



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

A report on

**St Donats Nursery School
Atlantic College
St Donats
Vale of Glamorgan
CF61 1WF**

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

St Donats Playgroup is an English medium setting based in the former gymnasium of Atlantic College in the village of St Donats. It is run by a management committee and employs four members of staff, including the setting leader, who has been in post since September 2017.

The setting is registered to provide care for up to 19 children aged from two and a half to five years old. At the time of the inspection there were 14 three year olds on roll, and they all receive early education funded by the local authority. A very few children have identified additional learning need. All children speak English as their first language and none of the children speak Welsh at home. The setting was last inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales in February 2017 and by Estyn in October 2013.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- Most children make effective progress in the development of their skills
- Most children make good progress with developing their speaking and listening skills
- Nearly all children enjoy attending the setting
- Most children collaborate well with each other in their play and behave well
- Practitioners meet the needs of the children well
- The quality of teaching is good

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting provides good quality care and effective teaching and leadership
- The setting leader has a clear vision for improvement
- Practitioners work well together as a team
- The setting has made improvements in many areas of its work
- The setting has developed a wide range of beneficial partnerships that improve the provision and develop children's skills well

Recommendations

- R1 Provide effective opportunities for children to develop their problem solving and thinking skills well
- R2 Ensure practitioners plan suitably challenging opportunities for children to develop their skills independently

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations

Main findings

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

Most children enter the setting with skills, knowledge and understanding that are at the expected level for their age. They make effective progress in the development of their skills from their individual starting points.

Most children make good progress with developing their speaking and listening skills. They listen well to practitioners and speak with clarity that is appropriate to their age. Most children speak to adults that they are unfamiliar with willingly, and use a good range of vocabulary. For example, they describe cotton wool balls they are sticking to their pictures as being like 'cotton candy'. Most are confident to describe events at home, such as when talking about what the 'naughty elf' in their house had been doing that morning. Most children join in with songs and rhymes confidently.

All children enjoy mark making in a variety of ways. For example, they experiment with making shapes on the pavement in the outdoor area. They understand that writing conveys meaning and many interpret what they have written when they create lists of patients in the role play doctor's surgery. A few more able children are beginning to form recognisable letters, such as the letters in their names. Most children develop useful early reading skills and enjoy looking at books. A few children choose to access books independently and describe what has happened in them, such as to explain that Sali Mali is trying to bake a cake and the animals have stolen her ingredients. Many children understand how to hold books correctly and show interest in their contents. Most children listen and interact well when being told a story at the end of the morning.

As part of circle time routines, all children join in with adults when counting the number of children who are present. Most children count to 5 independently and a few count to 10 with assistance. They develop a wide basic mathematical vocabulary. For example, they describe the biggest and smallest dinosaur in the small world area. Many name simple shapes correctly, such as a square and a triangle. With prompting, they describe some of their properties, for example by counting the number of sides.

Most children develop worthwhile information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, they enjoy playing with simple remote control cars and understand how they can alter their movement with a controller.

Nearly all children develop good fine and gross motor skills. They glue small pieces of material to their picture and push a wheelbarrow in the outdoor area successfully. However, few children use their thinking skills or solve problems in different contexts.

Most pupils demonstrate good basic Welsh language skills. They respond well to instructions from practitioners and answer questions about how they are feeling or what the weather is like with confidence. In a few cases, children use Welsh words without prompting, such as to describe the colour of the circle they are standing on.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enjoy coming to the setting and settle quickly into their daily routines. Most hang up their coats independently before choosing which activity to begin the day with. All children feel valued and well cared for. They know that practitioners will listen and respond to their thoughts and concerns. As a result, they choose what they want to do and the resources they will use confidently and independently.

Most children collaborate successfully with each other in their play and behave well. They follow the setting's routines with enthusiasm. For example, nearly all children participate busily when it is 'tidy up time'. Most children wait patiently to take their turn to use resources or when playing games. They have good social skills, talking sensibly to each other during snack time and answering questions from visitors to the setting with confidence.

Most know the importance of washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet. They understand that eating fruit is good for them and that drinking water or milk is a healthier choice than "fizzy pop". They learn to look after their own needs well, such as when they put on their own slippers when they come indoors, of their coats and wellingtons to go outside

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

Practitioners meet children's needs well. They plan interesting learning activities, both indoors and outdoors, which engage nearly all children successfully. For example, children enjoy finding out about capacity when playing with measures and pans in the setting's mud kitchen. Practitioners base their planning firmly on the foundation phase framework and the principles of learning through good quality first-hand experiences. They consider children's views suitably by discussing what and how they would like to learn at the beginning of a new topic. They make particularly good use of the college's extensive grounds. For example, they visit its private beach and mark out the size of different whales using string.

Practitioners provide good opportunities for children to develop a wide range of skills. They place an appropriate emphasis on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills through practical experiences. For example, they encourage children to practise their mark making skills in the outdoor environment by making shapes and letters on the pavement and in a tray of foam outside the nursery class. Practitioners develop children's knowledge of mathematical language well. For example, they talk to the children about which dinosaur is the longest, shortest, biggest and smallest when playing in the small world area. Throughout the session, practitioners provide good opportunities for children to develop their counting skills, such as counting how many children are present during circle time. However, they do not plan sufficient opportunities for children to develop their problem solving and thinking skills. The setting provides appropriate opportunities for children to develop simple ICT skills

The setting develops children's Welsh language skills well by using familiar words and phrases throughout the session. For example, they encourage children to talk about how they are feeling and what the weather is like in Welsh at the start of the session

Teaching: Good

All practitioners maintain a supportive, caring relationship with children. They expect the best of the children and encourage them to persevere and concentrate for sustained periods of time. They recognise and praise their achievements and respond to their contributions well. As a result, most children engage well with their tasks and make good progress in developing their skills. All practitioners have high expectations of how children should behave. They use praise well to encourage good behaviour and address any instances of unacceptable behaviour gently but firmly.

Practitioners are good language role models for the children. They question children purposefully to move them on in their learning and assess their understanding. They do this particularly well when helping children to develop their skills through activities they choose for themselves. For example, they ask thoughtful questions to support children's language development as they play in the role play doctor's surgery. There is a good balance between tasks that practitioners lead and activities that children choose for themselves. However, practitioners do not always succeed in planning a stimulating and challenging enough learning environment for all children to make progress effectively when they work independently.

The setting has useful procedures to observe children and assess their progress. Practitioners use this information well to identify specific skills that children need to develop further and to help them plan successfully to meet their needs.

Practitioners provide parents with useful information about their children's wellbeing and progress through twice-yearly reports and meetings.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides a happy, welcoming and engaging environment. As a result, children feel valued and settle quickly. Practitioners promote children's understanding of healthy living well. For example, they ensure that children only bring healthy food for snack time. They use this as an opportunity to talk to the children about the types of food and drink that help us thrive and those that are less good for us. Practitioners provide daily access to the college grounds so that children can exercise regularly. They encourage children to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. This helps them to become responsible for their personal hygiene.

A broad range of learning experiences promotes children's spiritual, cultural, moral and social development well. Practitioners develop children's cultural understanding effectively by taking them to see live performances at the local college theatre and providing opportunities for them to hear musical played for them by a parent who is a professional musician. They develop a sense of awe and wonder well through encouraging children to plant seeds and watch them grow in their allotment and to spend quiet time listening to the waves on a visit to the beach. The setting has begun to help children learn about recycling and composting. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Practitioners identify children's emerging learning and emotional needs promptly and support them appropriately. The setting works well with outside agencies to gain advice when necessary. For example, practitioners work effectively with the speech therapist to support pupils with specific language needs.

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

Learning environment: Good

The learning environment is welcoming, bright and engaging. Practitioners organise the space well to provide children with good opportunities to explore all of the foundation phase areas of learning. They plan these areas carefully to engage children's interest and ensure they can access resources independently. For example, children enjoy the dinosaur themed small world area and the doctor's surgery in the role play area.

All children have equal access to all activities and areas of learning. Practitioners value and recognise children's achievements well through the display and celebration of their work. They match resources well to children's needs and interests.

The setting makes good use of the extensive grounds of the college where it is situated. These include the private beach, woodland and a farm. Within these, practitioners have created specific areas where children can develop a range of skills, such as a muddy kitchen, forest area and allotment. The setting is currently focusing on improving practitioners' understanding of how to develop children's learning successfully in the outdoors. As a result, practitioners plan increasingly effective learning activities that make the most of these areas. For example, they encourage children to gather natural materials in the forest area to create imaginative artwork.

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

The setting leader has a clear vision for continuous improvement that she shares well with all staff and parents. Since commencing her role, she has created a strong team ethos successfully amongst the practitioners. She delegates responsibilities well. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. She models high expectations and behaviours that results in continued improvement in the quality of provision that the setting offers. Staff meetings focus well on improvements to the quality of provision, and support new initiatives successful, such as the introduction of a key worker system. Relationships between practitioners, parents and children are positive, and contribute effectively to a sense of community and shared purpose. The setting's management committee know the strengths and areas for improvement of the nursery well.

Leaders use appraisal procedures successfully to communicate high standards and review the performance of each individual member of staff. This includes ongoing discussions with practitioners about their work as well as setting useful targets through formal appraisal meetings. Leaders identify individual training needs appropriately and support practitioners to access a range of beneficial external

training opportunities effectively. This supports continuous improvement in the setting well. For example, training in the development of staff Welsh language skills has impacted positively on the standards achieved by pupils.

Improving quality: Good

The setting leader, along with practitioners, has established useful systems to ensure that they review the setting's work regularly. This includes consulting parents through formal questionnaires and informal discussions, as well as taking into account advice from the local authority advisory teacher. The positive attitude of all practitioners towards improving the quality of the provision is evident throughout the setting. As a result, the setting leader and practitioners have a good understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement.

The setting carries out a formal annual review of the quality of its work. This helps leaders identify useful targets for improvement that link well to children's needs. For example, the setting has recently focused on improving children's understanding of pattern as part of their mathematical development, and encouraging children to respond to instructions given in Welsh. Overall, the setting is developing strong procedures that help lead to regular progress. This includes the recent focus on improving the way practitioners use the outdoor provision to develop children's skills.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has developed a wide range of beneficial partnerships that support improvements to provision and the development of children's skills well. For example, positive partnership working with the local college that hosts the nursery, allows practitioners to provide a wide range of engaging and stimulating learning experiences for the children.

The setting works very effectively with parents. This ensures that practitioners have a full understanding of the needs of each child, and enables them to keep parents informed about the progress their child is making. The setting makes particularly good use of parents' skills to provide rich learning experiences for the children. For example, through the delivery of music sessions and drama performances.

The setting leader works effectively with the local authority advisory teacher to monitor the quality of provision, identify areas for improvement and secure beneficial training opportunities. This has resulted in improvements in a number of areas of the setting's work. For example, practitioners benefited from training in how to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills in the outdoors, leading to improvements in the quality of provision.

The setting is working to develop its partnership with feeder schools and has set this as a priority for improvement. The setting has useful links with the local community that contribute well to children's learning and experiences. For example, children benefit from visits to a nearby farm to learn about the animals.

Resource management: Good

Leaders deploy practitioners well and use resources efficiently to ensure that children make strong progress in developing their skills and maintain good levels of wellbeing. They ensure that there are enough suitably qualified, experienced and well-trained staff to meet the needs of the children well.

The setting ensures that practitioners access training regularly to support their individual professional development needs and the setting's priorities. Leaders have recently benefited from visiting another setting to help them develop their understanding of good quality foundation phase provision .

The setting leader works well in partnership with the management committee to manage the setting's budget effectively. They have implemented strong systems for keeping spending under review.

In view of the good standards, good quality care, and effective teaching and leadership, the setting provides good value for money

Glossary of terms

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	Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.

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