



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cross Ash Under Fives
Cross Ash Hall
Cross Ash
Abergavenny
NP7 8PL**

Date of inspection: September 2014

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 Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Cross Ash Under 5s serves the village of Cross Ash and the surrounding rural community. The setting meets for five mornings per week. It also provides an optional lunch club for children attending the morning session. The setting operates in a converted room, which is part of the local village hall. There is access to an enclosed patio area, a large grassed area and an area for growing plants and vegetables. There are four members of staff employed in the setting. The leader has been in post since September 2014 and all practitioners have suitable qualifications and experience of working with young children.

The playgroup is registered to take up to 24 children and takes in children from the age of two. At the time of the inspection, 21 children attended of whom 17 are aged three and funded by the local authority. All children speak English as their first language. No child speaks Welsh at home. There are no children with additional learning needs.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in November 2013 and by Estyn in November 2008.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good. This is because:

- most children make sound progress and achieve well during their time at the setting;
- nearly all children listen attentively and speak clearly and confidently;
- the setting is a safe and welcoming learning environment and children settle in well;
- most children are polite, behave well and play co-operatively;
- all practitioners provide a broad range of interesting learning activities that engage the children effectively;
- practitioners are good role models for children and treat them with care and respect; and
- provision for the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills is developing suitably.

Prospects for improvement

The settings prospects for improvement are good because:

- effective teamwork and a positive learning environment enable children and adults to work and learn together well;
- the setting responds effectively to advice and guidance, which is impacting positively on children's outcomes and wellbeing;
- the leader and practitioners have a very clear picture of the setting's strengths and areas for development; and
- the setting has a good track record in bringing about improvement in children's communication skills and wellbeing.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve planning by clearly identifying opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R2 Make better use of assessment to plan more effectively for individual children's next steps in learning
- R3 Prioritise actions in the setting's improvement plan to make it a more effective tool for improvement and more manageable.

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 sound progress from their differing starting points. They acquire new knowledge and skills readily as they actively try out new experiences. This prepares them well for their next step in education.

Most children's literacy and communication skills are developing well. Nearly all children listen attentively and talk enthusiastically about their activities to each other and adults. Many are confident to begin simple conversations spontaneously, for example during independent learning activities. They approach adults happily to talk about their learning, expressing themselves using appropriate vocabulary. Nearly all children enjoy listening to stories and recite familiar songs and rhymes enthusiastically, in both English and in Welsh. Nearly all children respond positively to opportunities to develop early writing skills, using a variety of mark-making equipment. For example, many children demonstrate appropriate control when writing with a variety of tools and media, such as with twigs in shaving foam and making patterns with water on the floor outside with paintbrushes and rollers. This supports their understanding of early letter formation well.

Most children are developing effective early numeracy skills. They are beginning to use appropriate mathematical terms when sorting and comparing objects. For example, when sorting objects linked to their shape, they can sort by colour or size, with many understanding the concept of bigger than or smaller than. When working outside watering the plants, many children understood the idea of full or empty when filling the watering cans. Most children count to ten correctly and a few older children recognise and sequence these numbers accurately, understanding the concept of one more than four is five.

Most children's Welsh language skills are of a suitable standard. They respond appropriately to words, phrases and commands used within everyday routines. They recite familiar phrases and songs readily. For example, most children understand and use the Welsh words they have learned for colours when choosing their snack time cup.

Children's competence in using a range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is progressing well. A majority use a computer mouse competently to move items around the screen independently. Many children have opportunities to control battery-operated toys well and use buttons and switches to change the direction of this equipment effectively. A minority use a simple digital camera with confidence to photograph their peers and use a hand held computer microscope to investigate fish scales and starfish.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children are keen to learn and have very positive attitudes. These children have high levels of engagement in activities and participate with enthusiasm. They confidently make choices as they move between adult-focused and independent learning tasks. Most children remain busy and on task for appropriate periods.

Practitioners use snack-time effectively as a social occasion. Nearly all children show respect for each other and engage in appropriate conversations whilst enjoying each other's company. They develop good independent learning skills, for example when preparing their own fruit selections and pouring their own water or milk.

Children have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They increasingly show consideration and courtesy, such as when sharing resources or taking turns. Standards of behaviour are exemplary. Many children have high self-esteem and increased self-confidence. As a result, they readily undertake simple day-to-day jobs and tasks, such as acting as snack monitor and setting the table.

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

Practitioners work as an effective team to plan a wide range of learning activities that interest and engage the children well. The curriculum is broad, balanced and based on the Foundation Phase principles of learning through good quality first hand, learning experiences.

Recent changes to planning have placed a stronger emphasis on the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills across a broader range of areas of learning. Practitioners take regular opportunities to use the outdoor area appropriately in support of the development of these skills. However, they do not always specifically identify these opportunities clearly enough within their planning.

Practitioners encourage children to be independent, to make choices and to experiment with new experiences. For example, they encourage children to create a dance based on the theme of under the sea. Activities are regularly adapted following children's suggestions and interests. Planning provides suitable opportunities for children to develop their physical and creative skills and to learn about the world around them. Children learn to care about their environment and living things by planting potatoes, strawberries and flowers and establishing a minibeast habitat. Practitioners make appropriate use of visitors to the setting such as a local doctor and road safety officer. As a result, children's understanding of their locality and the world of work is developing well.

The setting promotes the Welsh language appropriately through daily focused sessions and informative labelling of displays and resources. Children have suitable opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions. They celebrate St. David's Day by eating Welsh food and looking at Welsh customs. Practitioners use the Welsh language well during whole-group circle time and ongoing through activities.

They actively encourage children to respond in Welsh when reading stories, singing songs and giving instructions. This supports children's acquisition of the language appropriately.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and provide interesting learning experiences across all the areas of learning. The appropriate pace of sessions means that children always have something new and interesting to engage them in their learning. Clear daily routines and effective teamwork provide a consistency of approach and enable nearly all children to know what to expect and to feel happy and safe.

There are very positive working relationships between all practitioners and children. As a result, children are confident learners and learn by their mistakes. All practitioners intervene appropriately in play situations to move children's learning forward, often through the effective use of questioning and ongoing praise to reinforce children's understanding. All practitioners are good language role models and this contributes to the good standards of children's oracy skills and enhances their vocabulary effectively.

Practitioners know the children very well. Regular observational assessments of individuals and groups of children are beginning to enable practitioners to identify children's next steps in learning clearly and to inform future planning appropriately. These assessments inform future planning successfully. The setting keeps parents and carers well informed about their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's awareness of healthy living well and has appropriate policies and practices for ensuring children's emotional and physical wellbeing. For example, regular use of the outdoors encourages children to develop their physical skills using wheeled toys and gardening equipment, such as wheelbarrows and watering cans. These activities also promote children's understanding of sharing and working co-operatively well.

Clear daily routines ensure that children settle quickly and confidently into the setting and this contributes significantly to children's emotional and social development. Children understand the importance of washing their hands, for example before eating food or after playing outside. This helps them to become responsible for their personal hygiene.

An appropriate range of learning experiences fosters children's spiritual, cultural, moral and social development effectively. For example, children celebrate a range of festivals from other cultures such as Divali and Chinese New Year. Practitioners encourage children to form positive relationships and to develop a sense of respect and tolerance towards others. They help children to manage their feelings and to develop self-awareness and self-respect well. Practitioners encourage children to develop a suitable sense of awe and wonder through daily outdoor learning opportunities where children observe wildlife around the setting.

There are worthwhile opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and recycling. For example, the setting recycles food waste for one of the practitioner's chickens to eat. The setting also reinforces children's understanding of the need to care for their environment through encouraging children to collect rainwater to water their vegetables.

The settings arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The setting currently has no children with additional learning needs. It has, however, clear procedures to support children with additional learning needs and an effective network of contacts with external agencies in order to provide extra support and advice, should the need arise.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to activities. As a result, children feel valued, confident and enjoy talking to each other, staff and visitors.

Practitioners are suitably qualified and very experienced in working with young children. There are plenty of good quality resources across most areas of learning and practitioners ensure that they match children's needs closely.

Practitioners make effective use of the available space. The accommodation is of an acceptable quality, generally well maintained and secure. Practitioners create a bright and stimulating environment for learning. The setting's outdoor area is safe and secure and practitioners use it well to provide a wealth of interesting experiences across the curriculum.

The setting uses community resources appropriately. For example, the use of the local school grounds and hall and the local playground provide additional learning experiences. These have a beneficial impact on children's physical development and social skills in particular.

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

There is a new leader to the setting who, in partnership with the previous leaders, is working with all practitioners well, to manage and implement changes within the setting effectively. All practitioners make highly effective use of each other's strengths. Leaders encourage individuals to take responsibility and leadership for areas of learning. This shared approach to leadership means that all practitioners feel valued and have high expectations of themselves and others. They are becoming reflective practitioners who understand the need to continue to develop the provision they offer and to sustain improvements. All practitioners understand the setting's aims well. Their vision focuses strongly on providing an inclusive and caring learning environment, whilst striving to improve children's communication and numeracy skills.

All practitioners have clear and up-to-date job descriptions and well-understood roles and responsibilities. They work together as a team successfully to move the setting forward. They manage their time well and provide very effective support for all children.

The setting makes appropriate use of appraisal systems to support and challenge practitioners. Appraisal targets are generally link to the setting's improvement plan and to staff training needs successfully. This impacts positively on raising the outcomes for children. This is particularly the case for children's oracy, early mark making and numeracy skills. Practitioners make appropriate use of weekly meetings to discuss children's achievements and to develop planning.

The setting has made good progress in taking forward national initiatives, especially the development of outdoor learning to support children's numeracy and literacy skills. The new leader and team keeps the management committee well informed about the setting's work and the standards it achieves.

Improving quality: Good

All practitioners demonstrate a clear commitment to continuous improvement. They contribute to an audit to identify the settings strengths and areas for development effectively. Leaders use this information well to write an honest self-evaluation report and to develop an appropriate setting improvement plan. Although the priorities relate well to improving outcomes and provision for children, there are too many. As a result, there is not always a sharp enough focus on the main areas for development with clearly identified costings, training needs and timescales. The setting reviews the plan informally on a regular basis and the views of parents and children are taken into account appropriately.

Practitioners are open to new ideas and respond positively to support from the local authority advisory teacher resulting in improvements in children's outcomes, particularly Welsh oracy skills and the quality of learning experiences provided, for example the development of the outdoors to support children's physical development skills and their understanding of caring for their environment. This has improved children's co-ordination and raised their self-confidence and wellbeing.

Practitioners make suitable use of training opportunities. These impact positively on the setting's planning and assessment procedures in particular.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has beneficial partnerships with parents and carers. Leaders share the setting's aims and objectives regularly with them. Parents receive relevant information via the setting's noticeboard, newsletters, e-mail and via daily personal contact. As a result, parents feel well informed and knowledgeable about the settings day-to-day work.

A valuable partnership exists with the local primary school. This promotes a smooth transition for children from the setting to the next stage in their education. The use of the school playground and hall supports children's physical development skills well.

The setting has appropriate partnerships with the community. For example, children visit the local park and a local doctor and dentist visit the setting to develop children's understanding of the world of work.

There is a strong partnership with the local authority advisory teacher and practitioners welcome this advice and support. Practitioners benefit from this support in developing and improving the quality of the learning environment and on planning for literacy and numeracy skills development. This improves children's oracy and counting skills in particular.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes effective use of staffing and resources. The sharing of ideas and professional knowledge amongst staff supports good quality teaching well. Practitioners make appropriate use of training opportunities to improve provision and outcomes for children. For example, practitioners have attended a Welsh language course improving their own skills and consequently those of the children.

The setting's committee and the leader monitors the budget regularly and systematically to ensure the most efficient use of funds. This means that spending decisions are appropriate and in line with the targets identified in the setting's priorities for improvement plan.

In view of fact that children's outcomes are good, learning experiences are effective and the corporate approach to leadership is a strength, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	10	5 50%	5 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		80%	19%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	10	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	10	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	13%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	10	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		80%	18%	0%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	10	4 40%	6 60%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		69%	26%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	9	4 44%	5 56%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		79%	18%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	10	5 50%	5 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		82%	16%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	10	4 40%	6 60%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Caiff fy mhentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		73%	22%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	10	6 60%	4 40%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		85%	14%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	9	1 11%	8 89%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		65%	24%	1%	0%		
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	10	2 20%	6 60%	2 20%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhentyn.
		63%	30%	5%	1%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	10	3 30%	6 60%	1 10%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		80%	19%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	10	2 20%	6 60%	2 20%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		62%	29%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	10	3 30%	7 70%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		71%	23%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	10	1 10%	7 70%	2 20%	0 0%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		62%	30%	4%	0%		
The setting is well run.	10	5 50%	5 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		82%	17%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Susan Davies

Reporting Inspector

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

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.