



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

A report on

**Seren Fach Day Nursery
School Close
Ponthir
Torfaen
NP18 1GA**

Date of inspection: November 2018

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

Seren Fach Day Nursery is an English medium setting. It is situated in the village of Ponthir, near Cwmbran in the Torfaen local authority. The setting is registered to take up to 95 children from the ages of six weeks to 12 years. It offers early education sessions from Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 11.30 am and 1.00 pm to 3.30 pm, during school term time. There are currently 12 children in receipt of funded early education

At the time of the inspection, no children were identified with additional learning needs. There are no children from ethnic backgrounds and all children speak English as their home language.

The setting is managed by two proprietors, who took up their posts in 2005. There are seven members of staff who work with children. The setting was last inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in October 2018 and by Estyn in 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- During their time at the setting, nearly all children achieve well
- Nearly all children listen attentively and speak confidently about their activities
- Nearly all children are developing good early numeracy skills
- Most children are skilful in using a range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment
- Most children's Welsh skills are developing well
- Nearly all children are very well motivated and show high levels of enjoyment when learning
- Nearly all children's behaviour is exceptionally good
- Practitioners plan a wide range of very interesting and engaging experiences for children
- The setting provides children with worthwhile opportunities to develop their literacy and communication skills across all areas of learning
- The setting provides high quality care and support for children

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Managers communicate a clear vision to other practitioners and parents well
- The setting's systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are appropriate and all practitioners are committed to improving quality
- Managers use the appraisal system successfully to communicate high standards and review the performance of all practitioners well
- The setting has developed a worthwhile range of partners, who contribute to children's learning and wellbeing successfully
- The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning effectively
- Managers focus well on ensuring practitioners access training based on their needs
- Managers deploy practitioners effectively to best support children's learning and development
- Managers use the budget purposefully and prioritise expenditure in line with the targets in the development plan

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that daily assessments are used effectively to plan the next steps in individual children's learning
- R2 Strengthen arrangements for monitoring practitioners' performance in order to identify purposeful targets for improvement

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

Most children enter the setting with the skills and knowledge expected for their age and stage of development. During their time at the setting, nearly all children achieve well. They recall previous learning confidently, such as how rainbows are formed when seeing them in bubbles.

Nearly all children listen attentively and speak confidently about their activities. They sing rhymes and songs with enthusiasm. Nearly all children engage in conversation spontaneously as they play and contribute to discussions with familiar adults confidently, for example when talking about why poppies are worn for Remembrance Day. They ask questions confidently and use appropriate vocabulary in their play, such as when selecting ingredients to make soup in the mud kitchen. Most children enjoy mark making using a range of equipment competently. They create marks purposefully, such as when 'writing' shopping lists in the farm shop. Most children enjoy listening to stories and respond appropriately. They handle books confidently and show interest in their content.

Nearly all children are developing good early numeracy skills and count reliably to and from ten. They join in with counting rhymes eagerly and apply their numeracy skills in different situations when encouraged by practitioners, for example counting the children at circle time and the number of cones and conkers in trays. Most children use a range of mathematical language in their play effectively when describing the sizes of sticky pieces of paper on the craft table and using full and empty cups in the water trays.

Most children use a range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment skilfully. They take photographs of one another during activities and activate talking points to listen to instructions for making poppies from play dough confidently.

Nearly all children's physical skills are developing successfully. They use a range of small utensils competently, such as glue sticks and small spoons to pick up powder paint. Nearly all children develop appropriate gross motor skills. They pedal trikes competently and take part in balancing activities with a good degree of co-ordination. Many children make appropriate progress with their ball skills and enjoy making up their own simple ball games.

Nearly all children make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they wish to use. They explore their environment eagerly and most children are developing problem solving skills successfully, for example trying different ways of getting water to go down a chute and working out how best to stack bricks of different sizes.

Most children's Welsh skills are developing well. They respond appropriately to the words and phrases used within everyday routines. They join in with simple Welsh

songs confidently and count to five in Welsh independently. Most children respond to simple commands given during daily routines, such as sitting on the carpet and greeting one another at circle time. A few children use Welsh spontaneously during their play, such as naming vegetables and colours when 'shopping' in the role play area.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Nearly all children are very well motivated and show high levels of enjoyment when learning. They are relaxed and happy in the setting and co-operate very well with one another. They are considerate and share toys and equipment thoughtfully, such as when sharing craft materials from a basket and giving out paper bags to their friends in the farm shop. Nearly all children show very high levels of self-esteem. A strong feature of the setting is the exceptionally high level of independence that children demonstrate. For example, they know which activities require aprons and put them on independently as well as preparing their own snacks at a self-service station.

Nearly all children's behaviour is exceptionally good. They are extremely courteous to one another and the practitioners around them. They look after the setting's equipment appropriately and tidy up enthusiastically. Most children demonstrate positive attitudes to new experiences, such as using pipettes to collect paint. They listen sensibly to practitioners and are confident to ask for help when needed.

Nearly all children sustain great interest in activities for appropriate lengths of time. They move confidently from one activity to another and collect and wear lanyards to show where they are playing. Nearly all children make many independent choices about what they want to play with from the activities offered. They demonstrate great perseverance for more challenging activities, such as mixing paint and corn flour together, using small taps on a water container and making poppies with play dough.

Nearly all children contribute effectively to the planning of interesting learning experiences by identifying what they would like to learn. They also discuss effectively the resources they need to accompany their ideas.

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

Practitioners plan a wide range of very interesting and engaging experiences for children that take into account their abilities and stages of development successfully. They plan around topics that children have chosen and ensure activities build successfully on what they already know and what they would like to learn. This ensures children enjoy their learning and make good progress. There is a strong emphasis on play and active learning through first hand experiences. This allows children to explore and discover for themselves, such as when using textured materials in the mud kitchen.

The setting provides children with worthwhile opportunities to develop their literacy and communication skills across all areas of learning. Practitioners promote

children's speaking and listening skills well through daily large group sessions, such as registration, singing and story times. They encourage children to enjoy looking at books in designated areas indoors as well as in the garden. These include valuable opportunities for children to enjoy themed books in other areas of learning, such as in the construction and investigative areas. Practitioners plan well to enable children to develop appropriate mark making skills using a range of different media, including chalk, marker pens and paint, for example activities for children to write in the role play farm shop.

Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to count across many areas of learning. For example, when adding ingredients to their 'soup' and jumping on and off mats in the garden. Practitioners promote the use of mathematical language well, such as encouraging children to follow patterns using natural objects and identifying small and large vegetables in the mud kitchen.

Provision to develop ICT skills is good. Practitioners plan beneficial opportunities for children to use tills, torches and electronic toys. They also encourage children to use tablet computers to take photographs while they play and to create pictures using paint programmes, for example when drawing poppies for Remembrance Day.

Practitioners plan worthwhile opportunities for children to develop a range of skills in the outdoors. They provide children with beneficial learning experiences to develop literacy and numeracy skills, such as chalking on floor, following recipe cards in the mud kitchen and looking for shapes on bird boxes. Practitioners promote the development of children's physical skills well. Activities include counting twigs into numbered pots, kicking large and small balls and negotiating climbing equipment.

Practitioners support children's Welsh language development successfully. They model Welsh well through singing songs, counting and using Welsh words and phrases throughout the session. The setting provides children with worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage by celebrating St David's Day, eating Welsh foods and wearing costumes.

The setting makes valuable use of the local community to enrich children's learning experiences. This includes singing for residents at a local care home, making food parcels for the food bank and shopping at a farm shop. There are regular visitors to the setting, including personnel from the emergency services and grandparents to read to children. This contributes well to children's understanding of the roles of people in their community.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a secure understanding of the requirements of the foundation phase. They use a wide range of teaching strategies to encourage and motivate children to learn. Practitioners use a wide range of resources imaginatively to capture children's interests in the high quality activities they provide in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. For example, they use natural materials such as wooden beads, shells and fir cones to stimulate their curiosity and develop investigative skills successfully. Practitioners combine focused tasks with children's free play effectively. As a result, almost all children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning.

Nearly all practitioners interact well with the children and are good language role models. They use questioning effectively to extend their language and to enhance children's thinking skills successfully. Practitioners give children plenty of time to complete tasks and know when to step in to extend children's ideas and when to allow children to explore for themselves. Practitioners reflect on their work regularly and consider how to improve activities and plans thoughtfully.

The setting has appropriate procedures for assessing children's progress. Practitioners use praise and encouragement effectively to ensure children understand what they have done well. All practitioners carry out worthwhile observational assessments of children and record their achievements regularly. The outcomes of teaching are recorded for groups of children, but do not identify clearly enough the next steps in learning for individual children.

Practitioners inform parents about their children's achievements, wellbeing and development effectively through social media and regular informal and formal contact. This ensures that parents have a beneficial understanding of their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are effective arrangements in place to develop children's understanding of keeping fit and healthy. Practitioners encourage children to eat healthy snacks and play energetically in the outdoors regularly. They promote good hygiene routines and children wash their hands after toileting and before eating independently. This contributes sensibly to their understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy.

Learning experiences promote and foster children's spiritual, moral and cultural development well. Practitioners have created a caring and supportive environment in the setting. They guide children sensitively and help them to learn about the importance of fairness and honesty by modelling these themselves. The setting promotes positive behaviour strategies effectively and children have a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Practitioners develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world when children undertake frequent 'seize the season' activities. For example, they investigate pumpkins in the garden, observe rainbows in bubbles and grow vegetables.

Practitioners encourage children to share equipment, take turns and look after resources sensibly, such as finding spoons for a friend in the mud kitchen and ensuring everyone has a bat and ball to play with. As a result, nearly all children show consideration for others successfully.

The setting provides valuable opportunities for children to learn about sustainability such as recycling their Christmas trees by planting them outside and collecting rain water to water plants.

The setting has well established procedures to support children with additional learning needs. Practitioners work closely with parents to create individual plans to support children's learning well. They liaise effectively with a range of support agencies for advice and guidance when needed. They act on advice given to meet children's individual needs successfully.

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

Learning environment: Excellent

The setting is an inclusive community that promotes a caring ethos well through all daily activities. The setting is generously staffed with committed, experienced and well qualified staff. Practitioners are friendly and approachable. They have a good understanding of children's needs and recognise their individuality sensibly. Practitioners place a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity, by celebrating festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. All children are encouraged to participate and have equal access to all areas of the setting's provision.

The setting is very well maintained, safe and secure, and provides a highly stimulating and welcoming environment for all children. The accommodation is bright, spacious and of very good quality. Practitioners provide colourful displays of children's work and use photographs of children engaged in play in most areas of learning. This motivates children to participate in learning activities and creates an attractive environment for them to explore.

Learning environments are very well organised and resources and equipment are plentiful and readily available to children. The range and exceptional quality of resources are very well suited to the age and stage of development of the children. Practitioners provide children with highly effective opportunities to be creative and explore and investigate, through the extensive and highly creative range of natural materials they offer to children.

Highly creative use is made of the outdoor area. It is very well equipped and provides a very good range of interesting and engaging activities that children access daily to develop literacy, numeracy and physical skills. For example, children are encouraged to count shovelfuls of gravel and the number of kicks of a football. Children are encouraged to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments throughout the sessions. This is highly effective in contributing to the development of their decision making and independence.

There is a good range of recycled materials, such as crates and tubes for children to use imaginatively and creatively outdoors. Large scale sand and gravel pits enable children to develop physical and problem solving skills well. The setting provides children with highly imaginative opportunities to explore the natural world, observe weather, plant, grow and eat their own vegetables. For example, they play with real vegetables and herbs.

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

Managers work effectively with all members of staff and have a clear focus on creating a positive ethos and caring environment where all practitioners and children feel valued. They communicate this vision with other practitioners and parents successfully. There is a strong commitment to team work, and managers work

collaboratively with colleagues to develop children's wellbeing and enhance their learning effectively. Managers have high expectations of themselves and all practitioners. This contributes well to a clear direction for the setting's work.

Managers have a strong sense of purpose in ensuring consistent improvements, through regular informal and formal discussions about children's progress and the effectiveness of the provision. Practitioners have clear job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities well. They are becoming reflective practitioners who understand the need to continue to develop the provision they offer and to sustain improvements. For example, they review their practice carefully to ensure they plan worthwhile learning experiences, create a high quality learning environment that interests all children and establish good behaviour management strategies effectively.

Managers use the appraisal system successfully to communicate high standards and review the performance of all practitioners well. Targets are agreed and progress monitored regularly. Managers identify training needs well and seek opportunities for practitioners to attend appropriate courses. As a result, the outcomes of training have a positive effect in maintaining high quality provision and good standards in children's learning.

The setting has a range of appropriate policies in place, and practitioners implement them consistently. There is a suitable focus on national priorities such as developing children's literacy and numeracy skills and provision in the outdoors.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has purposeful systems in place for identifying its strengths and areas for development and all practitioners are committed to improving quality. Managers monitor the work of the setting regularly and discuss the outcomes with practitioners well. They produce a useful annual review to identify strengths and areas for development, which provides purposeful targets for the setting's improvement plan. They ensure that these targets will improve outcomes for children and link them well with available funds.

Managers regularly seek the views of parents and others on the work of setting. They use this information well and act on any issues or ideas quickly. For example, they adapted the daily menus following requests from parents to include more fruit in their children's diet. They also collect the views of practitioners successfully both informally and through the appraisal system. Managers respond to their suggestions positively. For example, the setting has enclosed a separate garden area for every room to ensure age appropriate equipment can be made available outdoors for all children. They also consult children through useful mind mapping activities and informal discussions at group times. As a result, children regularly request resources to accompany the topics they choose to explore.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has developed a worthwhile range of partners, who contribute to children's learning and wellbeing successfully. Practitioners have developed strong relationships with parents and carers. There are good communication links between the setting and parents using social media, where the setting shares information and photographs on what children are learning. This ensures that parents are kept fully informed of what their children are doing daily. The setting takes active steps to

include parents and carers in the setting's life. Recently, this has included parents visiting the setting to talk to children about their jobs.

The local authority advisory teacher provides valuable advice and guidance which managers readily implement. For example, practitioners have developed a successful approach to using loose parts and natural objects to develop children's creativity, imagination and problem solving skills well.

The setting has established good links with local schools. Practitioners attend training with the neighbouring school when appropriate. For example, they recently attended training on phonics to improve children's early reading skills. The setting attends celebrations at the school and holds concerts in the school hall. Managers ensure appropriate information is passed to schools at points of transition, including assessment data. Teachers also visit children in the setting, which enables them to settle into school quickly and confidently.

The setting has established beneficial links with the local community to enhance children's learning. They visit elderly residents in a care home to sing for them and visit a farm shop to buy produce regularly. As a result, children learn about their local community and develop values such as care and respect.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning effectively. Managers ensure there are sufficient, suitably qualified and practitioners to support the effective delivery of the foundation phase curriculum. Resources are plentiful and of very good quality. Managers monitor them carefully and replace when necessary. They deploy practitioners effectively to best support children's learning and development.

Managers focus well on ensuring practitioners access training based on their needs. They seek suitable training that will develop practitioners' practice and impact positively on children's outcomes. For example, practitioners now provide children with natural resources to help develop their ability to discover for themselves and to solve problems.

Managers monitor the performance of practitioners appropriately as part of their appraisal process. They identify strengths and areas for development suitably and discuss them with practitioners. However, this process is informal and does not always result in the identification of important targets to ensure purposeful and consistent improvements in practitioners' practice.

Managers use the budget purposefully and prioritise expenditure in line with the targets in the development plan. They ensure funding is used skilfully to improve provision and children's outcomes effectively. Managers make beneficial use of external grants to improve provision and address national priorities, such as outdoor play and literacy and numeracy.

In view of the good teaching, the progress that children make and the quality of the provision, the setting provides good value for money.

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
CIW	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 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 three to seven 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 that 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)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation 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