



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

A report on

**Little Stars
Caldicot Leisure Centre Demountable
Mill Lane
Caldicot
Monmouthshire
NP26 4BN**

Date of inspection: November 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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Context

Little Stars Under 5's is a privately run playgroup situated in the grounds of the leisure centre in Caldicot in Newport local authority. It is registered to care for up to 26 children aged from three to five years old each morning and up to 20 children aged from two to five years old each afternoon. At the time of inspection, eight children were eligible for education funded by the local authority.

Nearly all children are white British and nearly all speak English at home.

The setting leader has run the playgroup since her appointment in 2000. There are four full time members of staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to work with young children.

Estyn last inspected the setting in February 2012. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in September 2015.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is adequate because:

- Children like coming to the setting, feel secure and settle quickly
- Relationships between peers, and practitioners and children are respectful
- Children are cared for and supported well by the practitioners
- The setting's practice ensures that children eat healthily and engage in physical activity on a daily basis
- The environment is exciting and stimulating
- Many children develop their communication skills well
- Practitioners implement the foundation phase curriculum appropriately and plan a suitable range of learning activities

However:

- Many children's numeracy skills are underdeveloped
- Opportunities for children to develop their numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not planned systematically and lack appropriate challenge
- Planning does not always respond to all children's abilities and needs well enough
- Practitioners do not always make efficient use of assessments and observations
- There is limited use of visits to the community and visitors to the setting to enrich children's learning experiences

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- The leader has a clear vision for the setting that she shares with practitioners effectively
- Practitioners work well together
- The record of self-evaluation focuses well on what the children can do
- The setting has effective partnerships with parents
- The setting has strong partnerships with the local church and primary schools
- The leader manages finances efficiently

However:

- Systems for managing the performance of staff are not rigorous enough
- The setting does not have appropriate processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

- Self-evaluation is at an early stage of development

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards for numeracy and ICT skills
- R2 Develop the use of visitors, visits and links with the community to enhance learning
- R3 Make sure that activities challenge children at a suitable level
- R4 Use assessments more effectively to identify what individual children need to do next in their learning
- R5 Improve procedures to manage performance of staff
- R6 Improve processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan, showing how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Adequate
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Standards: Adequate

Most children make satisfactory progress from their individual starting points. A minority of children recall previous learning appropriately and a minority apply this to solving everyday problems. Many children apply their communication skills well in a range of contexts.

Most children's literacy skills are developing effectively, particularly their early writing skills. For example, nearly all children use mark-making tools confidently, such as when they draw pictures for a friend. Many children develop good speaking and listening skills. They listen well during story time and talk confidently to visitors. For example, they describe creating a skate park in the block area or making tea in the kitchen role-play area. When encouraged to use the reading area many children sustain their interest in a story suitably, and a few choose their own story and handle the book as a reader.

Overall, children's numeracy skills are less well developed. Many children need adult support to recognise simple two-dimensional shapes and numbers to five. Around half of the children use mathematical vocabulary in their play, for example when describing a big house or wall in the construction area. Children that are more able can complete numeracy tasks quickly and easily but do not develop their skills to a high enough level.

With adult support, many children are beginning to use ICT appropriately in play. For example, they use the phone in the role-play area or play a dinosaur game using the hand held computer.

Children's physical skills are developing well. For example, most children can control a pencil and use the tweezers skilfully. All children demonstrate a good awareness of space, such as when they jump and stretch to make big movements when taking part in an active story.

Welsh language skills are developing suitably, but older children who have been at the setting for a long time do not build on their knowledge of language patterns well enough or use Welsh independently in their play.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enter the setting happily and settle quickly. They show enjoyment and excitement when adults talk about what they are going to do next, such as going outside to play. Nearly all children are becoming confident explorers of the environment. For example, they readily access continuous provision to find a

resource. Many children share their thoughts and ideas at 'talk time' confidently. As a result, all children have high levels of self-esteem and they feel valued and listened to.

Nearly all children behave well and they are polite and considerate of each other. Most children listen carefully to adults, such as when following the actions in a story or when taking part in the adult focus task. Many children show motivation and interest in their learning and most demonstrate positive levels of engagement during tasks. Many children enjoy the activities in the areas of learning, especially outdoors, and they share equipment readily and co-operate with other children successfully. Many children demonstrate positive attitudes to new experiences, such as washing a car in the car wash or collecting autumn leaves. They relate well to adults and visitors when they arrive at the setting and when they leave.

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

Practitioners provide children with a suitable range of learning activities and make good use of available resources. There are sufficient opportunities for children to use the outdoor area; however, consistent use of the outdoors to develop children's learning effectively is at an early stage of development.

All practitioners are aware of the foundation phase curriculum. All practitioners collaborate in the planning process and contribute to the development of activities appropriately. However, planning for developing children's numeracy skills does not always build on children's existing knowledge. Overall, practitioners do not take enough account of individual children's needs to help them all progress well enough. For example, the setting's routines do not always challenge or support individual children sufficiently.

Practitioners develop children's literacy skills and follow their interests well. For example, they developed the construction area and car wash following child led discussions. Numeracy provision is under developed in comparison. The setting has identified this in its action plan and is working towards making improvements. Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities for children to count, sort and match objects. However, these are not always sufficiently challenging for children that are more able.

There are appropriate opportunities to develop children's ICT skills using a comprehensive range of resources. However, practitioners do not plan systematically to develop a wider range of ICT skills..

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to hear and respond to the Welsh language during registration and when giving praise or instructions. They use a suitable range of Welsh songs and rhymes to help children learn simple language

patterns. Practitioners display Welsh phrases around the setting and they use these successfully to remind them to encourage children to use Welsh in their play.

The setting makes good use of the local church to enhance children's learning experiences. However, in general, there is limited use of visits to the community and of visitors to the setting. As a result, children's understanding of their locality is under developed. There are suitable opportunities to learn about other cultures. For example, children have a pen friend in Bangladesh and they celebrate the traditions of multicultural children in the setting appropriately.

Teaching: Adequate

All practitioners are committed to supporting children and are eager to meet their individual needs. They make appropriate use of a range of teaching strategies and employ a suitable range of questioning techniques to engage children. Practitioners' interactions with children are sensitive, respectful and caring.

Practitioners have a suitable knowledge of the foundation phase curriculum and are good language models. Most practitioners intervene appropriately in children's play and demonstrate the use of resources when necessary. However, they do not have sufficiently high enough expectations of what children can achieve. As a result, many children rely on adult support and have limited opportunities to develop their thinking and problem solving skills.

Practitioners plan activities that engage children successfully and all children respond well. They initiate play gently and work alongside children appropriately. However, they do not always make the most of learning opportunities such as providing more challenging mathematical problems for more able children.

All practitioners are involved in the assessment process. They record formal weekly assessments as well as incidental observations regularly. Practitioners consider information from assessments appropriately when they plan activities. However, they do not always use the assessments well enough to move the children on successfully. For example, children revisit skills they can achieve easily or tasks are too challenging for children who are less able. Practitioners are beginning to keep a useful record of what children can do to help them plan more effectively, but this is at an early stage.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners promote good behaviour skilfully and positively, using praise effectively. They establish strong routines and children respond well to these. For example, children tidy up when they are asked to and sit down happily for group work.

The setting promotes healthy eating well. For example, when they have their snack, children prepare their own fruit and they are encouraged to drink milk or water. All

practitioners encourage children to compost food waste and recycle materials. As a result, many children are beginning to understand how to look after the environment. Practitioners promote exercise well and children have regular opportunities to take part in energetic outdoor play and pedal bikes.

Practitioners promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This has a positive impact on their wellbeing. They provide children with opportunities to grow their own food and observe seasonal changes, such as when they collect autumn leaves. Practitioners encourage the children to hunt for mini beasts in the bug hotel and express awe and wonder at changes in the seasons. They actively encourage children to develop a sense of fairness successfully. For example, nearly all children know how to share and children apologise when they knock over a friend's model. Practitioners encourage children to have respect for themselves, others and the environment skilfully.

Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There are worthwhile measures in place to support children with additional learning needs. Successful relationships with specialist agencies help practitioners to set realistic targets. Practitioners review the progress of children with additional learning needs effectively each term.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides a caring and nurturing environment where practitioners encourage children to take part in all activities. This is a strong feature of the setting. They ensure that all children have equal access to the indoor and outdoor environments.

The setting is clean, safe and secure.. The indoor space is exciting and stimulating. For example, the creative area provides opportunities to experiment with different recycled materials and children enjoy using the block play area to build different structures and talk about their creations. Resources are set out so that children can use them independently. For example, children know where to find materials they need to create a picture and go and choose these on their own.

The setting uses its outdoor space effectively to promote children's learning. For example, children use real vegetables to cook in the mud kitchen and there is an outdoor literacy den where they can look at books. Practitioners organise visits to the library and local church to learn about religious celebrations such as the nativity. However, in general, opportunities to visit the local community are limited.

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

The leader has a clear vision for the setting that she shares with practitioners well. There is an ethos of teamwork and co-operation among staff and they work well together to provide a high standard of care. All staff are aware of most of their roles and responsibilities. However, they do not all have job descriptions and others have job descriptions that are out of date and do not reflect their current roles. The setting has a system for managing the performance of staff, but this is not rigorous enough and does not set targets for improving performance.

The setting places an appropriate focus on national priorities, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and developing children's literacy and Welsh language skills. It is beginning to develop a culture of looking for ways to improve. For example, following attendance at a leadership course, the leader is much more aware of her role in evaluating outcomes and managing performance and has secure plans to improve these areas.

The setting has a suitable range of policies and procedures to deliver appropriate care and education which it reviews annually. Practitioners share useful information in weekly staff meetings. These meetings include discussions about the standards that children achieve and identify what staff need to do to take children's learning forward. For example, staff recognised the need to provide more opportunities for children to develop their numeracy skills and have worked to improve this.

The setting has made good progress in responding to two of the recommendations from the previous inspection, but has been slow to develop the outdoor area to a suitable standard. Practitioners have completed this work very recently and there is now an exciting and stimulating outdoor space to develop children's skills.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting has recently improved the quality of its self-evaluation processes. Leaders are aware that they need to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously and have started to do this. However, this is at an early stage of development and it is too early to judge the impact on children's standards and on improvements to teaching. All staff contribute to the self-evaluation process through discussions at staff meetings. Leaders ask parents for their views about the setting through an annual questionnaire.

The record of self-evaluation focuses well on what the children can do and the setting has developed a new format for this that makes clearer what the setting needs to do to improve. The setting improvement plan focuses suitably on the areas for development identified through the self-evaluation process. It sets out clearly what the setting wants to improve, how it will do it, the resources required and how it will measure the impact of actions. However, it does not indicate which member of staff will take overall responsibility for different actions.

The setting has begun to make good use of advice from the advisory teacher from the regional consortium to improve provision and raise standards. For example, the leader and advisory teacher have recently considered how the outdoor area is used and how practitioners can provide a better learning environment and make the area more appealing to children. This has resulted in significant change. Children are eager to use the area now and it provides very good opportunities for them to develop a range of skills across foundation phase areas of learning.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has effective partnerships with parents. Leaders keep parents well informed about what is happening at the setting through noticeboards, newsletters, social media and text messages. Parents respond well to requests for help in developing areas of provision. For example, many parents provided resources for the outdoor area.

There is a strong partnership with a local church. Members of the church visit the setting to provide activities. For example, they put on a puppet show for the children. During preparations for the Christmas concert, the setting uses the church for one morning each week to practise.

The local authority advisory teacher visits the setting on a regular basis. She provides support and advice to the setting, and practitioners have recently reacted to this very positively to improve provision. Practitioners attend training courses on offer from the regional consortium and local authority and this helps them to keep up-to-date with new initiatives to improve teaching and learning and the quality of leadership.

The setting has strong partnerships with the local primary schools it feeds. Staff from the schools visit the playgroup prior to transfer and there is appropriate sharing of relevant information.

Resource management: Adequate

The setting makes appropriate use of staffing and resources to support children's learning. All practitioners are suitably qualified, but not all practitioners have received specific training in foundation phase practice.

Practitioners attend an appropriate range of training provided by the local authority and regional consortium. Following training, practitioners complete a useful evaluation and indicate how they will apply what they have learned in the setting. They monitor the impact of the training, and this is a strong feature of the setting's work.

The leader manages finances efficiently to make sure that resources are plentiful, of good quality and meet the needs of the children. The setting makes effective use of

the early years development grant, for example to improve children's speech and language skills.

As a result of the adequate standards that children achieve, the setting provides adequate 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
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 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.