



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

A report on

**Stepping Stones Day Nursery, Penymynydd
Penymynydd Road
Penymynydd
Flintshire
CH4 0LG**

Date of inspection: May 2017

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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Publication date: 06/07/2017

Context

Stepping Stones Day Nursery is a privately owned nursery in the village of Penymynydd, in Flintshire local authority. The nursery serves the village and the surrounding areas.

The nursery is registered for 30 children between the ages of three months and eight years. It offers early education sessions Monday to Thursday from 9 am until 11.30 am during the school term. There are currently eight children in receipt of funded early years education.

At the time of the inspection there were no children identified as having special education needs or from an ethnic minority background attending the setting. All children have English as their home language.

There are 13 members of staff including the nursery manager. Two members of staff work with the funded three-year-old children. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children. The nursery manager has been in post since 2010.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in April 2017 and it was last inspected by Estyn in 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

- Most children make good progress in learning from their differing starting points
- Nearly all children are developing good communication and numeracy skills
- Most children are developing good Welsh skills
- Nearly all children behave well
- The setting provides a wide range of stimulating learning experiences across all areas of learning
- Practitioners plan and deliver a good range of activities and opportunities to reflect children's interests and needs in the indoors and outdoors
- All practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and provide effective learning experiences across all areas of learning
- All children are well cared for at the setting and benefit from positive relationship with practitioners; the setting has an inclusive and friendly ethos where all children are valued and have equal access to all resources and activities
- The outdoor area offers a wide range of opportunities to develop skills successfully

Prospects for improvement

- The nursery manager provides a clear vision for the setting
- All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team
- There are comprehensive policies and procedures to support the running of the setting and staff implement these consistently
- Effective self-evaluation and improvement planning are a regular part of the work of the setting
- The nursery manager and practitioners know the setting well
- The setting makes use of a range of valuable partnerships to support children's learning and wellbeing
- Practitioners make the most of the partnership with the advisory teacher from the local authority to get valuable support and guidance for the setting

Recommendations

- R1 To improve the planning for the progression in development of information and communication technology (ICT)
- R2 Ensure that adult focused tasks challenge the more able children
- R3 Use first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning as part of the self-evaluation process

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 make good progress in learning from their differing starting points. In particular, nearly all children make good progress in their personal and social, literacy and numeracy skills. Nearly all children display high levels of engagement and concentration when involved in independent learning tasks.

Nearly all children are developing good communication skills. Nearly all listen carefully to simple instructions and at story time. Most children talk confidently and use appropriate vocabulary, such as describing what they saw on their journey to the setting. Nearly all children are developing early reading skills successfully, such as handling a book as a reader and recognising their names correctly at registration time. A few are beginning to recognise some familiar letters. Nearly all children respond positively to opportunities to develop early writing skills such as writing a letter to parents. A few are beginning to write recognisable letters of their name on pictures.

Most children are developing effective numeracy skills. For example, many count correctly to five and a few up to eight. Many children name two-dimensional shapes accurately and a few describe the properties of shapes such as the numbers of corners and straight sides of a square. Most children use mathematical language correctly when describing the length and size of their model animals. Most children recognise correctly the patterns on clothes and can continue a repeated pattern to decorate an egg. Nearly all children join in when singing songs, such as days of the week and five little ducks. Nearly all children are beginning to show an awareness of time. For example, most understand the correct order of routines and a few know that the clock indicates when it is time to tidy up.

Most children are developing good Welsh language skills. Most understand simple instructions, such as 'tidy up time' and 'wash your hands'. Most know and use simple Welsh words they have learned for colours, numbers and simple phrases, such as 'milk please' and 'I am here'.

Most children are developing their ICT skills well. Nearly all use resources competently in their daily activities, such as using a recording device to signal a change in routine and mobile phones to phone the hairdressers.

Most children are developing fine motor skills well, for example using small tools with increasing control to create patterns in dough and scissors to cut pictures. Most use their body successfully to copy animal movements and pedal wheeled toys in the outdoors.

Many children are developing their thinking skills appropriately. Half the children successfully problem solve how to move the ducks along the guttering in the water tray. Nearly all children select resources independently, for example choosing shapes when printing.

Wellbeing: Good

All children enjoy coming to the setting and settle quickly. Nearly all children behave well and show concern for others, such as asking about a child who is not present at the setting. Nearly all children are enthusiastic about participating in adult focused and independent activities, such as cooking biscuits or being the helper of the day. Nearly all children demonstrate good levels of independence, for example putting on coats successfully before going outside and helping to tidy up resources. This helps them to take responsibility and makes them less reliant on adults. Snack-time is a social occasion when children enjoy talking with peers and adults. Nearly all children are courteous and say 'thank you' with little prompting.

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

The setting provides a wide range of stimulating learning experiences across all areas of learning. Practitioners plan and deliver a good range of activities and opportunities to reflect children's interests and needs in the indoors and outdoors. Practitioners plan well together as a team and make effective use of information from assessments. They consistently use the Foundation Phase curriculum to build upon children's skills. However, practitioners do not always plan to challenge more able children according to their abilities. Nearly all practitioners manage children's behaviour consistently, for example reminding children of the rules and expectations of the setting.

Practitioners provide useful opportunities to develop children's literacy skills. For example, nearly all children listen well at story time. The printed word is highly visible at the setting in both English and Welsh. Nearly all children are encouraged to recognise and find their own name during registration. There are many valuable opportunities to develop early mark making skills in the indoors and outdoors, such as writing lists in the home corner and using large chalkboards in the outdoors.

Practitioners provide successful opportunities to develop children's numeracy skills. For example, the children count how many are present and attempt to copy the number on a board before snack time. The outdoor learning area provides valuable opportunities to learn about the functions of money and use mathematical language, such as paying in the garage role-play and filling and emptying containers with sand.

The setting provides appropriate opportunities for children to develop ICT skills. Examples include using a camera to take and print a photograph of their work and pressing buttons on telephones and cash registers in the role-play area. However, practitioners do not focus on the development of children's ICT skills well enough.

All practitioners make good use of Welsh throughout the session. There are worthwhile opportunities for children to hear and use Welsh during routines and adult focused learning. For example, the helper for the day names the food and drink on the snack menu and practitioners use animal names in Welsh at story time. The practitioners offer opportunities for children to learn about Wales and its traditions, for example making salt dough daffodils and Welsh flags to celebrate St David's Day.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and provide effective learning experiences across all areas of learning. There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities, both indoors and outdoors.

All practitioners make use of a range of effective questioning techniques to support children's learning. They intervene sensitively and this promotes children's skills successfully. Practitioners know the children well and how best to support them. For example, they subtly model how to count snack foods accurately by organising the food around the edge of the plate.

All practitioners manage children's behaviour consistently, gently reminding them of the rules and expectations of the setting. They are good behaviour and language role models to the children.

All practitioners contribute to the assessment process and evaluate children's progress well through planned and spontaneous observations. This enables practitioners to plan future learning activities accordingly. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress informally and formally. Practitioners share with parents how they can support their child, for example providing Welsh words and sharing how practitioners are helping their child to progress. At the end of their time at the setting, practitioners provide a detailed booklet of photographs, children's work with annotations and a report on children's progress to parents.

Care, support and guidance: Good

All children are well cared for at the setting and benefit from positive relationships with practitioners. The setting promotes the children's understanding of healthy living well. For example, children understand the importance of washing hands before snack time and after messy play. Practitioners provide a suitable range of healthy foods and drink at snack time.

The setting encourages children's spiritual, moral and social skills effectively. For example, children learn to share and to take responsibility for clearing away their plates and cups after snack time.

Practitioners offer regular opportunities to learn about the world around them, such as growing bulbs and making bird food. They provide a wide range of activities for children to learn about other cultures, such as stories from around the world and tasting foods to celebrate Chinese New Year.

At the time of the inspection, the setting did not have any children that it had identified as having additional learning needs. However, there are suitable systems in place to identify and support children and to access appropriate support from specialist agencies should the need arise.

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

Learning environment: Good

The setting has an inclusive and friendly ethos where all children are valued and have equal access to all resources and activities. There is an appropriate range of resources that reflect the wider world such as books, jigsaws and small world figures.

The indoor and outdoor learning environments are safe, secure and well maintained. There is a suitable range of good quality resources including natural materials and these match children's needs closely.

The environment is attractive and children's work is displayed throughout the setting effectively. The indoor space is small, but well used. The outdoor area offers a wide range of opportunities to develop skills successfully, particularly children's physical development and thinking skills. Practitioners make good use of the outdoors throughout the year and in all weathers, such as experiencing the rain underneath umbrellas and investigating ice melting.

The setting makes effective use of the local environment to enhance children's learning, such as visits to the local butchers to buy sausages. This helps to develop children's social and language and communication skills.

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

The nursery manager has a clear vision for the setting as a caring environment where children are happy. She communicates this vision successfully to all staff and parents. All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team.

There are comprehensive policies and procedures to support the running of the setting and staff implement these consistently. The setting holds regular staff meetings and this supports the effective implementation of national and local initiatives. Staff note agreed actions and act on these to ensure consistency of approach. For example, practitioners were fully involved in reviewing policies and are therefore able to put any changes into practice effectively.

The nursery manager implements thorough processes to appraise staff and has high expectations of their performance.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation and improvement planning are a regular part of the work of the setting. The nursery manager and practitioners know the setting well. They have useful processes to evaluate their work and the progress made by the setting. They identify strengths and areas for development correctly.

The improvement plan includes helpful small steps and timescales for achieving targets and outlines potential costs. The setting monitors and evaluates the progress and impact on children's learning effectively and regularly. However, the setting

does not draw on first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning to inform areas to develop at the setting.

The setting has a good record of addressing actions, such as improving the provision for mathematics. This has resulted in an improvement in provision for learning about pattern in the indoors and outdoors and in children's skills.

The nursery manager considers carefully parental responses to an annual questionnaire and uses this information appropriately. The setting makes good use of the support and advice provided by external agencies such as the local authority advisory teacher and National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA). For example, advice provided about how to improve planning has affected the quality of learning experiences positively.

Partnership working: Good

The setting makes good use of a range of valuable partnerships to support children's learning and wellbeing. It communicates effectively with parents and shares useful information with them. Practitioners keep parents well informed through regular newsletters, social media and notice boards inside and outside of the setting. Parents have both formal and informal opportunities to learn about their child's progress.

The setting use community links effectively to support children's learning. For example, visits from a nurse and police officer enable children to learn about people's jobs. The setting uses the local community well, such as visits to the church and post box to post letters.

There are good links with local schools. The setting shares relevant information when children move onto the next stage in their education. This helps them to settle into a new environment quickly and ensures that a new setting is aware of their preferences and needs.

Practitioners make the most of the partnership with the local authority's advisory teacher who provides valuable support and guidance to the setting. This helps to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the setting.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of suitably qualified staff and resources of good quality to support teaching and learning. All practitioners access a worthwhile range of training and implement ideas to improve children's learning experiences. For example, following training events practitioners reviewed provision to promote children's listening skills. This led to improvements in the learning environment and children's listening skills. The manager and practitioners benefit from visits to other settings and local network meetings. For example, this has improved practitioners use of observations to inform future learning experiences.

The setting has an effective range of resources to support all children's learning across all areas of learning. Nearly all resources are accessible to the children and this encourages their independence.

Practitioners have made good use of the training and resources provided via the Early Years Development Grant and this ensures good outcomes for children. The nursery manager has a clear understanding of the setting's budget and prioritises spending well.

Overall, the setting offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

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

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Sharon Elaine Hughes	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.