

# **The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age**

## **Nursery report on: Abacus Day Nursery**

**Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Mary Dyas**

**Date of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

**Contract number: T/021/07N**

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**Report on the inspection of nursery settings in the non-maintained sector**

<b>Name of nursery:</b>	Abacus Day Nursery	
<b>Address:</b>	Newmarket House 26 Lion Street Abergavenny	
<b>Post code:</b>	NP7 5NT	
<b>Telephone:</b>	01873 856031	
<b>Person responsible for day-to-day management</b>	Sarah Storey	
<b>Position</b>	Manager	

**About the inspection**

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no major shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

## 1.0 Context of the setting

### **Context of the nursery setting**

Abacus Day Nursery opened in 1994 in the market town of Abergavenny and is available for parents to bring their children from birth until 8 years plus. It includes an after-school and holiday Kids Plus club. Children come to the nursery from a wide area stretching as far as Cardiff and Hereford and it is open from 8am to 5.30pm for 51 weeks a year. There are currently nineteen children registered in the pre-school group with fourteen three-year-olds and five four-year-olds. Fifteen of these are currently in receipt of funded educational provision.

The children attending the pre-school group come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds with a high proportion from socially advantaged homes. There are currently no children from ethnic minority groups and all three- and four-year-olds speak English as their main language. There are no children with additional needs identified but all are welcomed and clear policies are in place to accommodate their needs.

The nursery occupies a large town house in the town centre and has the benefit of a large garden comprising a patio and separate grassed area. The pre-school group has the use of two rooms downstairs with toilets accessible independently by the children. During activity times children have free access between these rooms and the outdoor area. One room is set up with quiet activities and a topic based role play area and the other is a 'messy' room with playdough, sand, painting, construction and craft activities. Children are able to select their own resources from shelves and cupboards both indoors and out.

The pre-school group is led by a nursery officer and supported by two nursery nurses with the nursery manager taking on a relief role when required.

The nursery was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in December 2006. The next inspection should already have taken place but due to a change in management the setting has been re-registered and the next inspection is now due in the summer.

In May 2006 Abacus Day Nursery achieved their Level 3 Quality Counts accreditation which is a quality assurance scheme provided by the National Day Nurseries Association. The nursery was last inspected by Estyn in December 1999.

## 2.0 Main findings of the report

### **2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision and whether or not the provision successfully promotes the goals for children's learning**

The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the desirable outcomes from children's learning.

## 2.2 Standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

<b>Six areas of learning</b>	<b>Grade for under-fives</b>
<b>Language, literacy and communication skills</b>	2
<b>Personal and social development</b>	1
<b>Mathematical development</b>	2
<b>Knowledge and understanding of the world</b>	1
<b>Physical development</b>	2
<b>Creative development</b>	1

## 2.3 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

<b>Quality of education</b>	<b>Grade for under-fives</b>
<b>Quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	2
<b>Quality of planning for children's learning</b>	2
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	1
<b>Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress, and reports for parents and carers</b>	2
<b>Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community</b>	2
<b>The contribution made by the setting to children's well-being</b>	2
<b>Quality of the leadership and management of the setting</b>	1
<b>The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report</b>	2

### **3.0 The standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning**

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds and standards achieved by 4-5 year-olds

#### **3.1 Language, literacy and communication skills**

##### **Good features**

Children make good progress in this area.

All children sit and listen attentively and with great enthusiasm to stories. They look carefully at the pictures and comment appropriately. When looking at books independently they handle them with care and turn pages correctly. Many children listen to pre-recorded stories following the progress of the story in a book.

Nearly all recall and join in with singing and reciting familiar songs and nursery rhymes and with familiar repetition in stories. A noticeable feature is the ability of a few children to supply appropriate rhyming words when the leader pauses while reading a rhyming story.

Children self-registerate by choosing their written name and sticking it on the wall. They have further opportunities to recognise their name during the course of the day on their hangers with their aprons and wet weather clothes and also written on their drinking cups. Many are able to find their name without help and a majority are also able to identify the written names of other children in the group.

Most children speak very clearly and articulately using sentences and quite complex phrases. They listen to one another, express opinions and join in with group discussions. Most are able to talk relevantly about what they are doing and to remember and describe previous activities.

A majority of children have very good pencil control and several are able to write their own name unaided.

##### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

### 3.2 Personal and social development

#### **Good features**

This is an outstanding feature of the nursery.

The children are happy and confident in the setting. They are familiar with the daily routine and anticipate what they will do next. Interactions between children and between children and adults show care and respect for one another. Children come into the group happily and immediately join in with activities – they are warmly welcomed by those who are already there. They understand the need to share and to take turns and most are able to do this without prompting. They interact extremely well with their learning environment confidently choosing the areas they want to play and the equipment they need for their activities, yet seeking help from adults when required.

When introduced to new learning activities such as investigating water with a hosepipe, pipes and guttering they explore and experiment with confidence.

All children are growing in independence. Most are able to take off and put on their coats and wellington boots by themselves and a few are also able to fasten zips and buttons. They access the snack bar during the course of the morning and afternoon sessions and most decide independently when they want to have a drink and a healthy snack.

Through their topic work children are learning to treat living things with care and respect. For example they have planted vegetable and flower seeds and spring bulbs. These have been cared for and the children have helped to harvest vegetables for their lunchtime meals in the nursery and are waiting to see the bulbs come into bloom.

All children are developing their ability to concentrate for lengthening periods of time when involved in an activity and to see tasks through until they are finished.

The children have been introduced to the Welsh language through simple words and phrases and many have begun to respond to questions and to join in with Welsh songs and rhymes.

#### **Shortcomings**

No shortcomings were identified.

### 3.3 Mathematical development

#### **Good features**

Children's mathematical development is good.

Most of the children show a sound understanding of basic concepts such as over, under, high, low and behind, for example when throwing beanbags at a target.

There are many opportunities for children to use and develop their counting skills and almost all are able to count in unison forwards and backwards to and from ten. Many of the older children have a secure understanding of numbers – they can count objects accurately to ten and identify numbers of objects or fingers to five without counting. They are familiar with written numbers around the setting and a few are able to identify numbers to five.

The children recall and join in with number rhymes and songs and a majority are able to hold up the correct number of fingers while doing so.

Most children are able to sort and match objects according to identified similarities such as colour or shape.

#### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

### 3.4 Knowledge and understanding of the world

#### **Good features**

Children make very good progress in this area through the many interesting and exciting activities that are planned for them.

They are learning to think for themselves, to make considered choices in their learning and to explore the potential of a range of situations and activities. This is an outstanding feature.

In the morning the children discuss the day of the week and the forthcoming events of the day. Most are able to talk about home and relate things which have happened, food they have eaten etc.

They experience at first hand the weather and changing seasons when they play outside in all conditions and also when they visit the local park and woods. Their understanding of where food comes from is developing as they grow, harvest and eat vegetables and observe the development of the pear tree in the garden through the year. This is another outstanding feature of the nursery.

The children have begun to appreciate the differences in and uses of a range of materials through their recent topic which led them to think about different lights.

They found pictures of lights and also walked around the town taking photographs of different lights which they have displayed on the wall.

All children enjoy using the computer in the classroom which has two different types of mouse to choose from. Most are able to choose which program they want to use and to use the mouse to make choices.

#### **Shortcomings**

No shortcomings were identified.

### 3.5 Physical development

#### **Good features**

Children make good progress in physical development. They use the resources indoors and outside to develop both their fine and gross motor skills.

Their manipulative skills develop well. Most are able to handle mark making implements with control and dexterity and are able to use writing tools to produce drawings, to colour pictures and few also to write their name and other letters. Most also use scissors and glue to create pictures and models and manipulate construction toys competently. All children continue to develop their manual dexterity using playdough to make models, to roll and cut and to squeeze through a press.

All children enjoy steering and riding wheeled vehicles and many are able to pedal bikes independently. They are aware of different types of movement such as running, walking and jumping and enjoy making large movements in the extensive garden. Most children are able to respond to suggestions to move in different ways and to vary their speed as they do so. They are developing control in throwing and catching objects themselves and to and from one another.

#### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

### 3.6 Creative development

#### **Good features**

The quality of children's creative development is good overall and outstanding in the area of music.

All children gain considerable benefit from weekly visits from a teacher from the local authority music service who leads a session of singing and music making. This makes a strong contribution to the good progress children make in this area.

Children know and recall many songs in both English and Welsh which they sing with enthusiasm and join in with appropriate actions. They are able to play percussion instruments along with the teacher in time to music and all are able to control the volume and speed of their playing in response to her suggestions.

In role play situations children show imagination when taking on the role of different characters. They use language appropriate to the context and think creatively to develop different scenarios.

Children use materials creatively when making pictures and models. They experiment confidently and make clear choices about colour and medium. Older and more able children produce realistic drawings and paintings.

During circle time at the end of each session the children reflect and discuss their activities, show their work and appreciate the work of others. This is another outstanding feature.

#### **Shortcomings**

No shortcomings were identified,

## 4.0 The quality of educational provision

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds and for 4-5 year-olds

### 4.1 The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

#### **Good features**

Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are clear policies in place and the staff provide good role models in ensuring that each child is valued and treated with respect and encouragement. Behaviour is a good feature of the nursery. Children show care and consideration for one another and they know the difference between right and wrong.

There are many opportunities during the day for children to reflect quietly on what they have done during the session and on what they might have particularly enjoyed. The leader encourages this when the children gather together at the beginning and end of each session.

The children have been introduced to some simple Welsh words and phrases. They have many enjoyable opportunities to find out about different cultures through art and craft, tasting food and dressing up. The nursery has a range of appropriate resources to support the children's respect for the diversity of beliefs and cultures such as books, a range of multicultural dolls and different flesh coloured pens and pencils for colouring.

#### **Shortcomings**

There is little use of incidental Welsh throughout the children's day to reinforce the learning in circle time.

### 4.2 The quality of planning for children's learning

#### **Good features**

The quality of planning for children's learning is good.

Medium term plans are firmly based on the desirable outcomes for children's learning and embrace the philosophy of the Foundation Phase. General activities for a specific topic are identified under the desirable outcomes and their development then follows the children's interest. For example the current topic began as a general one on transport and quickly centered on space following the children's interest. Having developed this for two or three weeks the children then turned to trains and the planning has followed this.

Weekly planning sheets identify enhanced provision for the areas of continuous provision and planned outdoor activities are highlighted. The planning is well-balanced and makes good use of resources to support teaching and learning.

A weekly focus activity is also planned listing the learning intention and targets for specific children if appropriate. Comments are made of each child's response, attainment or learning for future planning and assessment.

#### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

### 4.3 The quality of teaching

#### **Good features**

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding features.

Staff are well qualified. The nursery officer holds an NNEB qualification and is supported by two nursery nurses who hold a CACHE level 3 Diploma in Early Years Practice and an NVQ level 2 respectively. The nursery manager works in the pre-school group on a relief basis and also holds an NNEB qualification.

The staff use good distraction, encouragement and direction techniques to keep the children's attention appropriately focussed. During the session there is a good balance between energetic and quieter periods and a good mix of adult led activities and opportunities for children to work as individuals making their own choices.

An outstanding feature is the use that is made of the outdoor area. Children have free access to a great many resources stored in accessible cupboards and are encouraged to explore and experiment. Staff demonstrate their thorough understanding of the desirable outcomes through their open questioning designed to help the children to think for themselves. They know the children well and structure their questioning appropriately for the stage of development of individual children.

The group enjoys regular input from the local education authority's Early Years Network Co-ordinators and there is evidence of the positive support that has been given and acted upon. A weekly visit from a teacher from the local authority's music service also impact positively on the children's creative development.

#### **Shortcomings**

No shortcomings were identified.

### 4.4 The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports to parents and carers

#### **Good features**

The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reporting to parents and carers is good.

Staff are aware of the children's strengths and shortcomings and manageable systems to record children's achievements are well established.

Monthly observations are made on the children based on a selected activity and sent home. Parents and carers sign and return them to be kept in the child's individual record folder.

Parents and carers are invited to meet with their child's keyworker three or four times a year when they share information and discuss their child's developmental records. A report is prepared for parents and carers when the child leaves the nursery in July. Comments are specific and focussed on the child's level of development in each area of the desirable outcomes for children's learning, together with general comments on the child's overall progress.

There are opportunities when parents and carers bring and collect their children for staff to discuss children's progress.

#### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

#### **4.5 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community**

##### **Good features**

The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community is good.

Parents speak highly of the nursery. They report that they are well informed about their children's education through regular newsletters, art work and written and verbal reports about their progress and feel that they can approach a member of staff at any time to discuss their child's education. There is also a board in the entrance with information about forthcoming events.

The children in the pre-school group make frequent visits into the local area visiting a park and woods, taking walks around the town to look at things relevant to their discussions in the classroom and making regular visits to the library for under-5's story time and to change library books for their classroom.

A variety of visitors such as a local vicar, 'Mrs Tufty' and an organisation bringing exotic animals enriches children's learning

##### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

#### **4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing**

##### **Good features**

The setting contributes positively to the children's well-being.

Appropriate policies are in place. These include admission arrangements, health and safety and behaviour management. There are good procedures for the administration of medication and for the reporting of accidents and equipment is regularly checked for safety. Staff are aware of their responsibilities with respect to Child Protection and have received appropriate training.

The ethos of the playgroup successfully contributes to the children's sense of well-being. The premises are welcoming to parents and children. Good use is made of space and the areas are brightly decorated and are in a good state of repair. Risk assessments are carried out especially when the children are making visits outside the premises.

##### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

#### **4.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting**

##### **Good features**

Leadership and management of the nursery is good with outstanding features.

The manager has carried out a self-evaluation of the setting recommended by the local education authority and has set targets for improvement.

The nursery is a quality assured member of the National Day Nurseries Association. Under this process all members of staff observe another routinely and rate their observation under specific areas. The results of these observations are collated to provide information on areas of development both individually and corporately.

The nursery owner carries out annual staff appraisals during which targets for staff training are agreed.

The nursery is outstandingly successful in promoting effective teamwork among the staff. They have achieved this through monthly contracted staff meetings, social events and team building activities. This results in a purposeful, well organised, stimulating and caring environment where the whole team is committed to providing high quality experiences for the children in their care.

The present manager is recently appointed but has worked at the nursery since it opened. She has a clear vision for maintaining the high quality of provision and for seeking to improve further the quality and range of learning experiences.

##### **Shortcomings**

No shortcomings were identified.

#### **4.8 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for inspection identified in the last inspection report**

##### **Good features**

The setting has made good progress in updating the nursery prospectus to include an outline of the educational programme in the six areas of learning.

Creative development is now a distinct area of learning in the medium term plans.

Information gained from assessment procedures is used to inform the planning of future activities and some evaluation of teaching is in place.

##### **Shortcomings**

No important shortcomings were identified.

## 5.0 Recommendations

### **The setting needs to:**

Further develop the knowledge and understanding of Welsh of members of staff so that more consistent opportunities are provided for children to use Welsh phrases and vocabulary.

Continue to develop the planning of adult-led activities focussing on the development of specific skills

As identified in recent self-evaluation, continue to ensure that information from assessments is meaningfully used to evaluate teaching and to inform future planned activities.

**The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to Estyn. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.**