



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

A report on

**Little Stars
Maesyrhandir CP School
Newtown
Powys
SY16 1LQ**

Date of inspection: November 2015

by

**Nicholas Jones
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

Little Stars is a setting run by Maesyrrhandir Primary School in Newtown, Powys. It meets in a purpose built building on the school grounds. The setting is open for four mornings of the week. The setting has three members of staff.

The setting's registration allows it to accept up to 24 children. It admits children in the term after their third birthday. They remain at the setting until the term before their fourth birthday, when they start school. At the time of the inspection, 17 children attended, all of them funded by the local authority.

Nearly all the children are of white British origin and nearly all speak English as their first language. Currently, a few children have additional learning needs.

The leader began her post in September 2015. The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in July 2014. Estyn last inspected the setting in January 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Nearly all children show good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning
- Nearly all children have positive attitudes to learning and behave responsibly
- The staff's planning of learning experiences is conscientious
- The curriculum is stimulating
- The teaching is effective
- The ethos of the setting is caring and supportive
- The resources are used well both indoors and outdoors
- There is a positive relationship between adults and children

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because of the:

- Clear direction to the setting's work by the leader and the school's management group
- Appropriate self-evaluation systems
- Positive attitudes of staff towards development and training
- Supportive and challenging management group
- Purposeful partnerships with external agencies that support the setting effectively

Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's use and standards of Welsh
- R2 Set clear learning objectives for the children at the start of every focus activity
- R3 Ensure that the targets in the development plan derive directly from the self-evaluation

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

Nearly all children make good progress from their start points by the end of their time at the setting. They make positive improvements in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Nearly all children discuss ideas with other children and adults confidently. They listen carefully to each other when discussing a story, the date and their feelings at the start of the session. Most children discuss colours sensibly when using chalk, crayons, dough and paint. They also talk confidently and accurately about equipment needed to prepare a tea party in the cafe. Individuals offer sensible suggestions to adults when they take on a responsible role in a group, for example when organising the making of pancakes out of dough, when using electronic tablets and when using tools as a builder.

Most children sit quietly when listening to the introduction of a task. They join in enthusiastically when discussing these stories or while singing songs and nursery rhymes in both English and Welsh. Many are eager to answer questions about what they are doing and talk articulately about the correct sequence of numbered bottles in rows. Many children choose to look at books independently and these children hold books correctly and discuss the content meaningfully with each other and adults.

Most children develop their early writing skills effectively through mark making, painting autumn scenes and colouring letters and numbers. They have a sound understanding of the purpose of writing and they mark make meaningfully when recording different amounts of coloured hoops on the yard with chalk. Very few children are beginning to form the letters of the alphabet and numbers with support in fairly recognisable forms, when handling pencils, chalk and crayons.

Nearly all children are developing sound numeracy skills. The majority can count to ten with confidence and the minority of children identify and name numbers up to five accurately. The majority of children use a good range of mathematical language together whilst playing and they can create simple graphs, with support, based on the colours of their eyes. They describe toys, different objects and pieces of dough as 'small' and 'big', 'heavy' and 'light', and 'long' and 'short' when playing in the investigation and role-play areas. They also use numbers practically and successfully when comparing two and three-dimensional shapes, which are flat or round in the creative areas. Most children group different types of objects correctly by colour, size and shape. They use money in the correct context when ordering food in the cafe.

Many children know what to do when they are given instructions in Welsh, however, very few children use Welsh without being prompted. Children's standards in Welsh are satisfactory. Most children use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment confidently, which includes using programs on a tablet and using a mouse to control the computer screen.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are happy and confident learners. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, in relation to their age. Nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly before eating their fruit, crackers and cheese snacks and drinking milk. They do so without much prompting. Nearly all children have a good understanding that a healthy diet includes fruit and vegetables and that physical exercise, such as dancing, keeps you fit and quickens your heart. Nearly all children talk sensibly about being out of breath during dance and outdoor activities.

Most children have a good attitude towards learning. They participate enthusiastically in all experiences offered to them. Most children listen attentively to one another and to staff. They are well behaved. They participate fully in all activities and concentrate and persevere for appropriate periods. Most children make sensible decisions for themselves, for example when asking to go to the toilet and taking turns to use mark making, electronic and outdoor equipment.

Most children relate well to each other and to adults and visitors. They are polite and considerate of other people's needs and discuss their feelings with adults voluntarily. They suggest ideas about what and how they will learn through discussions with staff and by preparing their own thoughts and ideas on theme planning sheets. As a result, most children show sound levels of motivation, engagement and concentration.

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

The planning is completed conscientiously and concentrates effectively on the areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. It includes children's ideas effectively. It builds sensibly on children's learning and experiences through termly themes. There are stimulating opportunities available for all children to develop their skills across the curriculum, especially their early writing skills and their basic understanding of counting and arranging numbers and recognising shapes and colours.

All staff discuss the curriculum and the themes' activities with confidence and they have an effective input into what is taught. The curriculum is flexible and linked sensibly to children's interests. Specific activities and tasks are planned thoroughly and the children have freedom to choose their own tasks and activities. The learning objectives are not presented clearly at the beginning of focus tasks and a minority of pupils are unsure occasionally as to what they need to do to complete some tasks.

Interesting activities are provided for children to develop their basic and key skills in literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. The regular use of the outdoor apparatus, such as the obstacle course, supports the provision for physical development well.

The visits around the locality and visitors to the setting, such as the postman, officers from the emergency services and the dental nurse, extend children's experiences effectively. The setting uses the local area well through regular visits to local shops to buy vegetables, the post office to post letters and nearby meadowland for nature walks. The use of the locality develops children's knowledge and understanding of their community effectively.

Staff communicate appropriately with children in Welsh. Provision for developing children's ICT is established and the computer, tablet, cameras and electronic toys are utilised well. Children have many opportunities to develop their thinking skills through engaging activities such as role-playing in the dressing up area, experimenting with paints and looking after the setting's African snail.

Good emphasis is placed on Welsh traditions and celebrations, such as celebrating Saint David's Day. Interesting opportunities are provided for children to learn about other cultures and traditions, for example through celebrating the Chinese New Year, Diwali and special days like Mother's day and Father's day. Such activities help children to develop a clear understanding of the wider world and to develop a good awareness of global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

Staff have a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. There is a positive relationship between all staff and children. Staff have an active role in planning the curriculum and the best use is made of their expertise. At times, staff do not set clear learning objectives at the start of every focus activity to explain the purpose of the task. Staff co-operate effectively and separate children into groups well to target their learning needs purposefully.

Staff provide an interesting environment that ensures that all children take part and enjoy. All children are free to choose from activities that are led by adults or to work independently. Staff intervene sensibly and they allow the children to develop their independent skills successfully. Staff model English well and Welsh appropriately, which aids in developing children's thinking and communication skills through effective questioning. Staff encourage children to evaluate sensibly as they listen to a story and discuss the contents of books.

Regular assessment procedures exist. The records of children's achievements are completed thoroughly. Staff assess children regularly and make effective use of this information to track their progress. They complete informative records that note efficiently what each child learns at the setting. As a result, staff know the children well and can motivate them to persevere in learning new skills. Parents and carers are informed well about their children's achievements and the information is available to them at any time.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has good provision for ensuring children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The staff foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect sensibly. Children have good opportunities to reflect, discuss their feelings with staff and to say thank you to each other. This is evident as they take turns well when sharing toys and eating together. Snack time is a social occasion and children are encouraged purposefully to take responsibility for serving snacks and pouring milk. The setting makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. All children clean their teeth every day, which encourages dental care effectively.

The opportunities available for children to recycle different materials and to develop the children's understanding of sustainability are good. The setting uses the outdoor area well to grow plants like beans and peas. As a result, children learn effectively about how plants grow and how to care for the environment. There are good opportunities available for all children to recycle paper, plastic and food.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The leader is the safeguarding officer and she shares this responsibility with the school's headteacher. The setting is safe, the doors are locked and only members of staff open them. No one can come in and no child can leave unaccompanied. Staff are careful as children are collected and ensure that they are in the care of their parents or a familiar carer.

Regular reviews of children's progress ensure that individuals suspected of needing additional support are identified. Staff discuss these with appropriate agencies. The leader is the additional learning needs co-ordinator and she is familiar with the necessary procedures in order to support children who have special needs.

Learning environment: Good

Through daily activities and the attitude adopted by staff, the setting promotes a positive ethos. Staff know the children well and their individuality is recognised. All children have equal access to a well-balanced curriculum.

The setting uses positive behaviour strategies, which removes any disruption or aggressive behaviour. The setting's staff have suitable qualifications and good experience. The adult to child ratio is favourable. Staff's expertise is used well in planning and in supervising activities.

The building is planned and organised well. It is designed effectively to allow children to move freely from the indoors to the outdoors and this is encouraged by all staff. The setting uses its resources successfully to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase and children's needs. The growing areas in the outdoor area are developed well. Resources are accessible to children, which promotes the children's sense of responsibility effectively. Resources are shared sensibly between continuous, enrichment and focus activities.

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

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in full and work together well as a team, sharing values, aims and objectives. The leader involves all the staff in the weekly planning of learning experiences, which ensures the best use of their expertise. The leader and all staff are actively involved, giving clear directions on how to improve provision and children's outcomes. There is a positive ethos and a commitment to provide the best possible experiences for all children. The staff focus effectively on the needs of all children.

The staff receive relevant and appropriate training and this impacts well on the quality of provision. The school's management group takes full account of relevant legislation and guidance and they meet the legal requirements. The management group, which operates under the guidance of the school's governing body, meets regularly and the group monitors and challenges the leadership effectively.

The setting uses guidance from external agencies such as the local authority sensibly. They also use expertise from the Wales Pre-school Providers' Association for administrative support and to ensure that the setting is insured appropriately. This practice ensures the best use of expertise to support the setting.

The development plan identifies areas for improvement reasonably accurately. The strategic plan's targets have a positive effect by creating improvements over time. However, the targets do not arise in enough detail from the self-evaluation report. The setting takes good account of national priorities, including implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Improving quality: Good

When creating the self-evaluation, sensible consideration of the views of everyone involved with the setting is evident. The needs of the setting are set out suitably in the development plan. The leader, staff and the management group discuss the self-evaluation with confidence and they use the process appropriately throughout the year. In the development plan, the areas for improvement include reviewing and developing continuous provision in the outdoors, implementing literacy and numeracy practices, improving the children's Welsh and formalising the performance management systems for staff.

Staff focus diligently on creating improvements. They target improvement areas consistently. However, there is not a direct link between the self-evaluation and the development plan's targets. Although there are relevant and concise targets in the plan, they do not arise from the content of the self-evaluation.

Staff make very good use of professional training opportunities and learning experiences, which includes attending the school's training activities. This has a positive effect on the learning and wellbeing of children.

Partnership working: Good

The parents and carers, in the questionnaire replies and during discussions, express their satisfaction with the setting. They appreciate the standards of care and the quality of education available. They value the open door policy and the opportunities to meet staff on a daily basis.

By the time the children leave the setting, all parents feel that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Links with the school are very well established and the setting is involved in the daily life of the school. Classes from the school also attend activities like dance sessions in the setting, which develops a positive relationship with the school.

The support provided by the Wales Pre-school Providers' Association benefits the setting well. The positive co-operation between the setting and the local authority is good. The advice and suggestions have helped in moving the setting forward and have contributed to purposeful provision and effective leadership.

Resource management: Good

Leadership is effective and plans for the future well. Resources are managed efficiently to support learning and improvements at the setting. The leader, staff and the management group ensure that the setting has sufficient staff with appropriate qualifications and training. The setting's staff use support agencies purposefully for the sake of improving children's outcomes.

The staff work together well to improve children's achievements. Sensible use is made of all the available resources. They are accessible to the children. The staff make very good use of the building and the outdoor area to provide an engaging range of interesting learning experiences.

In light of the positive outcomes achieved by children, the effective provision and the purposeful 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 reporting inspector

Mr Nicholas Jones	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.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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings, which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.