



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

A report on

**The Treehouse Day Nursery
289 Chester Road
Oakenholt
Flint
Flintshire
CH6 5SE**

Date of inspection: April 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

Treehouse Day Nursery is a privately-owned English-medium nursery in Flint, in Flintshire local authority. The setting is registered for 45 children between the ages of birth to eight years. It offers early education sessions from Monday to Friday from 9 am until 11.30 am and 1 pm until 3.30 pm during school term time between January and July. There are currently 19 children in receipt of funded early education.

At the time of the inspection there were a very few children identified as having additional learning needs. There are a few children from ethnic minority backgrounds and a few children have English as an additional language. No children have Welsh as their home language.

There are 16 members of staff including the management team. Three members of staff work with the three and four-year-old children. The senior nursery manager has been in post since May 2011.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in August 2017 and Estyn last inspected it in November 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Nearly all children's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Almost all children's Welsh language skills are developing very well
- Nearly all children co-operate successfully with each other and share toys and equipment readily
- Practitioners provide a good range of learning experiences both indoors and outside, which engage nearly all children successfully
- Arrangements for care, support and guidance are comprehensive
- The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of its provision

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The managers are committed to making improvements
- There are beneficial systems for identifying the setting's areas for improvement
- The newly appointed lead practitioner has identified improvement planning as a priority area for development
- Practitioners work together collaboratively and understand their roles and responsibilities
- Practitioners use advice and information from training effectively to improve the provision
- Partnerships with parents and other agencies are beneficial

Recommendations

- R1 Improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT) to improve children's skills in this area
- R2 Raise practitioners' expectations of children's learning, particularly in adult led activities
- R3 Use assessments to identify and plan for the next steps in children's learning systematically and effectively
- R4 Ensure that the setting's improvement plan is monitored regularly to maintain the pace of progress in priority areas

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Many children enter the setting with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. During their time at the setting nearly all children make good progress, particularly in the development of their Welsh language and personal and social skills. A few children make very good progress.

Almost all children listen attentively. They pay good attention when others are talking and allow others to speak without interrupting them. Most children understand and follow instructions, such as washing their cup after snack time or getting an apron before they paint a picture. Almost all children speak clearly and are happy to share information about what they are doing with familiar adults. Most children talk confidently about past experiences, such as buying new football boots and going to football practice.

During story time, most children show interest and pay attention in line with their stage of development. Many join in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes throughout the session. A few children select books independently; turning pages and looking at pictures with interest. Around half of children choose to take part in mark making activities with a range of equipment. However, very few children write for a purpose, such as creating a shopping list in the role-play area.

Almost all children's numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points. Many children develop skills in line with those expected for their age and a few children develop skills above those expected for their age. A majority of children say numbers in order beyond ten and many count objects accurately up to five. Most children explore simple shapes in their play and around half make good use of mathematical vocabulary, for example describing a wooden block as 'too big' or a bug as 'only a small one'.

Almost all children's physical skills are developing well. Most children cope with fine motor tasks successfully. For example, they take part in threading activities and mould play dough into a range of shapes. Almost all children use a range of tools such as rollers, spades and brushes independently. Almost all children develop good gross motor skills such as negotiating space on trikes and taking part in climbing activities confidently.

Most children make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they will use. Most explore their environment confidently and a few are developing their problem-solving skills successfully. For example, they persist and try different approaches when trying to prevent a tall construction model from wobbling and falling over.

Around half of children access and use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment with support. For example, they use a digital camera to take photos of their friends and listen to a voice recorder. However, children's ICT skills are generally underdeveloped.

Almost all children are developing their Welsh skills well in relation to their starting points. Almost all join in with a range of Welsh songs and rhymes confidently and a majority can say numbers in order to five in Welsh. Almost all children respond positively to simple commands given in Welsh during daily routines and most use simple phrases. For example, they say whether they want milk or water during snack time.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children settle well as soon as they arrive at the setting. They co-operate well with one another and share toys and equipment with little support. For example, they play collaboratively when pretending to cook pizza in the role-play area. Most take good notice of instructions given by an adult and respond to requests positively. For example, they wash their hands before snack time. Most children help to tidy up with encouragement from practitioners.

Almost all children behave well. They look after the setting's resources appropriately and treat adults and children respectfully. Most children are courteous and polite when encouraged by practitioners. A few show good manners independently during their play, for example when riding a trike, they ask a friend to move by saying 'excuse me'.

Most children sustain interest in the activities they choose and move confidently to another activity when ready. Nearly all children show interest in the activities offered outside and particularly enjoy physical play, such as climbing over tunnels and up climbing equipment.

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

Practitioners provide a good range of learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage almost all children successfully. Long term plans cover all areas of the foundation phase curriculum effectively. Short-term plans focus appropriately on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. Recently, plans have identified opportunities to develop children's ICT skills. However, this is at an early stage of development. Practitioners focus on children's skills when evaluating planning appropriately. However, they do not use these evaluations well enough to plan the next steps in learning for individual children consistently.

The setting uses visitors successfully to enhance the curriculum, including the local police force and the coast guard. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn from visits to the local area, such as visiting the local duck pond and Flint Castle.

Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities for children to learn to care for living things. They support children to plant and look after a range of vegetables, such as carrots and swedes. There are meaningful opportunities for children to look after living creatures. For example, practitioners encourage children to be gentle when handling creatures during a visit from an animal road show.

The indoor environment provides useful opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, such as using peg boards, brushes, scissors and rolling pins. The outdoor physical play area provides extensive opportunities for children to develop their pedalling, climbing, balancing and ball skills. It presents children with appropriate challenge and enables them to develop their confidence successfully.

There is good provision to develop numeracy skills. Most practitioners provide children with regular opportunities to match, count and recognise shapes and patterns. For example, children enjoy developing their mathematical skills when joining in with number rhymes. Resources available, such as coins, a telephone book, shape puzzles and a tape measure provide children with a wide range of experiences that develop mathematical concepts well.

The setting provides a range of opportunities for children to develop their communication skills effectively. Practitioners share books, stories and rhymes with children and model how to handle books with care. They display many captions and labels written in both English and Welsh. Practitioners provide a range of opportunities for mark making, such as felt pens, pencils, crayons and chalk. Opportunities to develop early writing skills are available, such as clip boards in the construction area, however, the children do not access them readily.

Practitioners use tablet computers appropriately to support children in developing their ICT skills through encouraging them to use a variety of educational applications. Other opportunities to use ICT are available, such as programmable toys, voice recorders and battery-operated toys. However, a wide range of ICT equipment is not provided on a daily basis, which limits the opportunities for children to develop their skills in this area.

Practitioners support children's Welsh language development well and this is a strength of the setting. They model Welsh through singing songs, reading stories, counting and using Welsh words and phrases throughout the session. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage. For example, they plant daffodils, paint dragons and wear traditional dress as part of their St David's Day celebrations.

Teaching: Adequate

Most practitioners have a solid understanding of good foundation phase practice. They use a range of strategies appropriately to encourage and to motivate children to learn. Practitioners combine a range of focused tasks with children's free play suitably. As a result, almost all children sustain interest in child-led tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning. Adult led group sessions are well organised and have a clear focus. However, they last too long and do not offer enough challenge, which results in children's initial enthusiasm waning.

Practitioners consider children's requests and reflect their interests when selecting resources for them to choose from, and children respond well to these. However, during adult-led activities, practitioners' expectations of children are too low. This results in children showing little interest and quickly moving to an alternative activity.

Almost all practitioners are competent language role models for children. They use questioning appropriately to support children's play and to help them make choices about what they would like to do next. However, they do not use a range of questions to extend children's learning and develop their thinking skills.

The setting has relevant procedures to observe children and assess their progress. Practitioners observe children and identify what they can already do during their first few weeks in the setting. They are beginning to identify next steps for children in a few areas, such as numeracy. Practitioners are beginning to track children's progress using the foundation phase profile, however they do not complete all profiles within the specified time frame.

Practitioners provide parents with useful information about the wellbeing and progress of their child through informal updates and an annual parent's evening. As a result, a majority of parents feel well informed about their child's progress.

The setting has developed a good range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and children respond to these well. All practitioners have clear expectations and explain rules to children appropriately. This ensures a team approach and consistency for the children.

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 visit the supermarket to purchase fruit before returning to the setting to make fruit kebabs. Practitioners provide valuable 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 cooperate with each other well. For example, they play collaboratively in the role-play area as they pretend to cook pizza. Practitioners encourage children to use recycled materials in their play, however, opportunities for children to learn about recycling are limited.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual and cultural development well. Practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children through for example, encouraging them to observe caterpillars grow into butterflies before releasing them into the wild. However, practitioners do not provide enough opportunities for children to learn about different cultures.

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 do not give cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is welcoming, and practitioners are friendly and approachable. It is an inclusive community where all children are encouraged to take part and have 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 they need to share toys with their friends. As a result, all children play and learn happily.

The setting has suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the foundation phase. It is situated within a converted residential property, which benefits from access to a large outdoor area. The setting's accommodation is secure and well maintained.

Practitioners make effective use of the space indoors, which is attractive and welcoming. Resources and furniture are generally of good quality and appropriate. Designated learning areas make good use of the available space and make resources easily accessible for children.

The popular outdoor area has been developed successfully into a valuable learning environment. It supports the development of children's personal, social and physical, skills well.

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

Leaders work effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children. They manage practitioners and children well to ensure that the setting runs smoothly, following established routines. There is a commitment to teamwork and the lead practitioner has a clear vision to work collaboratively with colleagues to develop children's independent learning and wellbeing.

There are a range of beneficial policies and procedures to support the organisation of the setting, and staff review these appropriately. The manager pays valuable attention to local and national priorities, such as developing children's ICT, literacy and numeracy skills. A recent focus on developing children's Welsh skills has resulted in improved provision and better standards.

All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities and clear job descriptions have been developed for different roles. However, in a minority of cases these are not shared with practitioners, resulting in an inconsistent approach towards the induction of staff.

Leaders use appraisal systems successfully to communicate high standards and review the performance of all practitioners. Almost all staff have good opportunities to discuss and reflect on the quality of their work. However, practitioners' targets for improvement do not link to the setting's improvement plan consistently.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting's systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are appropriate and all practitioners are committed to improving quality. The lead practitioner makes good use of support from the local authority advisory teacher and the manager to inform the self-evaluation process. The self-evaluation document identifies strengths and areas for improvement. However, it does not identify what the children can do well and what they need more help with.

The improvement plan sets out areas that the setting has identified as requiring improvement. The document sets out actions, staff responsibilities and monitoring arrangements. However, time scales for completing actions are unclear and leaders and staff do not review improvement plans regularly, resulting in periods where little progress is made. Leaders and managers are aware of this and have recently taken positive steps to ensure that plans are monitored and updated. This is at an early stage and not yet an established way of working.

All staff are eager to take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development and strive to improve their performance. This has a positive impact on the quality of the provision in some areas, for example by improving provision for Welsh language.

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 good range of information through newsletters, parent's evenings, social media and day-to-day contact with practitioners. For example, the setting shares the main focus for children's learning on monthly newsletters so that parents are aware of these. This helps parents to feel informed about daily activities and comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns.

There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to the school. For example, the lead practitioner invites teachers from feeder schools into the setting to meet the children.

The setting has useful links with the local authority and receives regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. This has led to regular improvements in standards and provision. There are strong links with professional organisations and other external agencies, which have supported the professional development of staff.

Practitioners make beneficial use of links with the local community to enhance the curriculum. For example, children visit the local shop and regularly exchange books at the library.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning well. Leaders and managers make sure that the setting has enough suitably qualified and well-trained practitioners to support the effective delivery of the foundation phase curriculum. Resources are plentiful and of good quality, for example the wide range of equipment to support physical development.

The setting ensures that staff can access training based on needs identified through the appraisal process. Leaders place a strong emphasis on continuous professional development including learning from each other. Practitioners make effective use of training to improve provision, for example in developing provision for numeracy within the setting.

Leaders plan effectively to resource identified priorities. For example, the setting recently purchased numerous resources to support the development of children's ICT skills.

In view of the quality of provision, the progress that children make and the sound teaching, 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