



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

A report on

**Monmouth Montessori Nursery
Llangattock-Vibon-Avel
Monmouth
NP25 5NG**

Date of inspection: May 2017

by

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Context

Monmouth Montessori Nursery is part of Llangattock School Monmouth, an independent school formerly known locally as Monmouth Montessori School. It is situated in a rural setting four miles outside the town of Monmouth and caters mainly for children from Monmouth and the surrounding area. The principal of the school has overall responsibility for the nursery. However, the nursery manager takes the main role in leading and managing all aspects of the setting's work.

The setting provides funded education for 19 three and four-year-olds, but is registered to provide care for up to 40 children in total between the ages of two and four. Currently, there are 14 children who are funded by Monmouthshire local authority. These children attend between one and five mornings a week. They receive education in the mornings, but may also receive care at the nursery during the afternoons. During the inspection, there were four three-year-olds and four four-year-olds present.

All funded children speak English at home and are from white British backgrounds. The setting has identified a very few as having additional learning needs.

The nursery manager is qualified to NVQ level 3. She is supported by three other practitioners who hold either NVQ2 or NVQ3 qualifications.

The setting was last inspected the by Estyn in March 2011. The last inspection by Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) was in April 2015.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- The setting provides a calm yet exciting learning environment that engages all children well
- All children are content in the setting, and play and learn together happily
- Nearly all children develop good personal and social skills through their positive interactions with adults and other children
- Most show an interest in books, stories and rhymes, and enjoy a wide range of early literacy and numeracy activities
- Practitioners have clear expectations of children's behaviour, which they reinforce consistently, but sensitively
- Children experience a wide range of interesting and motivating learning experiences across all areas of learning
- Staff have a suitably flexible approach to the curriculum and planning that enables them to respond effectively to the needs and interests of the children

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The nursery manager and staff share a common goal to improve provision continually for the benefit of children's outcomes and wellbeing
- The readiness of the nursery manager and staff to engage in professional learning and to respond to support and guidance has resulted in considerable improvements in many areas of the setting's work since the last inspection
- Regular self-evaluation and progress reviews of improvement targets mean that all staff know the setting's strengths, and help to identify the next steps in its development
- Positive relationships with parents and other partners mean that the setting receives strong support
- The nursery manager's role on the school's senior management team ensures that the principal is well informed about the progress and needs of the setting

Recommendations

- R1 Use the existing target setting process more purposefully to challenge children and evaluate their progress more precisely
- R2 Link practitioners' professional learning more closely to the setting's priorities for improvement

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 enter the setting with skills that are at least the expected level for their age. Nearly all children make good or better progress from their starting points during their time at the setting. This includes a very few with additional learning needs who gain useful personal and social skills that help them to interact with other children and to benefit from the play and learning activities on offer. Most children recall their learning confidently, using vocabulary and ideas relevant to their current, and previous, topics. Many pick up new skills quickly and are eager to use these skills to try new things. The well-developed physical skills of most children mean that they move confidently for their age. They take advantage of this to balance on logs and climb large tractor tyres without fear. They experiment with rolling out and shaping different size balls of dough to try to create a jigsaw butterfly and use a wooden spoon vigorously to beat the ingredients to make their own dough. Most children develop the skills to think for themselves and make choices about where they play and which resources they use, but also respond positively to encouragement to change activity or extend their learning.

The early literacy skills of most children develop well and their competence in using language extends across all areas of learning. Most listen attentively and respond to instructions and questions with understanding. Children of all ages communicate confidently in a range of situations, explaining their activities clearly, while older and more able children use language in more complex ways to express emotions and give reasons for their choices when playing. Nearly all children enjoy listening to stories and join in with familiar, repeated phrases of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', the focus of their current topic. Many recognise their names when self-registering and on their place mats at snack time. Most children experiment independently with a wide range of mark-making equipment. Many have well-developed fine motor skills that enable them to carry out quite precise movements with dexterity. This means that many four-year-olds make good attempts at writing their names, while most three-year-olds create marks that they recognise when 'signing in' every morning.

Most children use their developing numeracy skills naturally in the course of their play and learning. For example, they describe the shape of a strawberry as 'like a triangle' when explaining what they can see during an observational drawing activity. Nearly all children join in enthusiastically with simple number rhymes and songs. Most count up to five reliably, while more able children count items within ten confidently, for instance when jumping from one stepping stone to another in the garden. Many children sort and match shapes correctly, and compare the size of two objects, using 'bigger' and 'smaller' accurately. Nearly all children understand the concept of exchanging money for items in a shop or café, and count their pennies out to buy crackers and pieces of fruit for morning snack.

Most children use a suitable range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment confidently. They operate the CD player to listen to music, play confidently with programmable toys and use items including a till and calculator in the role-play area. Many children use a digital camera and a simple sound recorder competently to take photographs of themselves and their friends at play, and record their voices. Many are beginning to understand some of the uses of ICT in the world around them. For example, when chatting in the queue at the role play café, they talk about using credit cards when they go shopping with their parents.

Most children make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They join in eagerly with Welsh songs and stories, repeating familiar words and phrases with accurate pronunciation, and making suitable facial expressions or sounds to show their understanding. Many respond correctly to simple instructions given in Welsh, and often use simple phrases spontaneously during the course of the day.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children settle well on arrival and choose activities quickly and confidently. They feel secure in the indoor and outdoor environment and know the routines of the setting and the expectations of practitioners well. Most are very comfortable when interacting with practitioners and communicate willingly with other adults as they become more familiar to them.

Most children develop good personal and social skills. They behave well and play happily alongside and with one another. Most share equipment appropriately and understand the need to take turns. They wait patiently in a queue at the café role play area, chatting to one another as if they are in a supermarket queue. All children sit politely at the table at snack time and for lunch, talking sensibly about the food they are eating and their activities. Most are considerate to one another and a few show understanding of children whose personal and social skills are not as advanced.

All children enjoy the learning activities on offer and participate enthusiastically. Many concentrate very well for their age and show high levels of perseverance when faced with challenges. Many children develop good levels of independence. These children wash their hands, serve their own food, and put their coats on with very little help from adults.

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

The setting provides children with a wide range of engaging opportunities to play and learn. First-hand, practical experiences across all the Foundation Phase areas of learning enable children to develop their early literacy and numeracy skills effectively. The setting also pays good attention to developing children's personal and social skills, and provides valuable experiences to strengthen children's physical, ICT and thinking skills. For example, when making dough, children learn new vocabulary and talk about how the dough feels and smells. Practitioners expect them to measure the ingredients and, with adult support, follow a simple recipe and use cutters to create

butterflies. While they work, staff and children practise their colours and numbers in Welsh, discuss the life cycle of the butterfly and ask questions about the caterpillar's segments and antennae.

Careful planning, based securely on Foundation Phase principles and linked to interesting topics, provides exciting activities indoors and outside. The length and depth of topics vary, according to the children's response to it, and this helps to maintain children's interest in their learning. A good balance between activities led by adults and those led by children means that children have good opportunities to learn new skills and practise or apply them in various ways around the setting. For example, a calm and well-organised snack time gives children a natural opportunity to discuss what they have learnt about eating and drinking healthily, and to apply the cutting and pouring skills they have developed in the craft area and the water tray.

Practitioners use the Welsh language naturally and confidently when working with children. They reinforce the routines of the setting, sing Welsh songs and introduce vocabulary and phrases linked to the setting's topic. This means that children hear plenty of Welsh throughout the day and they respond by using their own Welsh language skills well. Learning about St. David's Day and the eisteddfod and appreciating the countryside and wildlife around them help children to understand what is special about Wales.

Teaching: Good

All staff understand how to encourage young children to explore the environment around them and learn through play. Working relationships are strong and this ensures that children are comfortable to try out new things. A flexible approach to weekly planning enables practitioners to take note of children's interests and respond swiftly to their needs. For example, when a child brings a discarded bird's nest into to setting, practitioners use it as an opportunity to talk about how birds build nests and to explain sensitively why we should not normally remove things from their natural habitat.

In conversations with children, practitioners use mature, subject-specific vocabulary and this sets high expectations for children's use of language. For example, staff talk about the importance of drinking water to keep hydrated and ask why dry soil absorbs water. Through skilful questioning, adults often pose problems that help children to consolidate an idea, or move them forward in their thinking.

Practitioners collaborate effectively to plan activities that they can simplify or extend to cater for the skill levels of different children. They also use their very good knowledge of the children to enhance these activities naturally in sessions.

Practitioners use verbal feedback effectively to offer children encouragement and guidance when intervention is needed, but practitioners also know when to observe, or let children solve a problem or a minor disagreement themselves. These strategies often provide suitable challenge for most children. However, practitioners do not always focus well enough on challenging children to make progress towards their individual targets. This makes it difficult to show precisely the small steps of progress that young children often make.

The setting uses the Foundation Phase Profile appropriately to establish a baseline for children on entry to the nursery and to assess children's progress every term. Practitioners observe children at play and during activities and make evaluative notes about their achievements. These notes provide practitioners with key information about the development of each child, which they use to keep parents informed through informal discussions and informative annual written reports.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides high levels of care, support and guidance through its flexible approach that meets the particular needs of all children. Children have plenty of opportunities to learn about healthy living and personal hygiene in the setting's daily routines. All children have daily access to the outdoors and this provides plenty of fresh air and encourages vigorous physical activity. Nearly all stay to eat a balanced lunch and this is a valuable time when adults and children come together in a realistic and relaxed social setting. Practitioners use this time very effectively to encourage children to try a wide variety of foods, develop self-esteem and social skills, and reinforce polite behaviour at the table.

The setting has clear expectations of behaviour and kindness towards others that all practitioners share. Their consistent approach helps children to follow the setting's clear rules, including 'kind hands', 'good listening ears' and 'sharing is caring'. The setting's policies, supportive ethos and practitioners' focus on providing children with varied and relevant learning experiences promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A good example is the way in which practitioners draw children's attention to the beauty of the surrounding countryside and its wildlife as a matter of course as they go about their play and activities.

Arrangements for safeguarding children in the setting meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The setting identifies children with additional learning needs sensitively, but effectively. They liaise very well with parents, keeping them informed about their children's progress in relation to their individual development plan and providing good guidance about the actions needed to involve external bodies and specialists where necessary, including the educational psychologist and speech therapist.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides a safe and inclusive place for all children. Practitioners have created a calm, spacious, yet stimulating learning environment, which is organised in a way that encourages all children to move around freely, explore all areas of learning, and make choices about what and how they learn. This enables adults and children to respect the choices of others and celebrate individual differences.

Indoor and outdoor learning areas are safe and secure, with plenty of suitable, high-quality resources that children can access easily. Practitioners use both environments and equipment skilfully to provide children with a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills across all areas of learning. Attractive displays of children's work celebrate success and support children's learning well.

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

Leadership: Good

The nursery manager leads the setting enthusiastically. She has high expectations of herself and all members of staff. Together, they are committed to providing a nurturing and exciting learning environment for the children in their care. The proprietor, who is the headteacher of the school that is linked to the setting, provides appropriate support for the nursery manager to carry out her role effectively.

Setting staff respond very positively to support and developmental feedback from the local authority and other external agencies, and all members of the team work effectively together to make changes. The nursery manager ensures that weekly meetings with practitioners focus well on improving provision and children's outcomes. This positive response to guidance means that she has succeeded in establishing an ethos of continual improvement in the setting in recent years.

Being part of the senior management team of the school enables the nursery manager to keep the proprietor and other members of the school's senior management team well informed about the work and progress of the setting and its developmental needs. This enables the proprietor to help the setting appropriately, by providing administrative and financial advice, and by supporting its appraisal process.

Improving quality: Good

In recent years, the setting has established a strong ethos of self-evaluation and improvement planning. This has enabled the setting to make considerable improvements, particularly in relation to the recommendations from the previous inspection report. For example, provision for Welsh language development has improved considerably due to the commitment of staff to improving their own Welsh language skills. Their confidence to use the language throughout the day has a positive impact on children's attitudes to and standards in Welsh language development.

The nursery manager and staff know the setting's work and the impact of this well. This is because they observe teaching and learning regularly and evaluate their planning and children's response to activities every week. They take good account of feedback from the local authority advisory teacher, and respond positively and promptly to suggestions for improvement. As a result, the self-evaluation report is mainly evaluative and identifies relevant strengths and areas for improvement.

The setting improvement plan links well with the self-evaluation report and identifies appropriate targets to improve elements of standards, provision and leadership, for example the need to align staff targets more closely to priorities in the improvement plan. The plan identifies clear success criteria and resource requirements and these often focus appropriately on improving children's outcomes. Staff review the plan every term and evaluate progress towards the targets. This helps the nursery manager to ensure that improvements are on track and to identify any necessary modifications.

Partnership working: Good

The setting develops positive partnerships with parents and carers from the outset. The information pack, noticeboard and website provide helpful information that ensures that parents understand the setting's ethos, policies and expectations. This information, along with daily, informal communication between parents and setting staff, helps parents to support their children's early education effectively. There are good transition arrangements between home and the setting, and the setting and the receiving school. These help to ensure that children are confident and happy as they move from one setting to another.

Close working with the school to which the setting is linked means that resources can be shared. Children and staff benefit from using the school's extensive grounds, when appropriate, and staff share expertise about teaching and learning. Links with the local community, including visits from the local fire station and veterinary surgery, donations for the outside area from the garden centre, and visits to the village church to celebrate Harvest Festival, enhance children's learning experiences well.

Partnership working with the local authority advisory teacher is purposeful and benefits the setting considerably. Regular visits support the setting's work, particularly in relation to self-evaluation and planning for improvement. This helps the setting to identify its strengths and improve its provision, and enables all staff to access relevant, high-quality training. Similar links with specialist teachers enable the setting to provide good support for children with additional learning needs. The staff's readiness to work alongside the speech therapist when she visits, for instance, means that they can continue with programmes for identified children regularly, when she is not there.

Resource management: Good

The setting is appropriately staffed with practitioners who are suitably qualified and experienced to work with young children. There are suitable appraisal arrangements in place for all staff. The nursery manager and staff understand the Foundation Phase well and make sure that they keep up-to-date with recent developments. They take part regularly in training and other professional learning activities. Although these activities usually relate appropriately to the needs of individuals, they do not always link closely enough to the setting's priorities for improvement.

Overall, the setting is developing into a strong learning community, where practitioners share their expertise with colleagues and with practitioners from other settings. A good example of this is the setting's contribution to a local authority 'practice worth sharing' event. Practitioners from other settings visited to see the changes staff had made to the learning environment and learn about how it has improved children's wellbeing and engagement.

The nursery manager ensures that resources are used effectively to support learning throughout the setting. She prioritises requests for spending in line with agreed priorities in the improvement plan and to benefit children's progress and wellbeing. The headteacher and school administrator manage the setting's budget appropriately and ensure that the setting functions effectively. The setting has used its Early Years

Pupil Deprivation Grant appropriately to support children's physical, social and language development in the outdoors.

In light of the good outcomes for most children, the setting offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

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

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Sarah Jane Morgan	Reporting Inspector
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Copies of the report

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

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh.</p>

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.