



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

A report on

**First Steps Day Nursery
The Croft
Alltami Road
Buckley
Flintshire
CH7 3PG**

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About First Steps Day Nursery

Name of setting	First Steps Day Nursery
Category of care provided	Full Day Care and Wrap Around Care
Registered person(s)	Nanda Merton
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Jeanny Reynard
Person in charge	Jennifer Gardener Sharon Cappiello
Number of places	51
Age range of children	Birth to 12 years
Number of children funded for up to two terms	11
Number of children funded for up to five terms	0
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 7.30 am – 6.00pm
Flying Start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	No
Date of previous CIW inspection	19/07/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection	06/03/2012
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	05/03/2019
Additional information	<p>The is a privately run day care setting offering wrap around care and registered for children up to 12 years of age. The setting operates from The Croft in Flintshire local authority. All children speak English as a first language and no children come from homes were Welsh is spoken.</p>

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Wellbeing	Good
Learning (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	Adequate
Care and development	Good
Teaching and assessment (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	Adequate
Environment	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities to develop children's numeracy, ICT and Welsh skills
- R2 Ensure that planning develops children's skills systematically across all areas of learning and challenges children in line with their abilities
- R3 Improve how assessments are recorded and used across the setting to ensure that all children make good progress from their individual starting points
- R4 Develop and embed a systematic self-evaluation process to ensure that action planning is focused on key priorities and results in sustained improvement

What happens next

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

Main findings

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children make informed choices as they move confidently and independently from one play area to the next, for example choosing to play inside rather than outdoors or in the messy play area or with construction toys. They choose how they are greeted by staff each morning and move freely between activities throughout the day choosing from a wide range of resources available to them. Children share ideas confidently and express themselves appropriately during story times. For example, they make animal noises in response to a story and share their experiences of different animals.

Nearly all children feel safe in the setting. They have begun to form suitable bonds of affection with practitioners. Nearly all children cope well with separation from their parents and settle quickly on arrival into the setting. They seek out staff when they are hurt or feeling upset. For example, younger children and babies approach practitioners for cuddles when they need reassurance or comfort. Older children are relaxed and comfortable in the company of practitioners and know their communication is valued. For example, they chat to practitioners during snack and lunch times about their home lives and forthcoming events, smiling and expressing happiness when practitioners value what they have to say. Children enjoy sharing and celebrating their achievements with adults and other children.

Nearly all children behave well and most co-operate successfully with practitioners, helping with tasks happily. Nearly all children are learning to take turns and share resources well and older children have begun to form beneficial friendships with their peers. For example, during free play sessions younger children play happily alongside each other. Older children are eager to involve their friends in their imaginative play and talk to each other about what they will do next.

Nearly all children are interested in the wide variety of play experiences on offer. They are naturally curious about the environment and enjoy exploring natural materials and sensory activities. For example, younger children enjoy exploring different textures such as cooked pasta while older children enjoy playing imaginatively making pancakes in the outdoor mud kitchen. Most children sustain interest in activities for extended periods of time and concentrate well when engaged in tasks.

Nearly all children are developing independent skills well. Babies and younger children make choices about how to spend their time and practise simple self-help skills, such as self-feeding and potty training with a few prompts and adult support. Most older children wash their hands and dress themselves either independently or with minimal support from adults. Most children enjoy opportunities to do things for themselves during snack time, such as pouring drinks and distributing fruit using tongs.

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

During their time at the setting, most children make suitable progress from their individual starting points. They develop new skills appropriately as they try out new experiences and recall past learning competently. However, a minority of children, particularly the most able, do not make enough progress in line with their stage of development.

Most children's literacy skills are developing effectively. Nearly all children are developing good communication skills and most speak clearly. Many are beginning to express preferences using sentences that are more complex. A few children enjoy talking at length about things that interest them, for example, when sharing a familiar story. Most children listen well to adults and other children. They respond suitably to questions in a variety of contexts. Most children join in appropriately with familiar Welsh and English songs.

Nearly all children treat books with respect and show an enjoyment in reading. They make sure that the books are the right way up and turn the pages independently. Most use a range of writing instruments with increasing confidence and many are beginning to use a recognisable grip when making marks.

Overall, children's numeracy skills are less well developed. Most children join in with familiar counting songs and almost half can touch count up to four with support. Most children develop a suitable awareness of simple shapes and are beginning to use mathematical language during their play when supported, for example making longer and shorter necklaces.

A few children use information and communication technology (ICT) appropriately with support, for example using an electronic tablet with increasing control to complete a puzzle. Most children, with support, use a camera to take photographs of their work. However, overall children do not develop ICT skills well enough.

Nearly all children enjoy physical activities and many are developing good skills when using large outdoor equipment. Most children can run, hop, jump, and land on two feet with increasing confidence. Most children use small instruments, such as scissors, trowels and rolling pins skilfully in a range of contexts.

Most children show well developed personal, social and emotional skills in most situations. They show an age appropriate respect for other children and adults in nearly all situations. They are developing a good understanding of the need to share and take turns. Many children work together well and show appropriate levels of kindness and consideration towards each other.

Many children show good levels of perseverance and problem solving skills when engaged in activities, such as solving jigsaw puzzles and filling watering cans.

Nearly all children take pride in their work and develop their creative skills well. For example, they express themselves well using dance, role play and music when joining in with visiting dance and acting companies.

Most children develop appropriate Welsh language skills. With support, children use simple words such as 'bore da' and 'diolch' in daily routines.

Care and development: Good

Nearly all practitioners practise good hygiene procedures consistently. They keep surfaces clean, encourage hand washing and follow effective procedures to ensure the risk of cross contamination is minimised. For example, nappy changing procedures are in line with current best practice and children have their own individual sheets and blankets for sleeping in. Nearly all practitioners promote healthy lifestyles by providing ample opportunities for children to take part in physical activities. For example, nearly all children, including babies, have opportunities to play outside daily and participate in regular dance sessions. Practitioners provide healthy meals, snacks and fresh water to children throughout the day, promoting good nutrition and hydration.

Nearly all practitioners have received paediatric first aid training, ensuring they are aware of how to treat minor injuries or deal with emergencies. Practitioners record accidents or incidents well and communicate actions effectively to parents. Most practitioners have an appropriate understanding of the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a child. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

All practitioners are caring and supportive. They treat children with warmth, dignity and respect their rights views and opinions. Practitioners respond promptly to children's needs and requests and use positive methods and distraction techniques well to promote good interactions between children. For example, when a child refuses to share or has minor disagreements, practitioners patiently and skilfully negotiate and compromise to bring about a favourable outcome. Practitioners use praise and encouragement well throughout the day to promote good behaviour and develop children's sense of pride and achievement.

Practitioners know the children well and take account of their special preferences. Children's health and dietary records are complete and enable staff to understand children's needs. The setting uses a key worker system effectively to ensure children receive consistent care and form positive bonds with a practitioner they know well. Key workers maintain useful daily dairies for babies and toddlers in their care. They actively encourage parents to contribute to these notes to inform practitioners of any important information. Practitioners take good account of parents' views and use this information well to respond swiftly to ensure that they meet children's individual needs. As a result, they meet children's social, emotional and behavioural needs well. However, the evaluation of children's developmental progress throughout their time at the setting is at an early stage of development.

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

Most practitioners know the children very well and recognise when and how they need to provide support to help them move forward. All practitioners have established good relationships with children. They make effective use of praise and encouragement to enhance learning and wellbeing.

Nearly all practitioners have a sound understanding of the Foundation Phase curriculum. They make appropriate use of indoor and outdoor resources to support learning and ensure an appropriate balance between activities directed by an adult and those initiated by children. Most practitioners use questions suitably to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. However, the use of open-ended questions to challenge and extend children's learning is at an early stage of development.

Most practitioners are beginning to work together appropriately to plan a range of suitable learning experiences. However, curriculum planning does not identify sufficiently focused opportunities well enough to ensure that all children develop their skills progressively, particularly in ICT.

Practitioners make use of worthwhile opportunities to invite local groups into the setting to support the development of children's creative skills through music, dance and drama. They successfully encourage children to develop a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world around them, for example observing a wasp flying around in the setting.

Practitioners plan and organise appropriate activities and use a good range of resources to develop cultural understanding such as, Chinese New Year. The setting organises a number of relevant events throughout the year to enrich children's learning, for example a 'Muddy Puddle Walk' and a 'Royal Wedding Celebration'. Practitioners provide appropriate activities to enable children to experience and learn about the culture of Wales, for example listening to Welsh stories, singing Welsh songs and celebrating St David's Day.

The setting's processes for gathering relevant information about the progress of individual children are at a very early stage of development. Observation records and planning evaluations are too descriptive and do not focus well enough on individual children's achievements across all of the areas of learning. As a result, practitioners do not effectively build on children's previous learning or challenge the most able children well enough. Across the setting, practitioners do not assess or track progress effectively enough to ensure that they consistently meet the needs of all children.

Environment: Good

Leaders ensure that procedures for safety in the setting are good. For example, the setting maintains accurate records of attendance for children and staff, ensuring that

all persons can be accounted for in the event of an emergency. Comprehensive risk assessments cover all areas used by children and identify measures put into place to minimise or eliminate any potential hazards to children and adult safety. Leaders review these systematically to ensure effective monitoring and management of risks. For example, they document fire drills well and ensure that they take place regularly.

Leaders ensure children have access to a range of interesting areas to play and explore. Play rooms are bright, colourful and well resourced, offering a variety of activities, toys and resources for children to choose from. These are stored at low level and are easily access to children, promoting their independence. The outdoor area to the front of the setting contains a wide variety of exciting and interesting play and learning experiences for children, such as a construction area, mark making area and planting areas. Children have a sense of belonging as samples of their work and photographs of them taking part in different activities are displayed throughout the setting. Steps, potties and toilet seats are available to help children with potty training, aiding independence.

The setting provides quieter areas are for babies and toddlers to sleep when they are tired during the day. However, older children do not always have access to a quiet area in which they can sleep and do so in the corner of the main playroom. This can be noisy, as group activities and free-play take part in the same room.

Leaders ensure that toys and resources are well maintained, in good condition and suitable for the ages and stages of development of the children. Toys and resources are cleaned regularly, with accurate records maintained of when this occurs. A wide range of opportunities are provided for children to explore sensory and natural materials in the outdoor play areas, including a mud kitchen, recycled materials used for construction and planting and sensory exploration in gravel and sand. Children have worthwhile opportunities to explore materials such as cooked pasta, sand, water and junk modelling in the indoor messy play areas. Leaders ensure that a suitable amount of multi-cultural and Welsh resources are available to promote children's understanding of the world and cultural diversity.

Leadership and management: Adequate

Leaders have established a positive ethos for children, parents and staff. They have a clear vision for the setting and share their aims for learning, behaviour and relationships appropriately through the setting's information booklet, parent newsletters and a carefully managed social media application.

Self-evaluation processes and planning for improvement are at a very early stage of development. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate or up-to-date understanding of the strengths or key priorities for the setting. In particular, systems for gathering accurate and reliable first-hand evidence and prioritising actions are underdeveloped. Strategic planning to address priority areas is not sufficiently robust to bring about necessary improvements. As a result, the setting is slow to address important areas in a timely manner or sustain improvements over time.

All practitioners are well qualified and deployed effectively. The setting complies with safe recruitment processes for all new appointments. All practitioners have appropriate and up-to-date job descriptions, ensuring that they have an appropriate understanding of their role in the setting. The setting has well-established but informal processes for staff supervision and appraisal. As a result, nearly all practitioners understand what they do well and what they need to do to improve.

Nearly all practitioners participate in regular training provided by the regional consortium or in collaboration with other settings in the locality. Practitioners are beginning to share this learning successfully across the pre-school team to improve aspects of provision, for example to develop a consistent approach to improving behaviour and independence in child-led sessions. However, leaders have not developed this approach across the setting as a whole.

The setting has established a number of effective partnerships that benefit the children well. Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Parents and carers feel welcome at the setting and appreciate the regular exchange of information they receive about their child. They feel confident that if they approach staff with a concern, it will be resolved swiftly and appropriately. Parents and carers express high levels of satisfaction with the setting. Nearly all feel that their child is making good progress and is safe in the care of the practitioners.

The setting makes appropriate use of the advice and support they receive from the local authority advisory teacher to make improvements in identified areas, for example in establishing a consistent approach to managing provision.

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)

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

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

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