



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

A report on

**Abacus Day Nursery
Newmarket House
26 Lion St
Abergavenny
NP7 5NT**

Date of inspection: December 2018

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

Abacus Day Nursery is a privately-owned English-medium nursery in Abergavenny, in Monmouthshire local authority. The setting is registered for 32 children between the ages of birth and eight years. It offers early education sessions from Monday to Friday from 9 am until 11.30 am during school term time between Sept and July. There is currently one child in receipt of funded early education.

At the time of the inspection the setting had identifies a very few children as having additional learning needs. There are very few children from ethnic minority backgrounds and no children have English as an additional language. A few children are bilingual and speak both Welsh and English at home.

There are five members of staff including the management team. Two members of staff work with the three and four-year-old children. The proprietor is also the manager and has been in post since April 2009.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in August 2018 and Estyn last inspected it in November 2013.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is adequate because:

- Practitioners provide a suitable range of learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage nearly all children successfully
- Nearly all practitioners have an effective understanding of foundation phase practice
- A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral and cultural development well
- Practitioners make suitable use of the space indoors, which is appropriately welcoming

However:

- Opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills independently across the curriculum are limited
- Provision for developing children's Welsh language is limited
- The setting's accommodation and resources are not consistently well maintained

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- The manager works effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children
- The setting's systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are appropriate
- The setting has an effective range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children
- The setting makes appropriate use of staffing and resources to support children's learning suitably

However:

- Leaders do not adapt roles and responsibilities in response to staffing changes effectively enough
- The manager and practitioners are unclear about priority areas for improvement
- Practitioners receive limited opportunities for professional development

Recommendations

- R1 Provide child-led play experiences that enable children to apply and develop their skills across the curriculum independently
- R2 Improve provision for Welsh language development to ensure that children make good progress in this area
- R3 Ensure that self-evaluation processes lead to regular improvements in standards for children
- R4 Provide consistent performance review and professional development opportunities that support practitioners to improve their practice effectively

What happens next?

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

Main findings

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| Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? | n/a |
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Standards: n/a

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill's development, Welsh language and well-being. This is because the number of relevant children at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing: n/a

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill's development, Welsh language and well-being. This is because the number of relevant children at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

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

Practitioners provide a suitable range of learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage nearly all children successfully. They focus well on developing children's numeracy and physical skills. However, opportunities for children to develop and apply their skills independently across the curriculum are limited.

Practitioners use visitors appropriately to enhance the curriculum. For example, a specialist practitioner supports children's music and movement skills on a regular basis. Children also have regular opportunities to go on visits to enrich their learning, such as to a local supermarket and nearby castle.

The indoor environment provides useful opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, such as using scissors, felt pens and tweezers. The outdoor area provides beneficial opportunities for running, climbing and balancing, which children access confidently. Practitioners enhance provision through regular planned activities, such as musical movement sessions, successfully. This results in most children making good progress in developing their physical skills.

Provision for developing thinking skills is effective. For example, children explore and predict what might happen as they add water to 'magic jelly'. However, opportunities for children to develop their problem-solving skills are limited overall.

Nearly all practitioners provide an effective range of opportunities for children to develop their numeracy skills. They make good use of available resources, such as balance scales, shape buttons and an abacus, to provide children with appropriate experiences that develop mathematical concepts effectively. Planned activities, such as visiting the supermarket, support children's understanding of weight, number and money successfully.

The setting provides a range of opportunities for children to develop their communication skills appropriately. Nearly all practitioners engage children in conversation successfully and encourage children's speaking and listening skills well. For example, children chat happily about 'apple crumble and custard' being their favourite desert. Practitioners share stories with children appropriately, although the story area is not sufficiently inviting and does not encourage children to access books independently.

The setting provides appropriate opportunities for children to develop their mark making skills. However, the work area is very small and dominated by a worksheet activity. This results in very few children taking part in mark-making activities independently. Practitioners provide a few opportunities for children to write for a purpose. For example, they 'mark' which fruit they would like for snack.

Practitioners make good use of a suitable range of ICT equipment, such as remote-controlled cars, a programmable toy and a personal computer to develop children's ICT skills effectively. They encourage children to think about how ICT can be used in real-life situations. For example, on a visit to a local supermarket, they showed the children how a scanner can be used to find out the price of items.

Provision for developing children's Welsh language is limited. Practitioners model a few simple Welsh words and phrases such as for colours and to say 'thank you' appropriately. However, they do not use Welsh systematically throughout the session. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage, for example when making models of daffodils as part of their St David's Day celebrations.

Teaching: Good

Nearly all practitioners have an effective understanding of foundation phase practice. They use a range of strategies well to encourage and to motivate children to learn. Practitioners balance focused tasks with children's free play appropriately. As a result, most children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning.

Nearly all practitioners explain things clearly, model activities and question children effectively. For example, practitioners ask children to predict how many eggs are in the box and model cracking an egg before allowing the children to do it themselves when making biscuits. They build suitably on children's interests through careful observations and consult them about their preferences. For example, they plan a topic on bears after children show an interest in a story about a family of bears.

The setting has effective assessment procedures. Practitioners observe children and identify what they can already do during their first few weeks in the setting. At regular intervals, they update these records to show children's progress over time. They make appropriate use of this information when designing new activities.

Nearly all practitioners make effective use of praise to encourage and support children. This has a positive impact on children's confidence and levels of engagement. Nearly all practitioners have clear expectations and explain rules to children appropriately. For example, they explain why we should sit down when using scissors. This ensures a team approach and consistency for children.

Practitioners keep parents and carers informed about what their children are learning and how well they are progressing effectively. For example, they invite parents into the setting to discuss their children's learning and provide regular informal updates.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has successful arrangements to support children's healthy eating and drinking. Practitioners provide children with nutritious food options through snack time and planned activities. For example, they encourage children to try new foods such as pomegranate and melon. Practitioners provide valuable planned opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise. This develops children's co-ordination successfully and encourages them to adopt a healthy life-style.

Practitioners are good role models and support children to develop respect for others and a sense of right and wrong successfully. They encourage children to share equipment and to take care of resources effectively. As a result, children learn to co-operate with each other well. For example, they show a friend how to operate a remote-controlled car. Practitioners encourage children to use recycled materials in their play and provide worthwhile opportunities for children to learn about recycling plastic, paper and cardboard.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral and cultural development well. Practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children through for example, growing sunflowers and strawberries in the outdoor area. They also encourage children to observe 'Sticky' the pet stick insect, her friends and their babies. Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to consider the feelings of others. These include taking an unwanted toy to the charity shop so that another child can play with it. Children also rescued a baby hedgehog that 'couldn't find it's mummy'. This supports children's moral development successfully.

There are beneficial processes to support children with additional learning needs. The setting has effective links with a range of support agencies to ensure that they meet children's individual needs effectively.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting is welcoming, and practitioners are friendly and approachable. It is an inclusive community where all practitioners encourage children to take part and provide them with equal access to all areas of the setting's provision. Practitioners lead by example in encouraging children to show tolerance towards one another and respect for the setting's equipment. For example, they explain why children need to be careful with a remote-controlled car. As a result, nearly all children play and learn happily.

The setting is situated within a converted residential property. It benefits from a large outdoor area which supports children's physical development well. However, a few areas are not well-maintained, such as the mud kitchen where many resources are worn and rusty. Practitioners make appropriate use of the space indoors, which is

sufficiently engaging. The majority of furniture and resources are of good quality and suitable. However, a minority of resources are inappropriate or of poor quality, such as the many printed and laminated activities. Designated learning areas make suitable use of the available space and a majority of resources are easily accessible for children. However, in a few areas, resources are stored in boxes with no labels, which makes it difficult for children to access them.

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

The manager works effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children. She manages practitioners and children efficiently to ensure that the setting runs smoothly, following established routines. The manager has a clear vision to provide a stimulating and inviting environment where all children and staff can be the best that they can be.

Nearly all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and have clear job descriptions that reflect their current role. However, the manager does not ensure that all important aspects of the settings work are led effectively. This has resulted in a decline in the quality of a few areas, such as self-evaluation processes. The setting places an appropriate focus on national priorities, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and developing children's numeracy and ICT skills.

The setting has a system for managing the performance of staff and nearly all practitioners have appropriate opportunities to reflect on the quality of their work. However, these processes are not rigorous enough and do not set targets for improving performance.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting's systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are appropriate and nearly all practitioners are committed to improving quality. They focus well on outcomes for children and identify the setting's strengths suitably.

The setting identifies priority areas for improvement which reflect the needs of the setting appropriately. For example, they identify the need to improve provision for Welsh language development successfully. However, the manager does not monitor or evaluate the setting's progress towards meeting identified targets effectively. The manager and practitioners are unclear of the priority areas for improvement which has resulted in very little progress being made towards the setting's current targets.

Nearly all practitioners are eager to take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development. They respond appropriately to advice from external agencies and strive to make improvements. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of the provision in a few areas, for example the quality of observations.

The setting has made suitable progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has an effective range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Parents receive a useful range of information through email, newsletters, social media and day-to-day contact with practitioners. Staff invite parents to join celebrations and events such as Halloween and Christmas parties. This helps parents keep informed about daily activities and feel comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns.

The setting shares and celebrates children's achievements with parents well during regular parents' meetings and ongoing updates. The manager has developed beneficial sets of resources for parents to take home and share with their children. These include story sacks, cooking activities and language games. This helps parents to be more involved in their child's learning.

There are effective arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to school. For example, the manager ensures a flexible approach to meeting individual children's needs as they settle in. Before they move on to school, she invites reception teachers from feeder primary schools to the setting to meet the children and share relevant information. However, links with the schools are generally underdeveloped.

Practitioners make effective use of links with the community to enhance the curriculum. For example, they regularly visit the local supermarket, castle and park. The setting has useful links with the local authority and receives regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. This has led to recent improvements in the use of observations of children to inform assessments.

Resource management: Adequate

The setting makes appropriate use of staffing and resources to support children's learning suitably. The manager makes sure that the setting has enough well qualified practitioners to support the efficient delivery of the foundation phase curriculum. Resources are sufficient, and the majority are of good quality and condition, for example the wide range of equipment to support children's physical development. However, a minority of resources are inappropriate or poorly maintained and leaders do not plan effectively to resource priority areas for improvement.

The setting strives to respond to staff training needs identified through the performance review process. However, training places have been difficult to access. This has resulted in practitioners receiving limited opportunities for professional development.

In view of the appropriate quality of provision, the suitable impact of improvement planning and the effective teaching, the setting provides adequate value for money.

Glossary of terms

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| 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 |
| CIW | <p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 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> |

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| 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 |