



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

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

Date of inspection: October 2011

by

Linda Vittle

for

**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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2011: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.

Context

Seren Fach is a private nursery situated adjacent to Ponthir Primary School in Torfaen. The nursery opened in 2005 and gained registered education provider status in November 2009. It is open for 52 weeks of the year and provides sessions during the morning and afternoon. It also provides wrap around care and transports children to and from local schools. Four family members are directors of Seren Fach. Day to day management is carried out by two sisters who have diplomas in Nursery Nursing and NVQ level 4 qualifications. Administration and maintenance tasks are addressed by the other directors.

The nursery is registered for ninety five children aged from 6 weeks to 7 years. There are 181 children on roll of which thirty are 3 year olds and six are 4 year olds. There are seven staff in the pre-school area and all have appropriate childcare qualifications and suitable experience working with young children. Children who attend come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and enter nursery with a wide range of abilities. All have English as their home language and none of the children speak Welsh at home. The nursery is inclusive and welcomes all children. Currently no children have been identified with additional learning needs (ALN). Support for ALN is given by the local authority (LA). The nursery has good links with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and Torfaen Local Education Authority.

The nursery is accommodated in a purpose built, architect designed building. The pre-school group has use of two rooms downstairs, a quiet room, a large conservatory area with direct access to the outdoor areas and an upstairs playroom. The well maintained outdoor space includes a paved section and extensive grassed area.

The nursery was last inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales in October 2010. This is the first Estyn inspection.

Summary

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

Current performance

The performance of the setting is good because:

- All children make good progress and achieve well
- A wide range of stimulating learning experiences is provided
- There is a strong emphasis on providing wellbeing
- The positive impact the high quality learning environment has on standards.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- The directors, managers and staff share a vision to sustain improvement and achieve high standards
- Over the last year the nursery has demonstrated an ability to identify areas for development and implement improvement.
- Self evaluation is impacting positively on the quality of provision.
- Staff continue to seek training opportunities in order to improve their knowledge of child development and improve their teaching.

Recommendations

- Improve standards in Welsh.
- Plan more opportunities to extend the learning of children with ALN including the more able.
- Improve the self evaluation process to include a clear focus on standards.
- Improve the transfer of assessment when children move to local schools.

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan showing how it will address the above recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
---	-------------

Standards: Good

Almost all children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their age and stage of development. They demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding across the areas of learning and enjoy the challenge of new and varied activities. All children apply their skills well in a wide range of activities. Most have excellent oracy skills. They listen attentively to stories and instructions and talk confidently about their experiences. They eagerly respond to questions and use a wide range of vocabulary and extended sentence structure to express thoughts and opinions. Children show interest and enthusiasm in stories and join in with songs. They handle books correctly and know that words and pictures carry meaning. They express opinions and many are able to recall the main points of the story. Children enjoy self registering when they arrive and nearly all can recognise their own name. All children experiment with mark making using a variety of instruments. When writing cards to their friends they effectively communicate meaning using pictures and symbols. Many children correctly write letters and around half write their names.

Children's progress in Welsh is adequate. A majority show increasing understanding of familiar phrases, they count to five and name basic colours. Their understanding of simple instructions and use of individual words in Welsh are at an early stage of development.

Wellbeing: Excellent

All children are highly motivated and enjoy their learning. They enthusiastically enter the nursery, engaging immediately with activities and are eager to talk to adults. They show high levels of self esteem and independence. They eagerly attempt new experiences and show pleasure with their achievement. They contribute positively to their learning through brainstorming and mind maps. Behaviour is excellent both within the setting and when visiting a local shop. Children are well mannered and demonstrate consideration for each other. They show sustained concentration when engaged in focused tasks and co-operate well during play activities.

All children are aware of the need for personal hygiene such as washing hands before meals and after toileting. They have very good table manners and show a maturity when using a knife and fork when eating. They understand that eating fruit and drinking milk and water helps to keep them healthy. They enjoy exercising their bodies when taking part in the soccer school activities.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The nursery provides all children with a wide range of interesting and stimulating experiences in all areas of learning. Planning is clearly based on Foundation Phase principles and incorporates activities linked to the areas of learning. Practitioners work well together to plan a wide range of activities that stimulate and engage children but do not always challenge the more able. Planned activities ensure high quality learning experiences are provided to ensure progression of knowledge, understanding and skills. There is a strong focus on promoting skills in literacy, communication, numeracy and wider skills. Organisation and planning for the development of information communication technology (ICT) skills are less effective. There is a good balance of child led and adult led experiences, both indoors and outdoors. The nursery makes very good use of the excellent outside area to encourage involvement and enjoyment and extends children's experiences through visits and visitors.

Provision for Welsh language development is adequate. While most practitioners use incidental Welsh in whole group activities, few use Welsh regularly with the children. There is good provision to promote the culture and traditions of Wales

The learning experiences foster positive relationships, nurture respect and tolerance and promote an awareness of other cultures, through celebrating festivals. The nursery provides appropriate opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and the impact we have on the world.

Teaching: Good

Most practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and use a wide range of approaches to engage and interest the children. They provide exciting, stimulating experiences across all areas of learning to motivate their young learners. They are good language models and use questioning effectively to encourage and extend language. Teaching is most effective when practitioners use opportunities to challenge children and develop their thinking skills. Practitioners promote independence and intervene appropriately to extend learning. They know their children well and are sensitive to their needs, spending time to support and encourage them in their learning.

Practitioners assess progress regularly. They are currently moving from descriptive to evaluative comments in their day to day observations and focused assessments. These comments are now being used effectively to evaluate individual progress and plan for children's next steps in learning. Practitioners meet together to discuss

children's progress and record observations and assessments in individual portfolios. Parents are kept well informed about their child progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Very effective arrangements exist to ensure children's health and well being and these contribute positively to children's general development. Managers and practitioners form strong relationships with parents/carers and are aware of and address any issues that might affect children's ability to settle and learn. Induction arrangements ensure children settle quickly into the setting. The nursery provides a safe, caring and happy environment for children to enjoy learning. Policies and procedures are in place to promote healthy living and well-being. Arrangements to ensure children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are good. They promote a sense of curiosity about the world, foster values such as honesty and fairness, encourage good behaviour and provide opportunities for children to engage with a range of community and cultural activities. The nursery has a local Healthy Eating Award and ensures children exercise daily. Well-being is developed through day-to-day activities and is closely monitored by the key-workers.

Children's learning needs are identified when they join the nursery and there are good arrangements for providing children with personal and professional support. The nursery liaises with outside agencies and the local authority to plan for children's individual needs. Although no children at present have been identified with ALN, policies and procedures ensure all will have full access to all activities. Arrangements for supporting the more able children are not yet in place.

Procedures to ensure the setting is safe and secure are good. Managers place great importance on providing a safe and secure environment for the children. Practitioners know how to respond if challenges arise in relation to poor behaviour, bullying and safeguarding. The nursery has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding and one of the managers is the named person responsible for child protection. All staff have engaged in first aid training and appropriate risk assessments are in place.

Learning environment: Excellent

The nursery provides an exciting, inclusive and welcoming environment for all children. The high quality, spacious, well maintained accommodation is bright and stimulating. Vibrant displays of children's work and photographic evidence of children engaged in all areas of learning provide stimulation for young children's learning. The outstanding quality and range of resources are well matched to the age and stage of development of the children. The nursery is generously staffed with committed,

experienced and well qualified staff. All adults value children as individuals and sensitively encourage them to respect one another. Managers place great emphasis on training and development resulting in staff having a good understanding of the Foundation Phase.

Excellent use is made of the outside area. The large glass doors in the enclosed conservatory area fold open to provide direct access to a large paved area leading to a well equipped grass area. This encourages children to move independently from one area to another. The impact the outside area has on learning is outstanding. It provides high quality activities for children to develop their skills in all areas, particularly in physical development and investigative skills. All children have equal access to all areas of provision and diversity is actively promoted through activities and resources.

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

Leadership: Good

The managers create a very positive ethos where staff and children feel valued and respected. They have a strong sense of purpose to promote and sustain improvement in the nursery and are committed to achieving high standards. The nursery has clear policies and aims which are implemented by all practitioners. All adults in the setting respond positively to change in order to ensure improvement. Clear school improvement targets are in place in the Development plan, however the focus is on provision rather than standards. The pre-school leader and all practitioners contribute to planning and assessment. Managers place great emphasis on training and development resulting in staff having a good understanding of the Foundation Phase. Effective staff appraisal, staff development and training results in increased confidence and raised standards.

Relationships with parents are good. Parents speak highly of all the adults and feel they are well informed about their child's progress and general well-being. The managers ensure legal requirements are addressed and development plans are effective.

Improving quality: Good

Managers know their setting well and have developed good procedures to evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement. They have made good use of Foundation Phase training and advice from the Local Authority (LA) Advisor to improve their self

evaluation process. Self evaluation is effective in prioritising areas for improvement, implementing strategies for improvement and involving all practitioners. The setting is in the early stages of monitoring its effectiveness in terms of improving standards. There is a clear commitment to valuing the views of parents, carers and children. The managers are reflective and practitioners open to new ideas.

Liaison with the L A is very effective in improving quality. The advisor and foundation phase support personnel visit regularly. They have worked very closely with all the adults in the setting to help promote “best practice” and develop effective procedures, such as planning and assessment to improve learning and teaching. Practitioners have valued the support and keenly respond to advice and guidance. Managers and practitioners attend a range of training enabling them to acquire new knowledge and skills. They piloted the LA assessment procedures and benefit from attending the local Nursery Association meetings.

Partnership working: Good

Partnership working contributes greatly to the children’s progress and well-being. Practitioners have very good relationships with parents and carers. The outcomes of the questionnaires indicate total satisfaction with the progress their children are making and the standards they achieve. Parents/carers have daily contact with their child’s key worker and the managers. Newsletters, information on the notice board and home comments keep them up to date with important information. Links with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership are beneficial to the work of the setting. The nursery has fostered close relationships with the local school. Weekly visits to the school for football sessions, attending important assemblies and concerts ensure that children are familiar with the school to which most transfer. Links with other schools in the area are enhanced by staff visits. The nursery provides wrap around care and takes and picks up children from the local schools. Strong relationships and trust have been established between the nursery and these schools. The nursery meets with the feeder school staff to discuss the children however, transfer records of children’s progress is not always passed on.

The setting enriches its provision through its use of visitors from the community, such as local fire officers. Visits to the local shop and library enhance children’s learning experiences.

Resource management: Good

There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced practitioners to meet the needs of the children. They are deployed effectively to make the best use of their expertise

and experience. The pre-school children also benefit from the support of a qualified teacher who is based in another area within the nursery. Good appraisal systems are in place to identify and address the development needs of adults in the setting. Accommodation is outstanding providing children with a clean, well maintained, stimulating environment for learning. Good use is made of the excellent outside area to provide a wide range of interesting activities to encourage children to investigate and develop their skills. The high standard of accommodation and resources impact positively on the good standards that children achieve. Managers have a very good understanding of their budget. They carefully analyse financial decisions and regularly review them to ensure they are cost effective. Educational priorities are taken into account when planning future budgets and spending positively impacts on improving standards and provision. The nursery achieves good standards and provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Nine parents/carers completed the questionnaires. All parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the nursery. Positive comments highlight the professional, nurturing environment which offers a perfect blend of care and education. They say staff are genuinely interested in the children and always happy to discuss activities and progress.

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Linda Vittle	Reporting Inspector

Copies of the report

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

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.