



*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**

**Fingers and Thumbs Day Care Centre  
St. Mary's Church Hall  
Coity  
Bridgend  
CF35 6BL**

**Date of inspection: May 2014**

**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:

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

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## Context

Fingers and Thumbs Day Care Centre serves the town of Bridgend and the surrounding villages. The setting meets for five mornings and four afternoons per week. The day centre also provides a breakfast club, mother and toddler playgroup session, after school club and holiday club, for pupils at the local primary school. There are ten members of staff employed in the setting.

The setting is registered to take up to 30 children. Children attend the setting from two years of age. At the time of the inspection, there were 54 children on roll, 15 of whom are aged three and funded by the local authority. The number of children who attend each session varies. Nearly all children speak English as their first language. There are a very few children with additional learning needs.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in February 2014 and Estyn in June 2008.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is good. This is because:

- nearly all children make good progress and achieve well during their time at the setting;
- nearly all children listen attentively and speak clearly and confidently;
- the setting is safe and vibrant learning environment and children settle in well and play co-operatively;
- children are polite and behave very well;
- practitioners provide a broad range of stimulating learning activities that interest and engage the children;
- practitioners are very good role models for children and treat children with care and respect;
- provision for pupils' Welsh language development is effective; and
- provision for the development of children's numeracy skills is developing well.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are excellent. This is because:

- good teamwork and a positive learning environment enable children and adults to work and learn together effectively;
- all practitioners feel valued and have high expectations of themselves and others and are becoming reflective practitioners;
- high quality leadership contributes significantly to the wellbeing and good levels of progress made by nearly all children;
- the setting has a range of very successful partnerships that it uses well to improve children's wellbeing and outcomes;
- the leader and practitioners have a very clear picture of the setting's strengths and areas for development; and
- self-evaluation and improvement planning are an integral part of the setting's day-to-day practice and are effectively linked to improving children's wellbeing and improving outcomes.

## Recommendations

- R1 Explicitly identify opportunities for the development of children's early writing skills
- R2 Improve the use of assessment to accurately measure children's progress and inform future planning needs

### **What happens next?**

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

Nearly all children make good progress from their differing starting points. They readily acquire new knowledge and skills as they enthusiastically explore their surroundings and actively try out new experiences. Most children develop a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills that 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, for example during role-play. Nearly all children are very articulate and express themselves using appropriate vocabulary. Most children enjoy listening to stories and recite familiar songs and rhymes enthusiastically, in both English and in Welsh. Many older children turn the pages of books appropriately and can talk about some of the characters in the stories. A few children that are more able handle books appropriately as readers and show an increasing awareness that the text and pictures 'tell' the story. Many children respond positively to opportunities to develop early writing skills, using a variety of mark-making equipment, both indoors and outdoors. For example, many demonstrate good fine motor skills and control when writing with chalk in the outdoor area and making tickets for a train journey in the role-play area. However, opportunities to develop mark making and early writing across all areas of learning are not always explicitly identified within planning.

Most children are developing sound early numeracy skills. They are beginning to use appropriate mathematical terms when sorting, comparing objects, and exploring shape and capacity. For example, when sorting objects linked to their current topic on Thomas the Tank, they sort by colour or size. Most could clearly explain which is the odd one out. Most children count to ten by rote correctly and a few able children recognise and sequence numbers accurately.

Children's competence in using a range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is progressing well. Many use a computer mouse competently to move items around the screen and create pictures. They control battery-operated toys well and they use buttons and switches to change the direction of this equipment effectively.

Children's Welsh language skills are sound. Many children respond appropriately to the words and phrases used within everyday routines. They recite familiar rhymes and songs readily, and are beginning to use Welsh spontaneously in their play. For example, most children understand and use the Welsh words they have learned for colours and numbers.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Most children are keen to learn and have positive attitudes. Levels of engagement in activities is high with most participating with enthusiasm, making choices confidently as they move between adult focused and independent learning tasks. With very few exceptions, children remain busy and on task for appropriate periods of time.

Snack-time is a social occasion when children show respect for each other and engage in appropriate conversations whilst enjoying each other's company. They develop good independent learning skills, for example sharing toast and fruit and tidying up.

Children have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They increasingly show consideration and courtesy, such as when sharing resources or taking turns. Standards of behaviour are very good. Many children have high self-esteem and increasing self-confidence. As a result, they are willing to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

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

Practitioners work well together to plan a wide range of learning activities that interest and engage the children well. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is based firmly on the Foundation Phase principles of learning through high quality first-hand, learning experiences.

Recent changes to planning have placed a strong emphasis on the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of learning. However, opportunities for developing children's early writing skills are not always explicit enough within planning. As result, there are too few opportunities for children to develop their skills in all areas of learning. Planning for the use of the outdoors, supports children's literacy and numeracy skills well.

Children are encouraged to be independent, to think for themselves and to experiment with new experiences. Activities are generally adapted appropriately to follow children's suggestions and interests. Planning provides good opportunities for children to develop their physical and creative skills and to learn about the world around them. Practitioners make good use of visitors to the setting such as the local curate, the post office manager and use the experiences of parents from other countries, to enhance children's understanding of the wider world.

The setting promotes the Welsh language well through daily focused sessions and informative displays. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions. They celebrate St David's Day and hold a Welsh week, when they eat Welsh food and invite parents to visit the setting to learn Welsh songs. Practitioners use the Welsh language well during whole-group carpet time and ongoing through activities. They effectively encourage children to respond in Welsh when reading stories, singing songs and giving instructions. This supports children's acquisition of the language effectively.

There are worthwhile opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and recycling. For example, the setting recycles paper and a recent eco workshop reinforced the children's understanding of the need to care for their environment.

### **Teaching: Good**

All practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and provide stimulating learning experiences across all areas of learning. The appropriate pace of sessions means that children always have something new and interesting to engage their interest and motivate them to learn. Clear daily routines and effective teamwork provide a consistency of approach and enable children to know what to expect and to feel happy and safe.

Children develop very positive relationships with all adults in the setting and this enables them to become confident learners and learn by their mistakes. All practitioners intervene appropriately in play situations to move children's learning forward, often through the effective use of questioning or appropriate praise. All practitioners are good language role models and this contributes to the good standards of children's oracy skills and enhances their vocabulary effectively.

Practitioners know the children very well. Regular observational assessments of individuals and groups of children are beginning to enable practitioners to identify children's next steps in learning. However, these assessment procedures are relatively new and have not had time to embed fully. As a result, the setting does not always use assessment information well enough to measure children's progress accurately over time. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through regular formal and informal update meetings with practitioners.

### **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, there is daily access to a range of physical activities, which encourage children to use apparatus confidently and promote children's understanding of sharing and working co-operatively. Practitioners encourage children to form positive relationships and to develop a sense of respect and tolerance towards others. Practitioners help children to manage their feelings and to develop self-awareness and self-respect well.

Daily routines ensure that children settle quickly and confidently into the setting and this contributes significantly to children's good emotional and social development. Children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating food and after being outside. This helps them to become responsible for their personal hygiene.

The setting identifies children's learning and emotional needs well and works hard to meet these needs. It has clear procedures to support children with additional learning needs and has an effective network of contacts with external agencies in order to provide extra support and advice, as and when required.

An appropriate range of learning experiences fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, children say a prayer at the end of the day to give thanks for their friends and families and the local curate fosters a sense of awe and wonder in her story telling sessions.

Children learn about the importance of caring for the environment by growing vegetables and participating regularly in recycling activities. They learn to care for living things by planting potatoes and learning to look after pets. Children's cultural development is developing well. For example, parents from other countries share their traditions and customs and the setting celebrates a range of festivals from other cultures such as Holi and Chinese New Year.

The settings arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to activities. As a result, all children feel valued, are confident and happy and enjoy talking to visitors.

Practitioners are suitably qualified and very experienced in working with young children. There are plenty of good quality resources for every area of learning and practitioners ensure that they match children's needs closely.

Practitioners make effective use of the available space. The accommodation is of good quality, well maintained and secure. The setting shares the premises with other local community groups and practitioners set out and clear away the learning activities and information every day. Despite this, practitioners succeed in creating a bright and stimulating environment for learning.

Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities and help to create a welcoming environment. The outdoor is small but practitioners use it well to provide a wealth of interesting experiences across the curriculum.

The setting uses community resources effectively. For example, the use of the local school grounds, and visits to local shops, the park and the nearby castle, provide additional learning experiences that have a beneficial impact on children's physical development and social skills in particular.

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

The setting's leadership team provides focused, robust and highly effective leadership, which results in very high standards in teaching and learning. They have established a clear vision based on a continuous drive to raise children's outcomes and develop provision, whilst maintaining a nurturing, happy and 'family-orientated' environment. This impacts positively on how children behave and in the good quality standards they achieve. The setting's leader actively seeks out ways in which the

setting can improve and responds quickly to any guidance and advice. There is strong focus on ensuring that any changes impact positively on provision and children's wellbeing. Targets for improvement are challenging and are supported well by a committed team of practitioners. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities thoroughly and play an important part in moving the setting forward. Clear and up to date job descriptions are in place.

The leader has very high expectations of staff. She challenges staff regularly to develop their skills and maintain high standards. Staff model these expectations extensively within their classroom practice. They work together successfully, to support each other and to meet the setting's aims. They manage their time well and provide very good quality support for all children.

The setting makes very good use of an effective system of appraisal to support and challenge practitioners. Staff targets link to appropriate training needs and directly to the setting's improvement plan. The setting makes sound use of meetings to discuss children's achievements and progress and to develop planning. The setting leader makes highly effective use of her colleagues' strengths and encourages them to provide leadership in those areas. This means that all practitioners feel valued and have high expectations of themselves and others. They are becoming reflective practitioners who understand the need to improve the provision they offer and to sustain improvements.

The setting has made good progress in taking forward national initiatives, especially in its effective use of outdoor learning to support the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills. It also promotes healthy eating well.

### **Improving quality: Excellent**

Practitioners and members of the leadership team know the setting very well. Self-evaluation and improvement planning are a regular and highly effective part of the work of all staff. They contribute well to an annual audit that identifies strengths and areas for development accurately. Leaders gather a wide range of evidence, including views from parents, children and other interested parties, to inform self-evaluation. These high quality procedures for self-evaluation, including work evidence reviews, lesson observations and a rigorous attention to data, give everyone in the school a very clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

The setting's self-evaluation report is detailed and accurate and identifies clear priorities for improvement. The improvement plan outlines targets and measurable steps to achieve these priorities. It also contains training and resource needs, costings and success criteria appropriately. The leader is responsible for reviewing the improvement plan regularly. An end of year evaluation is used very effectively to evaluate the success of initiatives. This formal monitoring is very effective in evaluating the impact of change on outcomes for children and in informing future planning. For example, recent initiatives have led to valuable improvements in planning for children's literacy and numeracy skills and improved opportunities for children's Welsh language development. This practice is highly effective in creating a common and dynamic approach to school improvement.

The leader and all practitioners are open to new ideas and respond positively and quickly to advice, guidance and training. This is a strength of the setting and plays a significant part in its improvement.

### **Partnership working: Excellent**

The setting has highly effective partnerships with parents and carers. Leaders are proactive in sharing the setting's aims and objectives regularly with them. Parents receive relevant information via the setting's noticeboard, newsletters, e-mails, web site, and social media and via daily personal contact. As a result, parents are well informed and knowledgeable about the settings day-to-day plans and fully understand their child's targets and how to support them in achieving these. Parents also have a clear overview and understanding of the settings vision, aims and strategic direction, and feel that they play an important role in developing these.

Parents are encouraged to be fully involved with the setting's planning and development priorities. This, along with good induction procedures and regular information workshops, enables parents and carers to see and understand the setting's work well. For example, the recently introduced language and play scheme encourages parents to extend their understanding of how to support the development of literacy skills and this is already improving children's interest in books and reading.

Beneficial partnerships exist with the local primary school and this promotes a smooth transition for children from the setting to the next stage in their education. The setting has been the driving force in developing these links. Effective partnerships with the community and the involvement of local people and organisations contribute well to children's overall development and wellbeing. For example, children visit the local church to take part in harvest celebrations. The leader has also been instrumental in establishing a mother and toddlers playgroup session, which runs for one afternoon per week. Parents speak very highly of the benefits this has brought, such as the opportunity to socialise and to share in ideas to support learning through play.

There is a strong partnership with the local authority advisory teacher. Practitioners welcome the support they receive and there is clear evidence that this support has impacted positively on provision, for example in relation to improvement planning. The leader regularly attends local authority meetings and training updates and the local authority shares the leader's self-evaluation system and assessment processes with other settings, as an example of good practice.

### **Resource management: Good**

The setting has appropriately trained staff and deploys them very effectively, utilising their areas of expertise well. For example, a practitioner with knowledge of dance uses her skills beneficially to enhance children's creative development skills.

Staff appraisal identifies practitioners' training and development needs effectively and practitioners access suitable training to meet these needs. For example, practitioners have attended training to improve their Welsh language skills and planning for the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills. This training has impacted positively upon the quality of provision and, as a result, children's standards have improved.

The leader manages the setting's financial resources well. She monitors 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 improvement plan or other setting priorities.

In view of the good outcomes achieved by children, the effective provision and very strong leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

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

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Mrs Susan Davies	Reporting Inspector
Ms Jan Williams	Team inspector

### Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<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 partnership's conditions of registration.</p>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<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>

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