



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Abersychan Under Fives
Brynteg Community Hall
Abersychan
NP4 7BG**

Date of inspection: March 2016

by

**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

Abersychan Under Fives is situated in Brynteg Community Hall, Abersychan, in the Torfaen local authority. The setting serves the catchment of Abersychan and Garnteg and is registered to take up to 24 children for full day care. The setting has four members of staff led by a team leader. In addition, the group is managed by a manager and her deputy, who make regular visits and oversee the planning and assessment arrangements. All are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children. The acting senior team leader has been in post since January 2016.

Children are admitted into the setting from two years of age. There are 26 children on roll, of whom ten are three-year-olds and six are four-year-olds. Currently there are seven three-year-olds and five four-year-olds in receipt of funded educational provision from the local authority.

All children attending the setting are white British and speak English as their home language. The setting has identified a very few children with additional learning needs.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales in January 2015 and by Estyn in July 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Most children achieve well and make good progress from their starting point
- Nearly all children listen attentively and talk confidently about their activities
- Many children enjoy writing and frequently engage in opportunities to mark make
- Most children are developing good early numeracy skills
- Many children are developing appropriate problem solving skills
- Children's Welsh language skills are good
- Most children are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to new experiences
- The setting provides children with a wide range of interesting and engaging activities across all areas of learning
- Practitioners use a good range of open ended questions to develop children's thinking skills well
- There is a warm, caring and inclusive ethos in the setting

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The acting leader, in partnership with the strong management team, manages and implements changes within the setting effectively
- Leaders communicate a clear vision well to other practitioners and parents
- There is a clear focus on providing a safe, secure and attractive environment, where children are happy and feel well supported
- The setting has good systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement
- All practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to self-improvement and make beneficial use of training opportunities
- The setting has a range of worthwhile partnerships
- The setting makes effective use of staffing and resources and the sharing of ideas and professional knowledge supports good quality teaching successfully
- The setting's committee and managers monitor the budget regularly and systematically to ensure the most efficient use of funds

Recommendations

- R1 Further develop processes to enable children to make decisions about their learning
- R2 Use assessment more effectively to plan more clearly for individual children's next steps in learning
- R3 Involve all practitioners and children more fully in the self-evaluation process
- R4 Review the impact of training effectively and use outcomes to inform future priorities for improvement

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

Standards: Good

Most children achieve well and make good progress in line with their age and stage of development. They readily acquire new knowledge and skills as they actively try out new experiences. This prepares them well for the next step in their education.

Most children's literacy and communication skills are developing well. Nearly all children listen attentively and talk confidently about their activities. Many begin simple conversations spontaneously and use a wide vocabulary and a variety of sentence structures, for example when talking about different birds in the bird hide. Nearly all children enjoy listening to stories and join in confidently with familiar parts of a story. For example, during the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' they 'huffed and puffed' happily. A few children look at books independently and turn the pages appropriately. They talk about the pictures confidently. Most children recite familiar songs enthusiastically. Many children are interested in writing and frequently take opportunities to mark-make, such as making a birthday card for Ticw the teddy bear. Almost all children recognise their name in a list and on tables at snack time. A few identify individual letters.

Most children are developing good early numeracy skills. For example, they count to 12 correctly as part of the setting's daily routines. Many children demonstrate an awareness of numbers in their play, such as counting candles on a birthday cake in the role play area. A few children count down from five accurately. Many are beginning to use appropriate mathematical language in the course of their play, for example sorting and comparing the sizes and shapes of play bricks and boxes.

Many children are becoming skilful in using a range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, for example when taking photographs of the models they make and activating talking points to listen to instructions for finding birds in the outdoors.

Many children are developing appropriate problem solving skills, such as working out that a smaller card is needed for an envelope and finding alternative ways to stick down the envelope.

Children's Welsh language skills are developing well. Many children respond appropriately to the words and phrases used within everyday routines. For example, they ask to wash their hands, say thank you at snack time and join in confidently with a tidy up song. Most children recite familiar rhymes and songs readily and rote count to 10. Many are beginning to use Welsh spontaneously in their play. For example, many children understand and use the Welsh words they have learnt for colours and numbers.

Most children are developing their physical skills well. They make effective use of outdoor equipment to develop their co-ordination, such as when pedalling bikes and throwing different sized balls through a hoop accurately.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to new experiences. They are relaxed and happy in the setting. Levels of engagement in activities are high and most children participate in learning with enthusiasm. They make choices confidently, such as choosing what furniture to put in the doll's house and selecting animals to play with in the construction area. Most children remain busy and become engrossed in their play for sustained periods of time.

Most children demonstrate very good levels of behaviour. They are happy to tidy up, and to sit and listen to adults and each other on the carpet. Almost all children co-operate well with one another and share toys effectively. They demonstrate high levels of perseverance, for example when putting cards into envelopes, and putting together a play cake.

Most children develop good independent learning skills. They pour their own water and milk at snack time, peel bananas and wash their own hands. Many children are starting to contribute ideas on what and how they learn, including during their recent topic on castles. However, this is at an early stage of development.

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

The setting provides children with a wide range of interesting and engaging activities across all Foundation Phase areas of learning. They plan around interesting themes that build steadily on what children know, can do and understand. As a result, children enjoy their learning and make good progress. There is an appropriate emphasis on play and learning through first hand experiences. This supports the development of children's thinking and creative skills well and enables them to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

The setting provides children with effective opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of learning. Practitioners promote children's speaking and listening skills well through daily large group sessions such as registration, singing time and story time. They provide worthwhile opportunities for children to learn to recognise their names, including through self-registration and adding them to waiting lists. They encourage children to look at books in a designated book area, as well as themed books in areas of provision such as alongside a display on winter. There are valuable opportunities for them to develop mark-making skills using a range of different media, including chalk and mud. There are many beneficial opportunities for children to count, sort and match, such as counting and sorting different types of play bricks. Practitioners promote mathematical language well, such as encouraging children to make big and small balls of playdough and counting how many balls formed a worm. There are worthwhile opportunities for children to act independently, for example taking their shoes on and off for soft play.

Practitioners make effective use of visits and visitors to enhance children's learning. For example, planned visits to the local park have included shape walks, using play equipment and exploring the woodland area to observe nature.

Provision for Welsh language development is good. Practitioners promote the language well during daily routines and planned and spontaneous play. For example, they use praise words, simple questions, phrases and commands consistently. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about living in Wales and Welsh culture. For example, they celebrate St David's Day and investigate the story of Caerphilly Castle and the dragon statue.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of Foundation Phase practice and use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning. They provide an appropriate balance between child selected and practitioner led activities that meet children's needs successfully. They work well as a team and share observations to ensure all practitioners are aware of the support individual children require. They interact effectively with the children and support them sensitively in their play. Practitioners are skilled at knowing when to intervene to extend learning and when to allow children opportunities to discover for themselves.

Practitioners are consistently good language role models, using open-ended questions effectively to develop children's thinking in English and in Welsh. They use Welsh meaningfully throughout the session and, as a result, children's Welsh language skills develop well.

Assessment procedures are developing steadily and practitioners carry out appropriate observational assessments of children. An effective key worker system is in place and all practitioners are involved in keeping accurate records of children's progress. However, the setting does not use the information well enough to plan what individual children need to do next.

Parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's progress through regular formal and informal meetings and end of year written reports.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's healthy living well and has appropriate policies and practices for ensuring children's emotional and physical wellbeing. For example, children have daily access to a range of physical activities, which encourage them to use apparatus confidently and promote their understanding of sharing and working co-operatively.

Practitioners have created a caring and supportive environment in the setting. They guide children sensitively and help them learn about the importance of fairness and honesty by modelling these themselves. Clear daily routines ensure children settle in quickly and confidently. This contributes significantly to children's emotional and social development.

Learning experiences promote and foster children's spiritual, moral and cultural development well. They develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world in which they live when they learn to care for their giant land snail and slow worm. They celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and Holi meaningfully. This helps children to begin to develop an awareness of other cultures. Children have useful opportunities to learn about sustainability through recycling materials such as paper and plastic and switching off lights when not in use.

There are comprehensive arrangements to support children with additional learning needs. Practitioners involve parents and carers successfully in developing and reviewing children's individual education plans. The setting accesses support from specialist services appropriately and uses this to support children's specific needs well.

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

Learning environment: Good

There is a warm, caring and inclusive ethos in the setting, where practitioners treat all children fairly. They are good role models and treat one another and children with respect. There is an appropriate emphasis on celebrating diversity and good procedures in place to help children to develop tolerant attitudes.

Practitioners are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children. There are plenty of good quality resources for every area of learning and practitioners ensure they match children's needs closely. These are easily accessible to children, allowing them to make meaningful choices and promoting their independence effectively.

The accommodation is of good quality, well maintained and secure. Practitioners make good use of available space both indoors and outside. The indoor area is bright and stimulating. Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities effectively and help to create a welcoming environment. Chutes for large scale water play, planters and a fairy garden in the outdoor area promote the development of children's literacy, numeracy and thinking skills well.

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

The acting leader, in partnership with the strong management team, manages and implements changes within the setting effectively. There is a clear focus on providing a safe, secure and attractive environment, where children are happy and feel well supported. Leaders communicate this vision well with other practitioners and parents. Practitioners make effective use of each other's strengths and all practitioners have clear and up-to-date job descriptions. As a result, they feel valued and have high expectations of themselves and others. They are becoming reflective practitioners who understand the need to continue to develop the provision they offer and to sustain improvements, for example in the good standards of children's Welsh speaking skills seen and in planning for the development of children's problem solving skills in the new outdoor area.

Senior practitioners take a lead role in specific areas, such as developing assessment procedures. This provides direction for new and inexperienced staff and ensures that they drive improvements and maintain a clear overview of the setting's provision.

The setting makes appropriate use of appraisal systems to support and challenge practitioners. Appraisal targets link to the setting's improvement plan and to staff training needs successfully. This raises outcomes for children, for example children's speaking, early mark making and numeracy skills. Practitioners make beneficial use of weekly informal meetings to discuss children's achievements and to develop future planning. As a result, they know the needs of individual children well and are beginning to focus more clearly on next steps.

Managers provide useful support for delivering the Foundation Phase through monitoring and advice about planning. As a result, the setting has made good progress in taking forward national initiatives; especially the development of outdoor learning to support children's thinking skills. The leadership team keeps the management committee well informed about the setting's work and the standards it achieves.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has good systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement. Regular meetings between managers and the lead practitioner allow the setting to address day-to-day issues quickly. The leader monitors agreed processes well, such as practitioners using more Welsh in the setting and asking probing questions to develop children's thinking skills. This is fed back to practitioners regularly and helps to maintain a sustained focus on the settings agreed priorities for improvement. Managers monitor planning and assessment information on a weekly basis and provide useful feedback to the lead practitioner.

All practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to self-improvement and make beneficial use of training opportunities. This improves their practice and provision within the setting as a whole. They are open to new ideas and respond positively to support from the local authority advisory teacher. This has led to improvements to the quality of learning experiences provided, such as the development of the outdoors to support children's physical development and thinking skills.

Leaders use information from monitoring and self-evaluation to develop a useful setting improvement plan. The priorities relate well to improving outcomes and provision for children. However, the role of all practitioners and children in this process is at an early stage of development. The setting's current improvement plan contains an appropriate number of priorities and identifies relevant timescales and costings. The setting has made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection, in particular developing a consistent approach to teaching.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of worthwhile partnerships. Practitioners take active steps to keep parents well informed about their child's progress and the life of the setting, for example through daily updates at the end of sessions, regular review meetings and informative end of year reports.

The setting's links with local primary schools supports children in moving onto the next stage of their education well. Visits from teachers enable the children to settle into school quickly and confidently.

There is a useful partnership with the local authority advisory teacher and other settings in the cluster. Practitioners benefit from this support in developing and improving the quality of the learning environment through sharing resources.

Links between the setting and outside agencies are effective, for example in providing useful advice on helping children and families who are in need of specific support.

The setting works hard to raise additional funds through a range of partnerships. It uses these funds very effectively to enhance the well-resourced and stimulating outdoor area that all children use purposefully.

There are beneficial links with the local community which enhance children's learning experiences well. For example, a visit by a knight from the local re-enactment society brought a recent topic on castles alive. Visits to the local park enable children to develop their physical skills when using the play apparatus and to observe birds in the attached woodland habitat.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes effective use of staffing and resources. The sharing of ideas and professional knowledge amongst practitioners supports good quality teaching successfully. Practitioners make effective use of training opportunities within its cluster of settings to improve provision and outcomes for children. However, the setting does not always reflect well enough on the impact of training to inform future areas for development.

The setting's committee and managers monitor the budget regularly and systematically to ensure the most efficient use of funds. This means that spending decisions are appropriate and in line with the targets identified in the setting's priorities for improvement plan.

In view of fact that children's outcomes are good and learning experiences are interesting, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	9	6 67%	3 33%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		80%	20%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	9	7 78%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		84%	15%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	9	7 78%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	13%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	9	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		81%	18%	0%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	9	7 78%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		72%	27%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	9	7 78%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	9	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		84%	16%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	9	7 78%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		76%	23%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	9	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	9	7 78%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		72%	27%	1%	0%		
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	9	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		63%	31%	5%	1%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	9	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		80%	18%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	9	5 56%	4 44%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		65%	31%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	8	7 88%	1 12%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		74%	25%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	7	3 43%	4 57%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		63%	32%	4%	1%		
The setting is well run.	9	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		82%	17%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector

Mrs Debbie Collins	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Susan Davies	Team Inspector

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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.