



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

**A report on**

**Derw Bach**

**Ysgol Calon y Dderwen Campus  
Park Street  
Newtown  
Powys  
SY16 1EH**

**Date of inspection: November 2023**

**by**

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)**

**and**

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

## About Derw Bach

Name of setting	Derw Bach
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Derw Bach Preschool
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Sarah Jane Rowlands
Person in charge	Sarah Rowlands
Number of places	32
Age range of children	3 – 5 Years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	17
Number of children who receive funding for early education	14
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 9:15 – 15:15. Term time only.
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of Welsh language or culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	Post inspection
Date of previous Estyn inspection	First Estyn Inspection
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	07/11/2023
Most children have English as their first language. There are a few children with English as an additional language.	

## Summary

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Learning</b> (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Care and development</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Teaching and assessment</b> (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

## Non-compliance

**No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.**

## Recommendations

- R1 Continue to implement the highly effective practice to support pupils' development, well-being and learning

## What happens next

CIW and Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a case study on its work in relation to their consistent approach to evaluation for improvement and how it involves all practitioners and how they support families in order to raise standards of learning and development, for dissemination on their websites.

## Main findings

### **Well-being: Excellent**

Children are very confident and have a strong voice. They know their ideas will be received in a meaningful way and their interests are always highly valued. Children have an exciting range of choices to make during their play. For example, they can move freely around the extensive activities indoors or outside. Children are motivated to make decisions and are actively involved in how they spend their time. They choose what fruits they would like for snack and confidently ask for more if they wish.

Children cope exceptionally well with separation from their parents. They form positive and warm relationships with the practitioners and make meaningful friendships, which has a very positive impact on their well-being. Children arrive with excitement and anticipation at what they will do that day. Those who need a little more support to settle are given the time and comfort they need. Parents can choose to stay and engage in their child's play, or practitioners encourage the children to take part in an activity they know they will enjoy to settle them successfully.

Children show maturity during their interactions. They co-operate and share exceptionally well for their age and stage of development. They learn empathy and understanding and happily invite others to join in their play experiences. For example, a child had built a structure using the large wooden blocks. Another child showed an interest in what they had built and started climbing on it. This play was accepted and resulted in them both taking turns to use the structure as a slide.

Children are fully aware and able to manage their behaviour and successfully follow the well-known and embedded routines.

Children are highly motivated as they play as they can follow their interests and have access to exciting opportunities. For example, a group of children are highly engaged and interested in the different patterns and colours they make with chalks as they draw on the wet floor outside. Children focus extremely well for an appropriate length of time for their age and stage of development and show delight in what they are doing.

Children have access to a vast number of inspiring activities and resources. They have regular and meaningful opportunities to be independent and take pride in doing things for themselves. For example, they gain a real sense of achievement as they enthusiastically help practitioners set up the snack.

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

Nearly all children including those with additional learning needs make very good progress from their starting point. All children engage fully in activities, which shows a genuine curiosity, for example as they become excited about measuring trees in the garden.

Nearly all children make excellent progress with communication skills. They make themselves understood and chat confidently with adults, developing a rich vocabulary. For example, they describe a character in a book as 'scared but trying to be brave'. Nearly all children are eager to look at books. They choose their favourite stories independently, turning the pages correctly and using voices for the different characters. They enjoy sharing stories with adults and confidently use puppets to act out the story being read to them. Many children are starting to recognise their own name.

Nearly all children develop a highly effective understanding of the Welsh language and carry out instructions correctly. For example, when playing in the shop they accurately collect fruit and vegetables requested. Many children are starting to use Welsh in their play, saying 'diolch' to each other when they share dough.

Nearly all children use the natural environment and equipment skilfully to develop physical skills. They demonstrate control as they run down a steep hill in the garden independently and show great skill when using a range of woodworking tools to connect two pieces of wood together. Many are beginning to use scissors effectively, snipping and cutting string and paper. Nearly all children can handle mark making tools purposefully, for example when they attempt to write their own name or make marks with chalk in the garden. They enjoy painting pictures and creating poppies with glue and collage materials. They enjoy listening to classical music, commenting on how it sounds. Children demonstrate a good understanding of ICT equipment and use it confidently to enhance their learning. For example, a group of children used the torches to closely look at the veins in the leaves, with one child commenting that the lines looked like a snake in the leaf.

Most children expertly solve problems such as how to use a water pump and ladle to move water from a bucket into a smaller tub. They demonstrate excellent mathematical skills, working out how to use string to measure and compare the height of different trees accurately. They work out that they can also measure how wide the tree is using the same string. Many children count 5 or 10 objects accurately and a few confidently count backwards from 5. Most use mathematical language in their play, asking how much items are in the shop and paying for their items using coins, which they count out.

### **Care and development: Excellent**

Practitioners are caring, supportive and committed. They have the children's needs and well-being at the heart of everything they do. They fully understand and implement positive and highly effective policies, procedures and routines to ensure that children are safe. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet the requirements and pose no cause for concern. Practitioners have current first aid certificates, which ensures that minor accidents can be dealt with appropriately. All records of accidents and incidents are recorded effectively and shared with parents.

Practitioners are extremely aware of the importance of promoting a healthy lifestyle and preventing the spread of germs. Healthy food choices are always provided, and practitioners work closely and effectively with parents to support them in understanding the importance of healthy food choices. Purposeful opportunities are always available for children to be active and get fresh air. Practitioners ensure that there is always access to one of the outdoor areas.

Practitioners are extremely good role models and are consistently responsive to children's needs, listening and respecting their views and ideas. They have comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the different age ranges in their care. Practitioners are consistent in their approach to managing behaviour and successfully respond to children's ages and understanding. For example, they use clear phrases and simple language, so that children understand what is being said to them. Practitioners create a fun-filled and exciting atmosphere that encourages children to join in with activities and enjoy social experiences. For example, practitioners sit with the children and have their lunch together. They effectively model appropriate behaviour and encourage interactions to help develop children's speech and language skills.

Practitioners have an extensive knowledge of child development, which they apply effectively to support children during their play and when planning the stimulating activities. All practitioners are involved in the constantly evolving planning process. They share ideas about activities and resources, which they may introduce and review regularly to ensure that children's development needs and interests are being met. For example, an activity may be planned but if children show an interest in something else then that takes precedence. Practitioners are dedicated to ensuring that they meet every child's needs, helping them to grow and develop. Tracking is used successfully so practitioners are fully aware of each child's progress and the next steps in their learning. Practitioners respond purposefully to every child's needs and adapt their approach successfully to support a child who may be identified as

having an additional learning need (ALN). They work collaboratively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all children receive the best care possible.

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

All practitioners have an excellent understanding of child development and how children learn. They know each child's strengths and areas for development extremely well and use that knowledge to provide highly successful opportunities for children to develop their skills across all developmental areas. Children with additional learning needs and their families receive excellent support through purposeful conversations and play plans which are reviewed regularly.

Practitioners are experts in recognising and responding to opportunities to encourage learning and knowing when to interact in play to move learning forward. For example, whilst playing alongside the children in the shop they show the children how to pay with money and explain how to count out the correct number of coins.

Practitioners make effective use of the indoor and outdoor environments to support learning. Children have uninterrupted access to the outdoor area throughout the session where they are sensitively encouraged to take risks and become independent learners. For example, they are encouraged to use the rope swing in the garden and practitioners celebrate with them when they achieve success. As a result, nearly all children maintain interest in their play for significant periods of time.

Practitioners support children's language development in English and Welsh skilfully by extending their vocabulary and asking questions that encourage problem solving. They encourage children to respond and listen and value all attempts at communication. Makaton signing is used purposefully with children who have speech and language difficulties.

Practitioners plan high quality learning experiences that promote children's moral, spiritual and cultural development in a purposeful way. Children learn about their immediate locality and Welsh heritage by talking about local landmarks such as Powys Castle and celebrating St Dwynwen's Day. They take time to learn about the child's own culture. For example, a parent visited the setting to share food from another culture during Diwali. They foster a sense of awe and wonder when they talk about the way dripping water feels when it lands on a child.

All practitioners encourage children to share and take turns through sensitive interventions, that achieve success. They are encouraged to be kind using the 'Kindness tree' where acts of kindness are celebrated by adding a button to the tree.

The setting has high quality assessment procedures. Practitioners observe and identify children's strengths and areas for development during their first few weeks at the setting. They record valuable observations to show children's progress, which are shared with parents through an informal report, which offers ideas for things to do to help their child at home. Assessments are highly effective in informing future experiences and in supporting the child to take their next steps in learning.

### **Environment: Excellent**

The environment provides an exciting and innovative space for children to play and learn. The risk assessments in place are implemented effectively and are purposeful. They evidence how risks are managed and identify the value and benefits of allowing children to take risks in a secure environment. For example, children are able to access items such as hammers and nails independently but items such as saws are only available under practitioner supervision. Effective and consistent cleaning routines are completed to ensure that the environment is suitable for children.

The environment is arranged in a purposeful way and all areas are inviting and utilised well. It creates a very warm and supportive atmosphere where children, parents and visitors are welcomed and feel relaxed and have a sense of belonging. The environment promotes exploration and independence. It encourages children to engage in challenges and consistently stimulates their curiosity and interests. For example, different areas of the provision are used imaginatively to provide areas for creative development and craft activities such as painting and play dough. Practitioners display children's work immediately they have finished, and this displaying of children's work instantly gives children a real sense of pride and achievement. The outdoor areas are very well arranged and equipped, providing extensive opportunities for children to develop a range of skills, learning about the world around them. Children thrive on being outside and enjoy the experiences available to them.

The environment is equipped with an immense variety of stimulating resources and areas of learning. The areas are very well resourced and always include items relating to the real world. For example, ladders outside enable children to develop their physical and problem solving skills when using them creatively. There are some innovative resources for children to access, including an area with broken toy cars, switches and hinges. This stimulates children's curiosity as they try and put the cars back together and investigate how things work. Leaders and practitioners ensure that children have lots of opportunities to access meaningful natural materials that successfully support their play and learning experiences, for example paints, craft materials and real food.

### **Leadership and management: Excellent**

Leaders provide inspirational leadership and have high aspirations for both practitioners and children. They provide a clear, purposeful vision for the setting, based on providing a safe nurturing environment for children. Their inspirational approach successfully creates a warm ethos within which children can thrive and develop. Well-being is at the heart of everything that happens at the setting. The statement of purpose provides an accurate picture of the setting and there is a range of useful and detailed policies, procedures and risk assessments, which are highly effective.

The setting has well-established and safe processes for recruitment. Excellent use is made of well qualified practitioners, who are highly effective in supporting children's well-being, learning and play. Practitioners are made to feel valued through an



extensive appraisal process, which ensures that they are provided with high quality training and support.

Leaders have established highly effective and consistent self-evaluation processes. Excellent teamwork results in improvements to provision being implemented quickly. Improvements always concentrate on developing the provision in order to encourage the children's learning and support their well-being. Practitioners understand the importance of maintaining a close supportive relationship with families. For example, the setting provides a detailed information pack for parents, which includes tips on how simple yoga can help children to relax as well as ideas about how to support their child's learning.

Leaders and practitioners have excellent links with parents and carers, and they support them exceptionally well. There is regular communication via daily chats, social media, and an app. Informal reports on progress help parents to understand how to help their child at home. Leaders make highly effective use of grant funding when supporting children and families, for example by offering lunchboxes, a maths resource and books for each child.

There are highly effective procedures in place for the children's transitions, both as they begin at the setting, and as they move on to the next period of learning at school. Parents are welcomed into the setting during the settling in period and excellent links with local settings and schools result in a smooth transition onwards. For example, practitioners arrange to meet with another local nursery so that children moving to the same school can play together.

Excellent links with the community allow children to develop a sense of belonging in their area. Children have visited the gallery to look at artwork by local artists and they contributed to 'Tidy Newtown week' by collecting crisp packets to be made into blankets for the homeless.

The setting has a highly effective relationship with the local authority advisory teacher and Powys additional learning needs team, who offer support when required. All support and advice is highly valued and acted upon immediately, contributing to the overall success of the setting.

## Copies of the report

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

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
<b>Poor</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required

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Publication date: 12/01/2024