

A report on

St Aubins Nursery

**503 Cowbridge Road East
Canton
Cardiff
CF5 1BB**

Date of inspection: March 2011

by

Mr Eifion R Morgan

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

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Context

St Aubins Nursery occupies the ground floor of two end of terrace houses in Canton. This is an established residential area of Cardiff with some commercial properties along the main arterial road. The setting is a day care nursery for children from aged 2 until they move on to the next stage of education in September following their fourth birthday. The Nursery is open for 50 weeks of the year from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Currently there are 40 children on the register but no more than 25 attend on any one session. In all, 20 children are funded and the nursery is registered to accommodate a maximum of 27 children.

The accommodation has been recently decorated and provides children with an attractive learning environment including access to the safe outside area. The nursery is well resourced with specific activity areas located in four rooms. Activity areas are designed to meet the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the outside area provides children with additional resources and facilities for play and other activities. Whilst storage space is limited, resources are easily accessible to children and this is a positive feature in as much as it encourages children to become independent.

Access to the nursery is from a side street which enables parents and carers to park safely whilst bringing their children to the nursery. The outside door is permanently locked and all children are individually met by members of the nursery staff. Parents/carers bring their children into the nursery and this allows them to see their children settled into their activities.

The small hallway and immediate access provides for notices and information to be displayed. The nursery is well provided with a kitchen for food preparation (which is out of bounds to the children). Appropriately sized toilets and hand washing facilities are easily accessible to the children. There are sufficient tables and chairs of the appropriate size.

The nursery is well able to accept children with additional learning needs (ALN). Whilst staff are vigilant in evaluating children's ability and progress, there is currently no child identified with such needs.

At present very few children come from homes where the predominant language spoken is Welsh, although about half the children are from homes where one parent is Welsh speaking. About a third come from homes where neither parent is Welsh speaking. A few children come from homes where the language of home is Spanish, French or Dutch, but all children are English speaking.

Children attending the nursery come from the locality but some from further afield so as to benefit from Welsh language education. The locality is not socio-economically disadvantaged nor particularly advantageous and a few children from different ethnic backgrounds attend from time to time. The nursery was established as a Welsh language setting in September 2010 in response to parental needs.

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The setting was inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in March 2010. There were no important recommendations and the minor recommendations have been undertaken. The nursery has not previously been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

Good features

- * All children progress and achieve well in all areas of learning.
- * All children's progress and competence in the Welsh language is very good.
- * All children enjoy learning and have very good attitudes to learning.
- * All children behave responsibly and are developing their independence very well.
- * Learning experiences are well planned, all children are well supported and benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum.
- * Teaching is effective and well directed towards the Foundation Phase desirable outcomes.
- * The "key worker" arrangement ensures that tasks are well directed at children's needs.
- * Adults are good role models and as fluent Welsh speakers have a positive impact on children's learning of the language.
- * The nursery is very well led and managed. Staff work together effectively and all contribute substantially to the success of the setting.

Prospects for improvement

- * The leadership has provided a clear direction for the work of the setting.
- * Recent innovations, changes and development show the nursery has a track record of improvement for the benefit of the children.
- * The leadership is self-evaluative and has clear targets for improvement.
- * All staff have a positive attitude to change and are actively involved in staff development and training.
- * The leadership and staff are receptive to new initiatives and have the procedures in place to incorporate new ideas into the working of the nursery.

Recommendations

1. Extend the well developed system of assessment and recording to ensure that individual children are progressing across all areas of the curriculum.
2. Continue to develop the outside area so as to extend children's experiences.*
3. Where possible, develop closer links with the primary schools so as to improve children's transfer arrangements.*

* These recommendations are included in the nursery's plans for development.

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

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

All children achieve good standards of achievement and make good and sometimes very good progress in all areas of learning.

All children make very good progress in developing their literacy skills in the Welsh language. Whilst a few children are reluctant to use the language, virtually all children have a good understanding of the language.

All children have well developed listening skills they enjoy and are eager to contribute to stories read to them. They answer questions enthusiastically and this illustrates clearly their developing understanding of the language. Most children contribute sensibly to group discussion and know the date, month and year. During the inspection many children also knew the significance of 1st March as St. David's Day. Another notable feature of their developing competence is that they responded in Welsh with very little prompting.

Many children choose to look at books independently. They hold books appropriately and study pictures and print. They recognise the main characters in a story.

Most children are developing their writing skills and another notable and good feature of their writing is that they understand the purpose of writing through a practical task. Children have written to children in another nursery, addressed their letters and posted them in their local Post Office. This illustrates well to them the purpose of their writing.

A few children are independently beginning to form recognisable letters of the alphabet.

All children are developing their numeracy skills very well through the practical use of number, using mathematical language such as “smaller than/larger than” and through using two and three dimensional shapes. All children can group objects by colour or shape.

All children have regular opportunities to use electronic equipment. They use digital cameras for recording and are developing their competence in the use of computers, such as to control their cursor using the computer mouse.

All children enjoy participating in music making. They have a good repertoire of Welsh songs and nursery rhymes which they sing enthusiastically.

All children are fully engaged and concentrate and persevere for significant periods of time. They are well able to make decisions and to work independently. The wide range of activities available to them successfully develops their creative skills and the knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

Wellbeing: Good

All children, relative to their age, have an appropriate understanding of how they can keep healthy. They know, for example, when they need to wash their hands and do so with little prompting. Most children know that a healthy diet incorporates fruit and vegetables.

All children’s attitude to learning is very good. They show interest in their work and in activities planned for them. All children sustain concentration for significant periods of time and are capable of independent decision making

All children relate very well to each other, to adults and visitors. They are courteous and considerate and willing to share resources.

All children take a full part in the life and activities of the nursery, such as their involvement in planning their curriculum. They have very worthwhile opportunities to suggest their own ideas and these are, when possible, incorporated into children’s tasks and activities. This is a very good example of how children can make decisions and be actively involved in their own learning.

Community links also alerts children to those people, such as fire-fighters, police and dentists who look after them.

Overall, all children display a sense of belonging, where they are happy and well cared for and free from any form of harassment.

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

Time is set aside when all staff meet to plan the curriculum and provides the children with innovating and challenging activities. Children are also involved in the planning process providing ideas as to what might be included. This is very good practice and ensures that the curriculum is flexible and relates to children's interests.

The curriculum is well designed to meet the philosophy of the Foundation Phase curriculum and to achieve the identified outcomes of children's learning. Overall, the curriculum successfully builds on children's previous knowledge and experiences and incorporates good opportunities for skill development across the curriculum.

There are very good and worthwhile opportunities incorporated into the day-to-day working of the nursery for children to develop their self-confidence and to become independent learners. Whilst specific activities are planned children have freedom to select their own tasks and activities.

Overall, all children respect each other, form good relationships with each other and with adults and are tolerant of each other.

Good and very good opportunities are provided for children to develop their basic and key skills of literacy, numeracy, understanding of the world, and physical and creative skills. A notable and very good aspect of children's learning experiences is the provision made for children to acquire the Welsh language. Welsh is the natural language of the setting and the natural language of communication between adults and children. All children, whatever their background, display enjoyment in speaking the language. All children enjoy looking at Welsh story books and a diary of activities. Children have ample opportunities to develop their thinking skills through activities such as in numeracy.

The traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales are given due emphasis as was the celebration of St. David's Day during the inspection. Good opportunities are also provided for children to acquire knowledge and understanding of other cultures and traditions, such as during their study of the Chinese New Year and other customs such as Divali. Such activities help children to develop an understanding of the wider world.

All children have opportunities to plant seeds and look after plants and so begin their understanding of plant growth and sustainability.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching shows that staff have a good working knowledge of child development and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase for children's learning. Staff have high expectations of the children and these expectations are realised in practice.

Staff's active role in planning the curriculum ensures that all know their roles well and best use is made of their expertise. The "key worker" system means that individual staff have a detailed knowledge of a small number of children and as such are well aware of their achievements and progress. It also means that tasks and activities can be well focused on their particular stage of development and consequently address the needs of both able and talented children and those with additional learning needs (ALN). This is good practice.

There is a good balance between adult directed and child selected activities, both indoors and out of doors. Children are free to select from either independent or adult led activities

Staff are good language models and use questioning well to develop children's thinking and communication skills. Practitioners provide a stimulating and challenging environment that successfully ensures children's involvement and enjoyment.

Assessment procedures and recording children's achievements are done efficiently. There are comprehensive records of children's achievements and these are made available to parents. Staff know their children well and are able to plan the next steps in their learning. However, there are no records to ensure that each individual child has undertaken all important learning objectives at some time during the week.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The nursery's provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing is good.

All children enjoy their time at the nursery. They arrive showing a sense of anticipation and are keen to get involved. They partake enthusiastically in activities set out for them.

The broad curriculum which consists of regular visits to the local park and visits further afield in Cardiff develops and extends children's experiences and their sense of curiosity. Follow-up work in their classrooms shows the wide range of experiences that arise from such visits and children's sense of wonder. Visits to the locality and visitors to the nursery develop children's knowledge and understanding of their own community.

The nursery's provision for ensuring children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Children experience a well structured curriculum designed to extend their sense of curiosity about the world they live in. The nursery is a cohesive unit where children value each other and they, in turn, are valued by the staff. Values, such as honesty, fairness, respect and an understanding of what is right and wrong, are fostered through the day-to-day activities and accepted without question. Children know and fully accept the social norms of living together, sharing and accepting the views of others and being members of a community. Individual children, in turn, are given specific responsibilities and this develops their self-esteem.

Children's cultural development incorporates Welsh customs and traditions and is extended to other cultures when children celebrate the Chinese New Year and Divali.

The nursery staff are vigilant in identifying children requiring specialist help. In the past professional help and guidance has been used. The nursery has also been used by the Social Services to support children in care. The nursery has appropriate policies in place for safeguarding children. Procedures in place follow the "All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008)" and staff have received regular training. Risk assessment is routinely undertaken.

The nursery is safe and secure. The entrance door is locked and only opened by a member of staff, consequently no one can enter or child leave unaccompanied. Good care is taken when children are being collected to ensure they are in the care of their parents or of a known carer.

Regular reviews of children's progress ensure that any child suspected of requiring additional help is noted and progress monitored closely. The nursery leader is the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and is familiar with the necessary procedures for supporting such a child. Where necessary external agencies are involved and one-to-one support provided if beneficial for the child. At present no child has additional learning needs.

Learning environment: Good

The nursery, through its day-to-day activities and the approach adopted by the staff promotes an outstanding ethos. Staff know their children well and their individuality recognised. All children have equal access to a high quality curriculum enhanced by visits to the locality and further afield.

The homely atmosphere and the friendship provided by the staff ensures that a tolerant attitude pervades the setting. The nursery employs positive behaviour strategies that have successfully eliminated any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. All children enjoy equality of opportunity.

The nursery staff are well qualified and experienced and enjoys a favourable child-adult ratio. Staff expertise is well used both in planning and in supervising activities. The nursery is well resourced to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the needs of the children. Whilst storage space is limited, resources are accessible to children and this promotes children's sense of independence and responsibility.

The local environment is well used on a regular basis and contributes well to children's understanding of the world around them. The children also benefit from immediate access to the outside – an area which is adequately resourced and being developed.

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

Leadership: Good

Staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team, sharing values, aims and objectives. The leader involves all staff in planning and this ensures the best use of their expertise. The leader is actively involved giving clear directions and a sense of purpose to the work of the nursery. There is a positive ethos and a commitment to provide the best possible experiences for the children.

The leadership and all staff are well focused on children's needs and the nursery successfully achieves this aim in practice. Staff have received relevant and appropriate training and this has impacted well on the quality of provision provided. Effective links with the parents are in place. Parents are kept well informed of their children's achievement and progress and this helps them to support their children's learning.

There is a well established management structure in place with clear demarcation of duties. The management has taken good account of relevant legislation and guidance and fully meet legal requirements.

The nursery has taken good account of National priorities, including implementing the Foundation Phase Curriculum. It has also made good use of opportunities to visit other nurseries within the local authority.

Improving quality: Good

The nursery is self-evaluative and has recently identified areas for improvement and implemented them for the benefit of the children. This has included useful additions to the outside area, such as a shelter at the side of the building and internal changes that broaden children's experiences, such as the "builders room" and to develop children independence, such as the self-registration pockets.

Areas for improvement have also been identified and prioritised, including further development of the outside area focused on improved provision. Future plans also focus on the development of the Welsh language, including involving the parents. The nursery also plans better links with the feeder primary schools.

Staff have made good use of training opportunities and professional learning experiences are impacting well on children's wellbeing. Staff have also visited other nursery schools within the local authority and this has proved beneficial.

Partnership working: Good

Parents, in the questionnaire replies and in discussion expressed their total satisfaction with the nursery and are highly appreciative of the standards of care and the quality of education available. They appreciate the open door policy and the opportunities they have to meet staff on a daily basis.

By the time children leave the nursery parents felt they were well prepared for the next stage in their education. Links with the feeder primary schools, however, are underdeveloped.

The nursery benefits from the support provided by the local authority staff. Their advice and suggestions have helped in developing the nursery and has contributed to the current high standards of provision.

Resource management: Good

Staff work together very effectively. Planning is done collaboratively and this has resulted in individual expertise being well used.

The nursery is well resourced and resources are well used to further the aims of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Resources are also accessible to the children and this encourages independence and has a positive impact on their learning.

The nursery provides very good outdoor experiences for the children through regular (usually weekly) visits to the local park, visits to the shops in the immediate neighbourhood and occasional visits further afield.

The nursery has identified areas for development including resources that need to be acquired.

Overall, the nursery provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Two questionnaires were returned. Discussion with a sample of parents during the inspection indicated their strong support for the setting. Parents and carers were particularly pleased with the care provided by the nursery and the progress their children were making, particularly their competence in the Welsh language.

Response to discussions with children

All children are happy in the nursery. Their enthusiasm is evident when they arrive and meet with their peers. They display a high degree of self-confidence from knowing that they are well supported and have interesting and challenging tasks.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R 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.uk)

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