



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

A report on

**Radnor Valley Little Dragons
The Old School
School Lane
New Radnor
Presteigne
Powys
LD8 2SS**

Date of inspection: November 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

Radnor Valley Little Dragons is a day care nursery located in the village of New Radnor, Presteigne, in the Powys local authority. The setting opens for four mornings a week and employs two practitioners.

The setting's registration allows it to take up to 23 children at any one time. The setting accepts children from two to four years old. At the time of inspection, three children attended, all funded by the local authority.

Nearly all children speak English as their first language. Currently, there are no children with additional learning needs attending.

A recently appointed management committee manages the setting and it is a registered charity. The manager began her post in September 2008. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in February 2015 and Estyn inspected the setting in April 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:

- The planning of learning experiences challenges children successfully
- Effective teaching engages children to improve their day-to-day work well
- Assessments move children on to the next steps in their learning effectively
- Practitioners work well together and target individual children's needs well
- Practitioners' care and support create a warm and nurturing learning environment
- Stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas motivate the children to participate in all tasks successfully

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The manager provides a clear direction to improve the work of the setting
- Regular self-evaluation systems exist, which consider strengths and areas for improvement effectively
- Practitioners are keen to develop professionally and training is purposeful
- Intelligent use of external agencies support children and practitioners beneficially
- Very positive relationships with the school maintain continuity of learning and reinforce the next steps in children's learning well
- Sensible use of funds ensures improvements in provision, both indoors and outdoors
- A new and supportive management committee is beginning to challenge the setting's overall level of provision and leadership practices effectively

Recommendations

- R1 Develop the provision to improve children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills further
- R2 Improve the planning of opportunities for children to learn about the roles of people in their own community
- R3 Ensure that the new management committee's monitoring practices are rigorous and robust

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?

Standards:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection to report on without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The manager and play assistant plan together well to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects the ethos of the Foundation Phase successfully. Practitioners plan learning experiences thoroughly. They target children's needs and interests purposefully and provide stimulating opportunities for them to become independent learners.

Practitioners provide flexible and exciting activities, which motivate children to learn through practical and creative activities. There are beneficial opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. Literacy and numeracy tasks are prominent in all areas of learning and challenge the children to perform at their best consistently. Regular literacy and numeracy activities build systematically on children's current knowledge and understanding in a lively and engaging way. Examples include role-playing with passports when boarding a plane, discussing how to build famous buildings from around the world with blocks and counting squares, after throwing dice, and during snail races.

Learning experiences are stimulating and practitioners ensure effective progression in children's learning. They include regular challenges to support the development of children's problem solving skills, for example sorting coloured balls in water troughs, dancing to contemporary music with scarves and weighing ingredients for bread accurately. Practitioners focus on developing children's physical, thinking and creative skills effectively. They allow children to explore and experiment when climbing on adventure equipment, riding bikes on outdoor paths, painting apple shapes by splattering paint using a salad spinner, and washing the setting's tortoise and African snail with toothbrushes.

Practitioners discuss individual children's assessments in regular meetings and arrange suitable themes and activities based on this. They encourage children to offer their personal ideas to enrich activities further. This contributes significantly towards children's enthusiasm when learning through play, both inside the building and outdoors. Such activities include mark making in an outdoor shed, marking trees with chalks and reading books whilst seated in cardboard boxes.

The setting's provision for developing the Welsh language is appropriate. Practitioners model single words and phrases correctly. They encourage children to use Welsh as much as possible through singing songs and the use of simple phrases involving numbers and colours. The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions and celebrations successfully. These activities include celebrating Saint David's Day and baking traditional cakes.

The provision for developing ICT offers opportunities to use a recently bought electronic tablet, cameras, electronic toys, phones and tills. However, practitioners do not challenge children to develop their early ICT skills systematically enough.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits to enrich children's learning experiences. Visits to the local church and shop, walks to post letters, watching lambs at a farm and catching local bus transport add interest to the curriculum. Visitors, who include members of the emergency services, a wood carver and a road safety officer, teach the children suitably about the roles of people in their community. However, practitioners do not plan opportunities for children to learn about the daily work of these people regularly enough.

Practitioners provide interesting learning experiences that encourage children to treat people from all cultural backgrounds with respect and tolerance. This includes celebrating the Chinese New Year and Diwali each year. These planned experiences develop a better understanding of the world for children.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are up-to-date with current information about child development. They are knowledgeable about the requirements of the Foundation Phase and they collaborate effectively. They have high expectations for all children and challenge them consistently well during adult-led learning tasks. They intervene sensibly in children's play, stimulating and motivating children to perform at their best.

Adults greet children brightly as they arrive and they continue with this warmth throughout the sessions. Practitioners manage children's behaviour positively and safely. This encourages children's participation and enjoyment in all activities successfully.

Practitioners encourage children to participate in purposeful activities. This enables them to move freely and confidently between different learning areas. They encourage collaboration with others across literacy and numeracy tasks. This involves mark making on chalkboards, investigating insects and various role-play activities in the mud kitchen. Practitioners use questioning purposefully to develop children's thinking and communication skills. This is apparent when children discuss the characteristics of autumn and fill buckets of sand with spades to make sand castles.

The setting's key worker system is effective. Practitioners complete daily assessments in individual notebooks regularly and consistently well. They encourage children to assess their own learning and discuss sensibly with other children what they need to do to improve their work. Practitioners record evaluations and discussions daily on useful record sheets. This guides future planning to target individual children's needs effectively.

The systems for assessing and recording children's achievements are accurate and useful, and provide a secure starting point for every child. Practitioners assess individual children's outcomes regularly as they mature at the setting, supporting their transition to the nearby school successfully.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements. At the end of their time at the setting, practitioners present an informative report on the children's progress to parents, which is based on their daily comments about individual children over time.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting offers positive opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Practitioners use group sessions well to focus on the consideration of each other's feelings. This includes allowing individuals to talk in turn and to share equipment and food sensibly. By doing so, they foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect successfully. Practitioners reinforce their importance daily, reminding children that they should act responsibly.

There are efficient arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing. These arrangements support their learning effectively and contribute well to their overall development. The setting has efficient arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Practitioners ensure that children understand that produce from the garden, such as tomatoes, potatoes and herbs, is part of a sensible diet.

There are valuable opportunities for children to reflect and say thank you each day. This creates calmness as children sit to listen to adults, wash their hands, say thank you for their food and clear the cutlery and dishes at the end of snack time. As a result, children take their turn politely when eating snacks and serving milk and water around the dining table. The helper of the day has an opportunity to help purposefully when preparing and serving snacks and drinks. The care of the setting's snail, tortoise, guinea pigs and fish also promotes their understanding of caring for living creatures.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to re-cycle paper, cardboard, plastic and food. Junk modelling is an active part of the setting's planning. Practitioners and children feed the tortoise and African snail with left over fruits and vegetables. They compost food and use it in the setting's wormery. This develops their understanding of sustainability successfully.

Practitioners' use of positive behaviour strategies ensures that children feel happy and safe in their company. Children often ask practitioners for help and support, which practitioners provide willingly.

The setting is a safe environment and practitioners take good care of children when they arrive and when they are collected. This includes a robust signing out system by parents and carers. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The setting identifies and supports children with additional learning needs purposefully. Practitioners work with appropriate agencies as necessary, in order to provide support as soon as possible.

Learning environment: Good

The setting promotes a positive ethos through its daily activities and practitioners' positive attitudes. Everyone places a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. The setting achieves this successfully by celebrating different festivals from all around the world each year, such as the Chinese New Year and Diwali.

The setting is an inclusive community in which all children have equal access to all areas of learning and equipment, both inside the building and outdoors. Practitioners have a thorough understanding of each child and their individuality is recognised successfully. Practitioners' daily work challenges every child to improve their learning and to be considerate and caring.

Practitioners use resources purposefully to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase and individual children's needs. Extensive resources are accessible to all children. This promotes their sense of responsibility successfully as practitioners delegate tasks in the outdoor area. This includes putting hay in the guinea pigs' hutch and serving drinking water independently from the drinking station.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities to enrich learning tasks and use resources effectively. As a result, children apply their literacy and numeracy skills across areas of learning confidently, for example when mark making on large pieces of paper to notate dance movements and rhythms, and when arranging dotted ducks to match numbered pots.

The stimulating outdoor area includes growing and planting areas, climbing equipment and a shed for literacy tasks. The setting uses its gardens sensibly for environmental investigations, such as bug hunts. Practitioners use facilities in the local area purposefully, such as utilising village amenities and local transport regularly.

The building is of a suitable quality, well maintained and safe.

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

The manager promotes and sustains improvements successfully. Purposeful leadership practices motivate practitioners to make improvements in a positive, sensible and supportive way. The manager uses relevant and regular information about the setting to bring about improvements to its provision. She leads planning and teaching effectively. She ensures high expectations of what children can achieve and provides a positive direction to the daily and long-term practices of the setting.

Current areas for development include improving children's outcomes in ICT, enhancing their cultural development, improving the range of visitors from the community to the setting and establishing greater rigour in the role of the management committee. These targets are set against suitable timescales and focus directly on ensuring effective provision and raising children's outcomes.

The manager ensures that the provision for the children is interesting and purposeful. The management committee is very new to its role and its practices have yet to become embedded in the operational life of the setting. It has put in place an appropriate level of quality assurance practices in a short period of time. However, the rigour and robustness of its monitoring process are not yet defined clearly enough.

The setting's key worker system ensures the best use of practitioners' expertise. It defines different roles of responsibility clearly to promote successes within the setting. Practitioners receive relevant and informative training and this has a positive impact on the quality of provision. The manager conducts efficient practitioner supervisions and appraisals and members of the new management committee now appraise the manager's work.

The new management committee receives useful information about the setting's day-to-day practices from the manager. Committee members are supportive and ensure secure financial management. They are beginning to challenge the setting to sustain successful practices and to develop further areas that require improvements.

Improving quality: Good

The manager ensures that well-established self-evaluation systems focus on improving the setting's provision and children's outcomes successfully. A positive culture of reviewing progress pervades the setting's work. The manager and her colleague establish useful arrangements to monitor children's standards and provision regularly. Effective and knowledgeable co-operation from day-to-day work and regular staff meetings contribute to this successfully.

Self-evaluation considers the views of practitioners, children, parents and carers, the local authority and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association appropriately. All of this benefits the setting in terms of gaining a clearer picture of its provision and its impact on raising children's outcomes. As a result, its self-evaluation report identifies the setting's strengths well. The manager identifies areas for development and the reasons behind them incisively, using the local authority's self-evaluation toolkit.

The manager and new management committee have a clear understanding of the budget and prioritise expenditure according to areas identified for improvement. This includes designating key workers to specific groups of children, which utilises their expertise well and has a positive effect on developing children's skills.

The manager is open to new ideas and willing to experiment with different ways of working. She readily accepts new ideas suggested by the local authority's advisory teacher and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association, for example advice on how to improve assessments in order to identify the starting point for individual children. This has a positive impact on identifying the next steps in children's learning effectively.

Partnership working: Good

The setting works with a range of partners to improve provision and raise children's standards and wellbeing effectively. The impact of strategic partnerships on children's outcomes is notable, especially the setting's very strong links with the school. The setting is located next door to the school and has a very successful relationship with the school's staff. This supports children's transfer arrangements very well. The arrangements for transferring assessments and personal information are effective and benefit the children as they settle at the school quickly and happily.

The setting's partnership with the local authority and Wales Pre-school Providers Association is also beneficial. A positive relationship with the local authority's advisory teacher and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association officer enhances the work of the setting, in both everyday tasks and administrative practices.

The setting uses community links effectively to support and enrich children's learning. This includes participating in school and village activities, such as entering the local gardening competition. Practitioners work and liaise with a broad range of other partnership groups, which make a strong contribution to improving provision. These include agencies that support the setting with business advice, first aid training, food hygiene courses and safeguarding training.

Practitioners take active steps to involve parents and carers in the setting's life. The setting informs them regularly about all aspects of the setting's work. Practitioners encourage them to offer their own opinions on matters to improve the setting.

Resource management: Good

The manager focuses directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work by leading practitioners purposefully and allocating resources effectively. She ensures that the setting has enough qualified practitioners with relevant training to meet the needs of the children.

Performance management systems are thorough and the preparation of interesting learning experiences lead to sound teaching practices. They also enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge successfully. As a result, a strong learning community exists, which has a culture of active collaboration, both within the setting and with other partners.

The setting manages resources creatively to support learning. This includes developing innovative role-play areas, such as an aeroplane and sensory tent, to support different themes and to stimulate and engage the children well.

The manager has a clear understanding of the budget and the new management committee aids in prioritising spending efficiently. Such practices create purposeful, regular and consistent improvements. The setting ensures that the use of funds has a direct impact on the overall provision and on raising children's outcomes. The setting provides good value for money due to its effective provision and purposeful leadership.

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

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	<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.