



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

**Building Blocks Day Nursery
Ynys Lane
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 2LH**

Date of inspection: January 2015

by

**Mrs Janet Heather Marsden
Reporting Inspector**

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:

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

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Context

Building Blocks is a privately owned day nursery, situated in Croesyceiliog, Torfaen. It was established in 1995. The setting is accommodated in purpose built premises that were extended in 2000. The setting is open daily and caters for children from birth until the age of eight. It also provides wrap around care for children until the age of eleven years. It is currently registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) for 60 children.

There are 13 three-year-olds and 4 four-year-olds in the pre-school group. Most of the children come from Croesyceiliog and neighbouring communities, with a small number travelling from more distant areas such as Abergavenny and Monmouth.

The experienced pre-school team is led by the deputy manager, supported by two other practitioners. A further practitioner is employed for three sessions per week and provides support for any children with additional learning needs (ALN).

All the children in the pre-school group are from homes where English is the first language. There are currently very few children identified as having additional learning needs.

The nursery was inspected by the CSSIW in February 2014. The previous Estyn inspection was carried out in 2009.

Summary

The Setting's current performance	Good
The Setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The setting's performance is good because:

- With very few exceptions, children make good progress across all areas of learning;
- children's Welsh language skills are exceptional for their age and starting point;
- almost all the children are very happy and enjoy their time at nursery;
- practitioners plan a very good variety of activities that make learning fun;
- the setting makes highly effective provision for children to learn Welsh;
- practitioners use the outdoor learning area very well to develop children's natural curiosity; and
- there are very good opportunities for children to make choices and plan their own learning.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Managers lead the strategic direction of the setting well;
- the pre-school team are very reflective and eager to improve their practice;
- self- evaluation is effective;
- recent improvements to practitioners confidence in using Welsh has had a very positive impact on children's standards; and
- the setting works effectively with other professionals to secure improvement

Recommendations

- R1. Formalise planning for more able and talented children
- R2. Plan regular opportunities for children to visit places outside the setting
- R3. Review systems for reviewing and monitoring progress towards improvement targets

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Almost all the children make good progress from their individual starting point across all areas of learning during their time in the pre-school. They successfully acquire new knowledge and skills as they have fun exploring out of doors or engaging in an interesting variety of indoor activities.

Nearly all children develop effective communication skills. They listen well to an exciting story or instructions for an activity that captures their imagination. For example, children are completely absorbed in listening to the story of 'The Gruffalo' and helping to plan and follow his route. Most children speak clearly and confidently using complete sentences. They initiate conversations with adults and chat sociably to their friends during their play. During their role-play, when making pizza or caring for dolls, many older children use different voices for different characters.

Most of the younger children eagerly join in singing songs and playing games that help them develop a good understanding of letter sounds. Older children begin to recognise and correctly name a good number of letters.

During their play, older children frequently 'write' notes, letters or cards using a variety of media. In their outdoor play for example, children of all ages construct a map of the gruffalo's journey and add marks to represent labels, letters from their names or, in the case of older children, attempt to write their own names.

Nearly all children successfully develop their numeracy skills through engaging in a good range of games and play activities. When playing outside with the water cascades, for example, they quickly develop their understanding of full and empty and discover how much a container will hold. A few children patiently explain to a questioning adult that empty is the same as zero.

Nearly all children successfully order numbers to five, a minority do this beyond five and a few correctly order numbers to ten. A very few older children have a developing understanding of numbers beyond ten. Most children correctly use positional language such as 'through' or 'into' when describing the route taken by the gruffalo.

Most children develop useful information and communication technology (ICT) skills to help them successfully develop their ideas. For example, many of them are able to skilfully operate the CD player by themselves when they want to dance. Many children use a computer beneficially to play educational games, solve simple problems or draw. Most children enjoy using a computer program, with some adult help, that effectively supports their Welsh language development.

Most children demonstrate good thinking and problem solving skills, for example they quickly work out that tilting a suspended bucket will help them to reach the balls inside.

Nearly all the children make exceptional progress in learning to speak Welsh and achieve high standards. They readily respond to questions and instructions given in Welsh and use Welsh frequently with adults during daily routines. During a Welsh language development activity, most children correctly respond to the question 'pwyt ti?' with 'Owl ydw i' or 'Snake ydw i' depending on which toy they have selected. Later, around half of them successfully ask the same question of their friends.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all the children look happy and smile readily when they arrive at the setting. They attend regularly and they are eager to meet their friends and start their activities. Most children concentrate on their tasks for long periods and persevere to overcome problems, for example when working on the computer or completing a puzzle.

Children develop a high level of self-esteem and confidence because adults respect their ideas and give them frequent opportunities to make their own choices. They are comfortable with all the adults and trust them to take care of any concerns they may have.

Most children respond positively to practitioners` high expectations and behave well. At Circle Time, many children confidently discuss the rules of the setting. They enjoy being monitors or helpers and proudly explain their responsibilities. Almost all children willingly take turns to use equipment and share their toys.

All the children pour their own milk at breakfast or snack time and most of them are keen to share out fruit and yogurt. Most children chat sociably to their friends and many are comfortable and eager to talk to unfamiliar adults about what they have been doing.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

Pre-school staff work together as an effective team to jointly plan learning experiences that successfully address all areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum. They frequently use the children`s suggestions to plan activities that are stimulating and make learning fun.

Practitioners know the children well and generally design tasks that can be readily adapted to their different stages of development. Learning plans include purposeful activities for children with additional learning needs (ALN). However, plans rarely include specific tasks for more able and talented children (MAT). There is generally a good balance between activities children choose for themselves and those that adults plan for them.

The setting places a strong emphasis on developing children`s literacy and numeracy, and Welsh language skills. There are regular, planned opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills effectively.

Practitioners read to children regularly in both English and Welsh and base much of their learning activities on ideas from stories. This helps children develop a positive interest in books and enables them to develop early reading skills successfully. It also helps them to listen purposefully. Children have regular access to a good range of books they can look at with their friends and this promotes the formation of good independent learning habits. Role-play is a regular feature of the children`s daily activity and this helps them to develop their speaking skills very well.

The setting plans a variety of enjoyable games and activities that enable children to effectively develop their numeracy skills. There are frequent opportunities for them to count and sort a variety of objects, recognise and sequence numbers or weigh, measure and estimate during their free play.

There are appropriate opportunities for children to welcome visitors such as a nurse, dentist, police or fire officer and this helps them learn something of the world of work. However they take part in very few visits outside the setting and this limits their experiences of the community around them.

Practitioners use the outdoor areas very effectively to develop children`s natural curiosity. They plan good opportunities for children to explore the natural environment freely and provide valuable adult support and guidance for developing their ideas.

The setting provides outstanding opportunities for young children to develop their understanding and use of Welsh. Practitioners plan a variety of engaging role-play activities based on both Welsh and English story books that help children learn simple commands and sentence patterns. There are very good opportunities for children to read and write Welsh words when playing in the language area. The setting has appropriate arrangements for celebrating St David`s Day and the National Eisteddfod.

Teaching: Good

The relationships between children and adults are very good and this has a beneficial effect on learning outcomes. Adults regularly converse with the children in both English and Welsh and this enables them to become confident speakers. The pre-school leader models bilingualism skilfully.

Adults respect and value the children`s opinions and views and involve them constructively in planning their own learning. As a result, children feel confident to experiment and learn from their mistakes.

Practitioners understand the principles of the Foundation Phase well. They plan varied learning experiences that generally cater for children`s different abilities and learning styles. The good pace of most adult-led sessions ensures that children are engaged purposefully in learning.

Practitioners allow children a high degree of freedom to explore for themselves and develop new skills. Most practitioners know when to usefully intervene in children's play to move their learning forward. However, on a few occasions, they too readily allow children to decline to take part in an adult led activity.

Practitioners frequently praise children's achievements and offer suggestions and encouragement on how to improve their work. They make regular observations and assessments that they generally use successfully to plan the next stage of children's learning. However, on occasions this information is not used well enough to plan for the needs of MAT children. There is a useful system of recording individual learning targets but these are not currently shared on a regular basis with the children or their parents.

Parents receive regular updates about their child's progress and there are formal meetings each term. Reports to parents are useful; they clearly state what children can already do and indicate what they need to learn next

Care, support and guidance: Good

The safety and wellbeing of children is given a high priority. There are effective arrangements to deal with any bullying and children are free from any kind of oppressive behaviour. Adults treat children with respect and use mealtimes and daily routines very effectively to model good manners and promote positive behaviour.

There are good arrangements to help children settle into the nursery setting and transfer from one age group area to another. Arrangements for sharing information with schools to which children transfer are appropriate.

Practitioners allow children exceptional opportunities to make choices in all aspects of their lives and as a result they develop confidence and a feeling of self-worth. Daily routines of tidying and organising their own equipment help children to develop a good sense of responsibility.

The setting successfully promotes the benefits of healthy eating and drinking, and taking regular exercise to both children and their families. There are suitable arrangements for children to learn about the need to recycle waste. Practitioners promote the concept of care and concern for living things very effectively when encouraging children to study small creatures in the garden or providing a home designed specifically for bees.

The setting plans suitable learning activities for children to develop their understanding of cultural diversity. For example, they taste foods from around the world, create a Chinese Dragon to celebrate New Year or make Diva lamps.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There are effective systems in place for identifying and meeting the needs of children with (ALN) and for supporting their families. The setting makes beneficial use of its network of professional contacts for specialist advice when necessary.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides a happy and safe learning environment where all children are valued and treated with respect. It successfully promotes equality, diversity and human rights. The pre-school successfully creates an ethos of learning through having fun.

Practitioners use outdoor learning activities very well to promote gender equality. For example, the make believe building site complete with security tapes, a mini cement mixer, shovels and gravel provides perfect opportunities for both boys and girls to engage in high quality role-play.

The accommodation is well-maintained and secure. Well-equipped learning areas encourage children to practice the skills they have learnt during their free play. There are high quality displays of children`s art work that celebrate their achievement and help them aspire to a high standard. Interactive displays of children`s work in the registration area are used exceptionally well to promote the Welsh language.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The two managers lead the nursery setting well. They have a strong sense of purpose and implement policies and initiatives to good effect. They pay good attention to local and national priorities and ensure that all members of staff are fully aware of their joint responsibilities.

All staff have clear job descriptions and managers ensure that they have the necessary skills to do their jobs well. Practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work together as an effective team. Managers have high expectations and challenge staff to do their best. There are useful processes to manage their performance and to identify and address their training needs. Managers provide very good support for the development of new staff and students.

The fairly new pre- school leader, who is also the deputy manager, has made a very successful start to her role. She leads and manages her team very well and ably supports their development. She values their opinions and encourages them to contribute ideas at the regular team meetings.

The pre-school leader has a very good understanding of the Foundation Phase and has implemented a number of initiatives that have already had a significant impact on outcomes. For example, the setting has recently raised standards in children`s Welsh language development and children are more successfully involved in taking greater responsibility for their own learning.

Improving quality: Good

There is a well-established culture of self-evaluation and planning for improvement that includes parents and children as well as all practitioners. Managers and staff are clearly aware of what the setting does well and what needs to be improved.

Recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed successfully and the setting has correctly identified what needs to improve next in its most recent development plan.

Managers use a number of different evaluation tools and recording systems to gather similar information for several different purposes. Although leaders and managers generally use this information well to inform their work, the variety of documents sometimes leads to a lack of consistency in regularly reviewing and monitoring progress towards targets in the development plan. Managers have recently recognised the need to streamline paperwork.

All practitioners respond well to advice and guidance. They continually seek effective ways to improve provision and outcomes for pre-school children. Practitioners enthusiastically engage in professional development and share what they have learnt with colleagues. Practitioners visit other pre-school settings to gain new ideas and this has had a positive impact on their practice.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of worthwhile partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children.

There is a productive partnership with the local authority support teacher that contributes well to improvements in the setting's work. Managers regularly attend meetings and take advantage of whatever training is offered.

Links with other settings to share good practice and ideas have proved to be useful and there are good arrangements with local colleges to provide student placements and training for staff.

There are appropriate links with the primary schools to which children transfer. The setting provides wrap around care for the local school and this enables staff to usefully share information that benefits children and their families.

There are valuable links with parents who appreciate the respect, care and support their children receive from nursery staff. Parents are well-informed about a range of issues in addition to receiving regular updates on their child's progress. Families support the setting well by organising fundraising activities and donating equipment.

Resource management: Good

Managers ensure that the setting has sufficient staff and resources to consistently meet the children's learning needs. They develop staff effectively and successfully retain them over the long term.

Managers use the skill and expertise of their staff well. For example, they have recognised the potential of the pre-school leader, through her work with younger children, and have recently put her considerable skills to good use in the Foundation Phase and as deputy manager. The very experienced SENCO also acts as an additional practitioner and this enables her to provide high quality support for children with ALN during their free play sessions as well as working with them individually.

Practitioners are very well-qualified and access a good range of useful training that successfully meets their development needs. Welsh language training, for example, has dramatically improved practitioners` confidence and has led to a very beneficial impact on learning outcomes.

Managers have a thorough understanding of the finances and spending is generally linked to priorities in the development plan. There is a sufficient supply of good quality resources in all areas of learning. Spending is regularly evaluated in terms of its impact on learning. For example, money spent on the outdoor area has already had a beneficial effect on the children`s independent learning.

In view of the many worthwhile educational opportunities offered to children and the good standards they achieve, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Janet Heather Marsden	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)

Glossary of terms

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

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