



**Estyn**

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

**A report on**

**Early Learners Day Nursery**

**13 Dyserth Road  
Rhyl  
LL18 4DW**

**Date of inspection: July 2022**

**by**

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)**

**and**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and  
Training in Wales**

## About Early Learners Day Nursery

Name of setting	Early Learners Day Nursery
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Clare Rowlands Rachel Wood
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Rachel Wood Tracey Hughes
Number of places	26
Age range of children	birth to 12 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	20
Number of children who receive funding for early education	20
Opening days / times	07:30 - 18:00
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This is a service that does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of children who use, or intend to use their service. We recommend that the service provider considers Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care'.
Date of previous CIW inspection	10 May 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection	February 2012
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	05/07/2022

## **Non-compliance**

We notified the provider of Areas for Improvement where the setting was not compliant with the regulations. A notice was not issued, but these are identified as areas for improvement, and the Registered Person's must address these.

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next CIW inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements, we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice. Information on all non-compliance will be included in an Action Improvement Summary which will be published on CIW's website only.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Develop children's numeracy and Welsh language skills
- R2 Improve practitioner interactions with children to ensure that they support children's learning and development during play activities
- R3 Develop systems for planning, observation and assessment to identify and plan next steps for all children, including those with additional learning needs
- R4 Ensure that leaders and staff know and follow nursery policies
- R5 Strengthen processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning to ensure a clear impact on learning and development
- R6 Address the areas of non-compliance found during the inspection

## **What happens next**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Estyn and the Chief Inspector of Care Inspectorate Wales are of the opinion that Estyn review is required in relation to this setting. The setting will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

## Main findings

### Well-being:

Nearly all children make choices and decisions about their play. They move between activities and areas confidently choosing what they would like to do from a good range of resources. For example, for large parts of the day children can choose to play inside or outside as is their preference and move freely between play areas. Most children express their views clearly for their age. Young children sit down at the table to indicate that they want to paint, knowing that practitioners will respond by getting more resources for them. Older children speak with ease and confidence to each other and practitioners during their play and at mealtimes. Children in the after-school club use abundant resources to play and create, developing their own ideas in detailed and complex ways.

Nearly all children arrive happily at the setting and cope very well as they separate from their parents and carers. They form close bonds with practitioners, which have a positive impact on their well-being. Very few children struggle with settling when they first arrive. They receive calm, gentle reassurance by practitioners and as a result settle very quickly. A few children are beginning to express their feelings and know they can talk to practitioners if they are worried, for example telling a practitioner that they are feeling sad when asked if they are alright. This develops children's confidence and self-esteem as practitioners acknowledge their feelings and give comfort.

All children behave well. Younger children play happily alongside each other as they explore books. They are learning to follow rules and respect other people as they are gently reminded to give toys back when they take them from others. Nearly all older children play together well, and resolve minor disagreements quickly and easily. Children show resilience as they are well supported to overcome minor upsets.

Nearly all children enjoy their play. They engage well in the activities they choose and sustain interest for appropriate amounts of time, for example as they complete drawings or art projects, play with colours and shapes on a light box or dig in the sand pit.

All children have some opportunities to learn and develop in all areas from the wide range of resources and activities available to them. They are able to follow their own interests for extended periods and as a result they develop confidence in making choices. They do not have as many opportunities to access targeted activities planned to support their next steps in learning and development and, therefore, they do not develop in some areas as well as they could. Nearly all older children are developing independence and self-help skills as they learn to manage their own time and personal care. However, they are not able to fully develop self-help skills at mealtimes as food is served to them already cut up and they are not always provided with knives. There are no opportunities for them to serve themselves or pour their own drinks.

**Learning (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting):**

Most children make suitable progress from their starting points during their time at the setting. This is mainly as a result of the appropriate learning opportunities provided through the environment. They are happy and settled, and they engage well with a range of resources available to them. Most children make choices confidently about where they would like to play and the resources they would like to use. They concentrate appropriately during activities that interest them. Around half of the children develop their independence appropriately. They are beginning to put their own coats on and wash their hands for snack, although they do not have opportunities to develop further by pouring their own drinks.

Many children develop their communication skills appropriately. They express preferences to practitioners and ask for help when needed. For example, they ask how to make a programmable toy go in the right direction, which they do once supported. A majority of children are beginning to chat with their friends as they play. For example, they listen appropriately to each other and discuss items needed to make 'nature soup' in the mud kitchen. Many children respond appropriately to favourite books at story time. They identify characters and take pleasure in chanting familiar phrases. Around half are able to use books, turning pages independently, and a few talk simply about what they see in the pictures. A few identify emotions appropriately, for example talking about why the character in a book is sad. Around half use the correct facial expression for different emotions when singing a song in Welsh.

Many children access suitable opportunities to develop fine motor skills, for example by squashing dough between their fingers and using small scoops to fill cake cases with mud. A majority handle writing tools with an effective grip making recognisable shapes when drawing pictures of sea creatures and boats that they see in their locality. Very few children attempt to write their own name. Many children are beginning to use scissors. A few handle them appropriately when snipping flowers in the garden. Most children develop gross motor skills appropriately. They are beginning to throw balls with increasing control and are keen to take appropriate risks when they climb onto and jump off tree stumps.

Very few children develop mathematical skills appropriately. A few use the language of big and small when looking at flowers in the garden and fast and slow when using ride on toys. Very few children count in their play but a few identify shapes accurately in their environment. Children have very few opportunities to listen to the Welsh language, and as a result development in this area is limited.

A majority of children develop suitable creative skills. For example, they paint with paintbrushes, draw pictures of things that interest them and sing made up songs whilst playing. They use simple instruments such as rain makers and a bell outdoors. They join in with familiar nursery rhymes at circle time. Children engage well in role play activities, for example when they look after baby dolls and turn the home corner into a fast food restaurant using toys as chocolate milkshakes.

### **Care and development:**

Nearly all practitioners follow the setting's policies and procedures relating to keeping children safe and healthy. They have good knowledge of how to protect children and know what to do if they have any concerns. Many have completed safeguarding training. However, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children do not meet requirements and give cause for concern. Leaders do not know the detail of their policy sufficiently well and therefore, do not always follow it. They do not always have full and relevant details about children in the setting that enable them to follow their policy. For example, they do not always have contact details for all professionals involved with some children.

Practitioners know what to do in an emergency as they practice regular evacuation drills with the children. Most practitioners follow good hygiene procedures. They wash their hands regularly, follow appropriate nappy changing procedures and ensure that they clean tables before snacks and meals. They supervise children appropriately, and mostly follow policies and procedures in relation to accidents, incidents and administering medication. A sufficient number of staff have appropriate paediatric first aid training. Leaders and staff have developed routines that ensure children get plenty of fresh air. They provide healthy and nutritious snacks and meals and manage allergies effectively.

Practitioners are very caring and supportive. They interact with children in a warm, friendly manner, creating a calm and relaxed atmosphere. There is a good behaviour management policy in place, which practitioners follow consistently. They praise children for good behaviour and use positive behaviour management techniques such as distraction and explanations. Practitioners are positive role models for children and create an environment that fosters and promotes children's self-esteem.

Practitioners adequately meet the needs of most children. They are responsive to children and their play. Practitioners provide many learning opportunities through the environment, the provision that is continuously on offer and planned activities. This is a particular strength in the after-school club. However, they do not take opportunities to extend learning through open ended questions, discussion or extension of children's ideas. There is very little Welsh language used. Practitioners in the pre-school room have recently introduced a responsive approach to planning, but this does not yet take account of what staff want children to learn next or consider individual next steps. Practitioners use a tracking document to record babies' progress effectively. However, the system for pre-school children is still being developed and is not yet effective in tracking children's progress. Practitioners do not develop individual plans to support children with additional learning needs. As a result, they do not always ensure that all children are making sufficient progress in all areas of learning and development.

### **Teaching and assessment (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting):**

Most practitioners have a good understanding of how children learn through play. They provide children with access to a range of appropriate resources in the indoor and outdoor environments. Practitioners allow children to make choices about where they would like to play. This results in them engaging well in activities. They have

access to a suitably resourced section of the outdoor area for an appropriate period of time during the session.

Practitioners have adopted a responsive approach to planning, which is at a very early stage of development. In the very few examples where this works appropriately, practitioners adapt the provision appropriately in response to children's interests. For example, when the children were interested in making cakes in the mud kitchen, small scoops and cake cases were provided which supported the development of fine motor skills. There are adequate, planned opportunities for children to use resources, which are appropriate for the development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, children are encouraged to program a simple toy to make it move. Overall, practitioners do not identify opportunities during play for children to develop their skills and they do not always challenge children and move their learning forward.

Practitioners develop positive relationships with children, which allow them to develop their social skills appropriately. They encourage them to solve disagreements suitably and support them in sharing toys. Practitioners provide suitable opportunities for children to explore the environment around them, for example making dens from tree branches and digging in the mud. They support children appropriately in showing care and respect towards living things when they water plants in the garden and talk about birds on the bird feeders.

Practitioners develop literacy skills suitably, particularly early writing skills when they encourage the appropriate use and control over scissors and pencils. They support the development of gross motor skills appropriately by encouraging children to take risks in the garden, for example climbing into the role play boat. There are insufficient opportunities for children to develop numeracy and Welsh language skills through their play.

Practitioners provide appropriate opportunities for children to celebrate the cultures of Wales. For example, on St David's Day they colour in the Welsh flag and paint daffodils. They support children in understanding relevant celebrations. For example, they celebrate Chinese New Year when they paint pictures of tigers (the year of the tiger) and Christmas when they write letters to Santa.

Practitioners have a limited understanding of each child's current stage of development. Assessments do not support practitioners effectively to understand the small steps that children need to take to meet an end goal and assessment records do not show progression. In the few examples where learning is recorded accurately, the information is not used well enough for children to make progress.

### **Environment:**

Leaders and practitioners ensure that children are safe and secure. The premises are secure with good arrangements for ensuring children cannot leave the setting unsupervised. Leaders and practitioners demonstrate a good awareness of relevant safety matters completing daily checks of the environment, cleaning schedules and fridge temperature checks. All areas of the setting are adequately clean and well maintained. Leaders carry out adequate risk assessments although they have not recently reviewed the fire risk assessment to ensure that it remains current. Leaders

ensure that they arrange for relevant periodic safety checks, such as for the gas boiler, electrical appliances and firefighting equipment. Vehicles used by the setting all have appropriate documentation.

The setting is welcoming and bright with plenty of natural light. All children's rooms are laid out in a way that gives children ample space to move around and play freely. Leaders and practitioners have developed the spaces to give children easy, independent access to a wide range of interesting and developmentally appropriate toys and resources. Children benefit from areas to rest, relax and be quiet in as well as areas to play, explore and be active. The baby and pre-school rooms have direct access to their own attached outdoor play areas, which are well resourced and provide for opportunities across all areas of learning and development. Practitioners ensure that they use these areas well and children can access them freely for large parts of the day.

Leaders provide good quality furniture, toys and resources, a few of which promote cultural awareness and include Welsh language books. Resources and equipment are clean and well maintained. Leaders monitor their use and provide additional resources for enhancing activities. Leaders and practitioners provide children with an environment that supports many of their learning and developmental needs.

### **Leadership and management:**

The atmosphere in the setting is warm and welcoming. Leaders and managers create a positive ethos. They work well with practitioners who, as a result, feel well supported and able to approach them with concerns. There is an appropriate statement of purpose, which reflects accurately the services the setting provides. During the inspection, we identified three areas of non-compliance, which are detailed at the front of the report.

There are sufficient practitioners who have relevant and appropriate qualifications. They are aware of their roles and most have appropriate job descriptions. Leaders complete staff appraisals on an annual basis. However, targets for improvement are rarely set and there is no system of supervision. As a result, appraisals are ineffective in bringing about change. Leaders do not always deploy staff to maximise practitioners' expertise effectively.

Leaders and managers generally promote safe practices appropriately, although they do not always ensure that policies are implemented fully, particularly in regard to safeguarding.

Leaders identify areas for improvement by evaluating the setting's work. However, their accuracy in identifying the most important areas of improvement is inconsistent. Processes for planning improvements are weak and they do not identify suitable actions to bring about the desired results. For example, the development of Welsh language skills was identified as an area for improvement but there were no clear steps in place for how this is to be developed. This results in a lack of clarity for practitioners about their role in relation to the settings aims for development and there continues to be limited use of Welsh by practitioners, which impacts on learning in this area. Leaders and managers use grant funding effectively to purchase

resources for ICT and to improve the choice of open-ended resources, which has a positive impact on the environment for learning.

Leaders and managers create appropriate links with the local authority link worker. A speech and language therapist provides advice to practitioners to support children's speech and language skills. However, wider partnerships are not as strong as they were pre-pandemic. Leaders engage effectively with parents to understand children's needs and interests on entry to the setting. They inform parents about their child's well-being and parents feel comfortable in asking about their progress. Leaders seek the views of parents and children through an annual questionnaire. However, ideas for improvement are rarely taken forward and there are no formal arrangements for sharing information about children's progress with parents.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from CIW and Estyn's websites (<http://careinspectorate.wales>) ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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