to Child Dreams, a national nursery group, in a deal financed by Parkwood Bank and brokered by Chum & Co. The Sturry site was the one exception: rather than sell it, Nigel Body retained it personally, carving it out into a new company — Sturry Limited, incorporated 11 June 2024 — and relaunching it as Acme Day Nursery & School.

Because childcare registration attaches to the registered provider, not the building, this change of ownership created a brand-new Ofsted registration: Acme @ Sturry, URN 2218776, registered on 17 November 2024. The previous registration, Mega Nurseries (URN 2639896), now shows as Closed on the Ofsted register. The new registration has not yet had a first inspection — Ofsted normally carries out the first inspection of a newly registered provider within 30 months of registration, which means Acme's first inspection could happen at any time between now and around May 2027. It will be carried out under Ofsted's new report-card framework, in use since 10 November 2025, which replaced the single overall grades (Outstanding, Good and so on) with separate evaluations for each area on a five-point scale from 'exceptional' to 'urgent improvement'.

Continuity Where It Matters

- **Leadership continuity.** The on-site Centre Director, Linda Smith, has led day-to-day operations since 2005 and is now also a director of Sturry Limited — the single strongest thread of continuity through the ownership change.
- **Workforce growth.** Staff numbers have grown from 38 at the February 2023 inspection to roughly 50 today, alongside continued capacity for 160 registered places.
- **Parent reputation intact.** 122 reviews on daynurseries.co.uk, with a 9.96/10 score, reflect a parent base that has stayed loyal through the rebrand.
- **Founder still at the helm.** Nigel Body — a board member of the National Day Nurseries Association and a well-known figure in UK early years — remains personally attached to this one site, having sold the rest of his group.

WHAT WE FOUND

The nursery's day-to-day reputation, staff and physical setting are continuous with an Outstanding-rated provider — but formally, its Ofsted grade resets to zero whenever the registered provider changes, regardless of how strong the underlying service remains. That is not a reflection of quality; it is how the regulatory system is structured. And because inspections since November 2025 use report cards with no single overall grade, the new registration cannot be graded 'Outstanding' at all: that label belongs to a closed registration under a framework that no longer exists. The practical risk is that marketing materials, award badges or word-of-mouth may describe the nursery as "Outstanding" when, strictly, that grade belongs to a registration that has since closed.

A QUESTION FOR LEADERSHIP

Is every external reference to Ofsted status — website, brochure, signage, social media — accurate about which registration earned which grade, and is the business ready to present its case well when the first inspection under the new registration arrives?

2 Performance Scorecard & Trends

A summary of the seven areas of intelligence that most affect Acme's medium-term position, and the direction each appears to be moving in based on the evidence gathered for this report — not a numerical or weighted score.

Dimension	Direction of travel	What the evidence shows
Regulatory standing	→ Unresolved	Outstanding inspection history under the previous registration (Feb 2023, all four judgements); the current registration has not yet been inspected. First inspection due by around May 2027, under Ofsted's new report-card framework.
Founder & leadership credibility	→ Strong and stable	Nigel Body built the predecessor group from scratch since 1988 and is an NDNA board member; on-site Centre Director has led the setting since 2005.
Parent reputation & digital presence	↑ Strengthening	122 daynurseries.co.uk reviews at 9.96/10, well ahead of nearby competitors; modern, video-led website with published fees and online tour booking.
Workforce scale	↑ Growing	Staff numbers have grown from 38 (Feb 2023) to roughly 50 today, alongside the change of ownership — a sign of continued investment in the setting.
Price positioning	→ Limited headroom	Day rates of £69–£72 sit close to, not above, the England average day-rate equivalent of £74.41 — limited headroom to absorb rising costs without repricing.
Local demand environment	↓ Softening	Kent's natural population change has turned negative (more deaths than births county-wide); a nearby 150-home proposal could offset this locally if approved.
Competitive intensity	→ Stable, but out-scaled	Nearby providers are mostly Good or Requires Improvement rated, giving Acme a historic quality edge — though the largest local competitor is part of a major national group with far greater marketing scale.

WHAT WE FOUND

Every dimension above points in a broadly positive or neutral direction except regulatory standing, which is genuinely unresolved until the next inspection report is published. That single dimension carries the most uncertainty, because pricing, marketing and parent confidence all lean on the assumption that the site's quality remains what it was. The bar for the top evaluation is high: when the NDNA reviewed report cards published in January and February 2026, only 1 of 341 private, voluntary and independent nurseries received an 'exceptional' evaluation in any area.

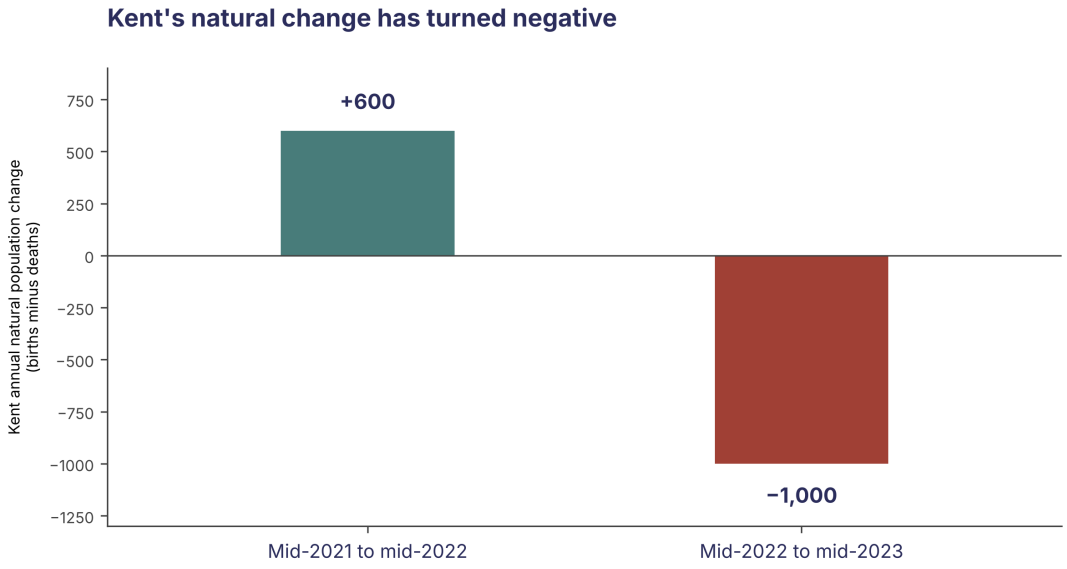
A QUESTION FOR LEADERSHIP

If Acme's first report card shows mostly 'strong' or 'expected standard' evaluations rather than 'exceptional', how would that be explained to parents, staff and prospective families alongside the site's Outstanding history — and is a plan in place for presenting the result either way?

3 Market Intelligence

3.1 Local Market

Kent's population (the Kent County Council area, excluding Medway) stood at an estimated 1,639,000 at mid-2024, up around 4% since the 2021 Census — growth driven almost entirely by migration rather than births. Canterbury district, which includes Sturry, had an estimated population of 162,100 at mid-2024; despite its large student population it records more deaths than births each year, because birth rates are low and the coastal towns of Whitstable and Herne Bay have an older age profile. Taken together, the wider Canterbury area is growing, but the underlying birth rate that feeds nursery demand is not keeping pace.



Source: ONS mid-year population estimates, components of population change, presented by Kent Analytics, Kent County Council (Kent County Council area, excluding Medway).

Locally, the most significant live development is a proposal by ABS Properties for up to 150 homes on Green Wedge land north of Sturry, off Lime Lane — within a few miles of Acme's site. The proposal has drawn more than 1,400 objections and a decision has not yet been made. Canterbury City Council's Local Plan, adopted in November 2025, separately earmarks further housing growth at Blean, Thanington, Tyler Hill and Fordwich over the next 20 years, so new family housing is coming to the wider area even if the Lime Lane scheme itself does not proceed.

3.2 Competitors

Provider	Ofsted rating	Notes
The Bumbles Day Nursery, Sturry	Good (Apr 2023)	110 places; part of ABC Group, a large national group. Compliance action published Jan 2024 for failing to notify Ofsted of two prior allegations against staff.

The Bumbles Day Nursery, Tyler Hill	—	Sibling ABC Group site nearby, same national group.
Treetops Blean	Good	41 Church Road; independent, open since 1997; smaller setting closer to Canterbury city centre.
First Child PDN, Blean	Requires Improvement (May 2024)	199 High Park Road; nearest RI-rated provider in the immediate area.

WHAT WE FOUND

The immediate competitive set is Good-to-Requires-Improvement, not Outstanding — meaning Acme's historic quality standard is a genuine local differentiator once it is reconfirmed under the new registration. ABC Group's 2024 compliance action for a notification failure is also a useful reminder: safeguarding-notification lapses happen even at large, well-resourced operators, and are exactly the kind of process risk that resurfaces after any change of registered provider.

A QUESTION FOR LEADERSHIP

Now that Acme operates under a new registered entity, have all statutory notification duties — serious incidents, allegations against staff, RIDDOR-reportable events — been explicitly re-confirmed and documented under Sturry Limited, rather than assumed to carry over from the old registration?

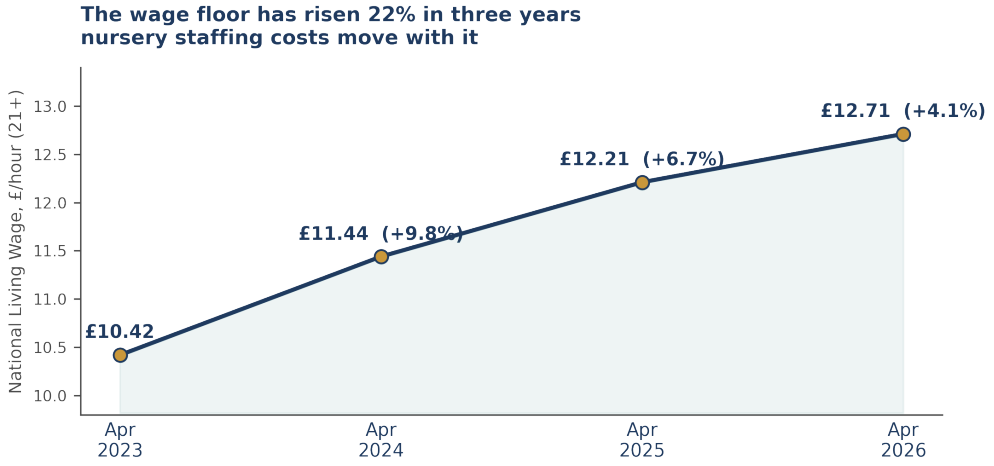
3.3 Parents & Reputation Signals

Acme carries 122 reviews on daynurseries.co.uk with a 9.96/10 overall score (46 of those reviews within the last two years), the strongest published review position of any provider identified in the immediate area. The nursery also promotes a connection to the Nigel Body Child First Trust, a charitable link to its founder that offers a genuine community angle distinct from the marketing of larger corporate groups. It was named a winner at the Nursery World Awards 2022, with earlier recognition for outdoor learning dating from before the rebrand — worth noting precisely, since some award history technically belongs to the previous registration, in the same way the Ofsted grade does.

4 Financial Intelligence

4.1 Cost Environment

Every private nursery in England is absorbing the same set of cost pressures this year, and Acme is no exception. From April 2025, employer National Insurance rose from 13.8% to 15%, and the threshold at which it starts to apply fell from £9,100 to £5,000 per employee — a direct, disproportionate hit to labour-intensive businesses like childcare, where staff costs typically represent 70–80% of operating expenditure. The National Living Wage has risen 22% since 2023, compounding the same pressure from the other direction.

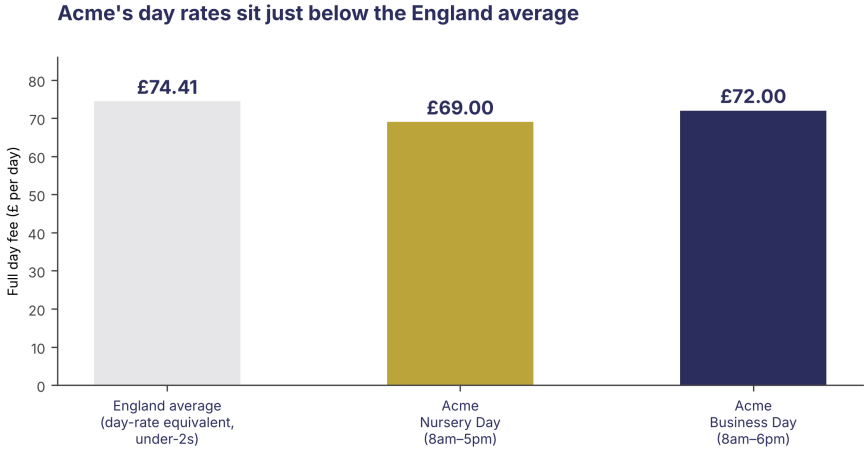


Source: UK Government National Living Wage rate announcements, 2023–2026.

Business rates add a further fixed cost: English nurseries receive no sector-specific rates relief, with the average annual bill for a standalone nursery premises estimated at around £21,034.

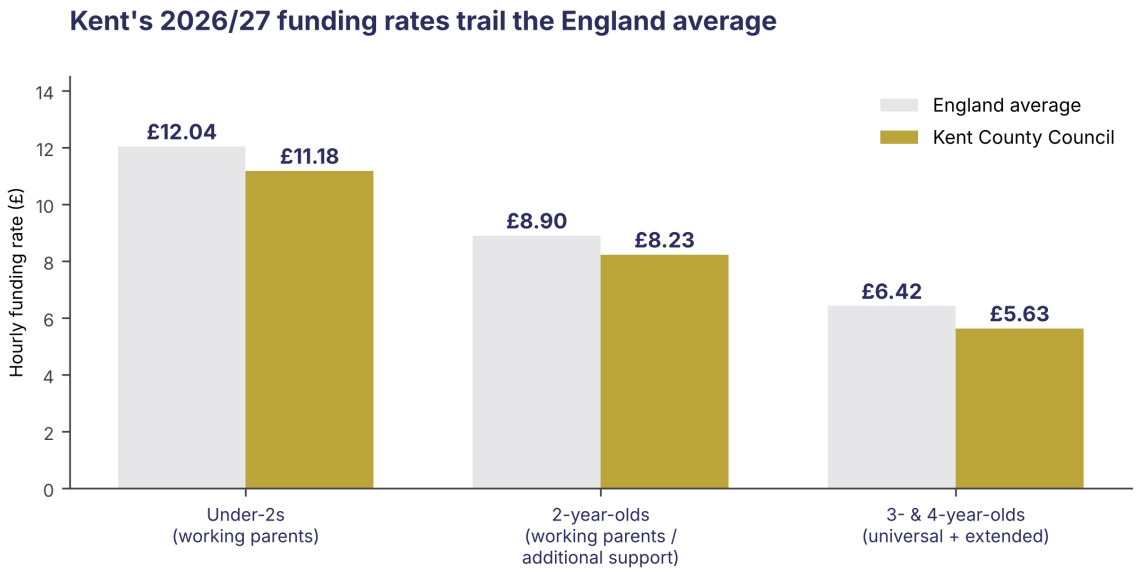
4.2 Pricing & Funding

Acme publishes its fees openly on its website — a Nursery Day (8am–5pm) at £69, a Business Day (8am–6pm) at £72, and a £4 Early Start supplement for 7:30–8am arrivals. That positions the setting close to, rather than above, the England-wide day-rate equivalent for under-twos (£74.41), which is a meaningfully different position from a nursery pricing itself at a premium.



Sources: acmenursery.com published fee schedule; Coram Family and Childcare, Annual Childcare Survey 2025 (England average, under-2s, day-rate equivalent).

On the funding side, Kent County Council sets early years funding for every provider in the county, so Acme and all the competitors in Section 3.2 are paid on the same local formula. Kent's 2026/27 base rates trail the England average at every age band: £11.18 versus £12.04 for under-twos, £8.23 versus £8.90 for two-year-olds, and £5.63 versus £6.42 for three- and four-year-olds. Kent's figures are the base rates paid to providers, before any supplements; the England figures are the Department for Education's average hourly rates to local authorities, so the comparison is indicative rather than exact.



Sources: Kent County Council, Early Years Funding Calendar and Payment Schedule 2026/27 (provider base rates, before supplements); Department for Education, early years funding rates 2026/27 (England average).

WHAT WE FOUND

Because Acme's fees already sit close to the England average rather than at a premium, it has less room than a premium-priced competitor to absorb further cost inflation without a fee increase — and any increase lands on a price-sensitive, funded-hours-heavy local market rather than a purely fee-paying one.

A QUESTION FOR LEADERSHIP

Given the NI and wage increases already in effect, does current pricing still cover true delivery cost per place, or is a fee review overdue before further cost rises arrive?

5 Workforce Intelligence

At the February 2023 inspection — the last full inspection of the site, under its previous registration — Happy Nurseries employed 38 staff, of whom 26 (68%) held at least a Level 2 childcare qualification, including four at degree level. daynurseries.co.uk's current listing for Acme records roughly 50 childcare staff, suggesting the workforce has grown by around a third since the site's last inspection, broadly tracking the change of ownership and any associated investment in the setting.

Recruitment positioning

- **A strong story to tell candidates.** The site's Outstanding inspection legacy and Nigel Body's national profile in early years are genuine, underused recruitment assets — few local competitors can offer either.
- **Leadership stability.** Centre Director Linda Smith's 20+ years at the site gives continuity that candidates can verify and trust, distinct from a newly assembled management team.
- **Pay pressure is universal, not Acme-specific.** Sector-wide wage inflation (National Living Wage up 22% since 2023) applies to every local competitor equally, so retention will increasingly be won on non-pay factors — culture, training, and the strength of the Outstanding legacy — rather than on wage rates alone.

6 Digital Presence & Reputation

This is the clearest area of outright strength identified in this report. Acme carries 122 reviews on daynurseries.co.uk with a 9.96/10 score (46 of them within the last two years), comfortably the strongest published review position of any nearby provider covered in Section 3.2. The nursery's website (rebuilt around October 2025) is unusually well built for the sector: video content, a downloadable brochure, an online tour-booking form, and — notably — a transparent, published fee schedule, at a time when many competing nurseries still require a phone call or form submission just to learn the price. The nursery also maintains an active presence on Facebook and Instagram.

WHAT WE FOUND

A near-perfect review score combined with genuine fee transparency is a real competitive advantage in a sector where many providers still hide pricing behind an enquiry form. This is one of the few areas where Acme is unambiguously ahead of its local competitive set, independent of the Ofsted question.

A QUESTION FOR LEADERSHIP

Is this digital strength being actively used in marketing and recruitment, or is it an asset sitting quietly on the website rather than being pushed out through paid or organic channels?

7 Leadership Agenda — Using This Report

This section is intended to support discussion by the owners, board and senior leadership team. Its purpose is not to provide a prescribed action plan — the report has already set out the intelligence, in Sections 1 to 6. This section instead provides a structured opportunity to consider what that intelligence means for Acme, and whether any issues require further thought, investigation or action.

The team may wish to use the questions below as part of a leadership meeting following receipt of this report.

1. What has changed?

What information in this report is new, changed or particularly noteworthy since the previous report?

OUR OBSERVATIONS:

2. What might matter to us?

Which developments could have the greatest relevance to our nursery over the next 6–24 months?

AREAS WE WANT TO DISCUSS:

3. What surprised or challenged us?

Is there anything in the external picture that challenges an assumption we currently hold about our nursery, market, competitors, parents, workforce or future prospects?

OUR OBSERVATIONS:

4. What does the outside world currently see?

Does the picture presented by publicly available information accurately reflect how we believe the nursery operates and is positioned?

ANYTHING WE WANT TO CHECK OR CLARIFY:

5. What should we understand better?

Are there areas where we need more information, better internal data or a clearer understanding before reaching a view?

QUESTIONS WE WANT TO INVESTIGATE:

6. What, if anything, do we want to do?

Having considered the intelligence, are there any issues we want to take forward?

Issue / opportunity	Why does it matter?	Owner	By when?	Review

7. What should we keep watching?

Which issues should remain on our leadership radar, even if no action is required now?

ISSUES TO KEEP ON OUR RADAR:

Leadership conclusion

If we had to identify three things from this report that we want to keep in mind over the coming period, they would be:

1.

2.

3.

Date discussed:	
Meeting:	
Participants:	
Next review:	

8 Data Sources, Methodology & References

Primary sources

- **Ofsted.** Ofsted register and inspection reports — Mega Nurseries (URN 2639896, Closed; last inspected 14 Feb 2023, Outstanding); Acme @ Sturry (URN 2218776, registered 17 Nov 2024, awaiting first inspection); The Bumbles Day Nursery, Sturry (URN 206110); The Bumbles Day Nursery, Tyler Hill (URN 2455111); Treetops Blean (URN EY2554326); First Child PDN, Blean (URN 20336). Ofsted guidance on report-card inspections (from 10 November 2025) and first inspections of newly registered providers. National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) analysis of report cards published January–February 2026.
- **Companies House.** Sturry Limited (company number 1334140), incorporation date, officers and registered office filings.
- **Department for Education.** early years entitlement funding rates 2026/27 (England average hourly rates).
- **Office for National Statistics.** mid-year population estimates and components of population change for Kent and Canterbury district.
- **Canterbury City Council.** Canterbury District Local Plan (adopted November 2025).
- **Kent County Council.** population and births/deaths bulletins (Kent Analytics); Early Years Funding Calendar and Payment Schedule 2026/27 (provider funding base rates).
- **Coram Family and Childcare.** Annual Childcare Survey 2025, England average day-rate benchmarks.
- **daynurseries.co.uk.** nursery listing, review data and staffing figures for Acme and competitor settings.
- **acmenursery.com.** published fee schedule, site content and photography.
- **TheBusinessDesk, Christie & Co and Nursery World.** coverage of the October 2024 Child Dreams acquisition of Mega Nurseries.
- **Local press coverage.** coverage of the Lime Lane housing proposal and Canterbury Council's Local Plan (adopted November 2025).

Methodology & data confidence

This report is compiled entirely from publicly available sources — regulatory registers, companies filings, government statistics and published reviews — cross-checked against one another where they overlap. Confidence is high for Ofsted, Companies House, DfE and ONS figures, all primary official sources. Confidence is medium for competitor staffing and daynurseries.co.uk figures, which are published only where a source discloses them and are not independently verifiable. Not available from public sources: Acme's own management accounts, current occupancy rate, and waiting-list depth — figures that a direct working relationship with the nursery would close quickly. Section 2's directional summary reflects the evidence set out in this report; it is not a weighted or numerical score.

Where a figure could not be confirmed from public sources, this report says so explicitly rather than estimating or assuming a figure.

About Blairgowrie Insights

This report was prepared by Blairgowrie Insights, an external intelligence service for nursery owners and leadership teams. We bring together regulatory, financial, demographic and market information that would otherwise be scattered across dozens of sources into a single periodic briefing — surfacing what has changed and why it may matter, and posing questions for leadership to consider. We report what we find; the leadership team decides what to do with it. **It is the responsibility of the nursery leadership to satisfy themselves before taking any action. Blairgowrie Associates Limited are not liable for any actions arising from the use or interpretation of this report or information contained within it**.

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