



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

A report on

**Ammanford Nursery School
High Street
Ammanford
Carmarthenshire
SA18 2NS**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

About Ammanford Nursery School

Ammanford Nursery School is situated in the centre of the town of Ammanford in Carmarthenshire. The school has two language streams. There are 91 children between three and four years old on roll, and they are admitted on a full-time basis in the term following their third birthday. They transfer to their parents' chosen primary school by the term before their fifth birthday. There are currently 41 children in the Welsh-medium stream and 50 in the English-medium stream.

Approximately 25% of children are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than the national figure of 19%. The school has identified 8% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is significantly lower than the national figure of 21%. There are no children with a statement of additional learning needs. Very few children come from Welsh-speaking homes. Very few children come from different ethnic backgrounds, to whom English is an additional language.

The headteacher has operated as the acting headteacher since May 2016. She was appointed to the post permanently in September 2017. The school was last inspected in January 2013.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

At Ammanford Nursery School, most children make strong progress from their starting points. An exceptional feature is the way in which most children develop independence and undertake leadership roles very maturely, despite being nursery-aged children. Nearly all children behave exceptionally well and treat each other and adults with genuine respect and courtesy. They are very keen to learn and persevere for extended periods of time. Practitioners have high expectations and plan skilfully to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. Practitioners model language particularly well, and this has a positive effect on children's oral skills in both streams. The school benefits from the headteacher's ambitious and clear vision. Under her robust leadership, all practitioners work closely to create a homely and safe ethos for children, with a clear focus on raising standards.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Plan a better balance between formal and informal activities in order to give children more freedom to be creative when making decisions about their learning
- R2 Refine procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress
- R3 Provide more natural opportunities for children to practice their free writing skills independently across the learning areas

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing children's early leadership roles, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many children's basic skills are low for their age. During their time there, most make strong progress in their skills across all areas of learning. Children with additional learning needs and the very few who speak English as an additional language make sound progress towards achieving their targets. Most children recall previous learning successfully, for example when discussing the story of Guy Fawkes. Many develop problem-solving skills appropriately, for example when deciding how to stop the bonfire from collapsing in the construction area.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which most children develop their English oral skills exceptionally well in the English stream, and their Welsh oral skills in both streams. They listen attentively to adults and their peers. When discussing, they use an increasing range of vocabulary very effectively; for example, they discuss the weather by choosing appropriate adjectives and idioms.

Most children's early reading skills are developing very soundly. They handle books with respect and understand that they read print from left to right. Many have a strong phonological knowledge and are beginning to use this knowledge to build words successfully in both languages. Many children discuss the content of class stories effectively, and older children predict what might happen next in the story sensibly.

The writing skills of a majority of children are developing effectively. They use an increasing range of equipment, including chalk, paint brushes, crayons and pencils successfully to make marks for different purposes. A majority hold a pencil correctly when writing. Older children are beginning to form letters correctly, for example when writing their names fairly independently. In general, only a few children choose to write freely in the learning areas.

Most children make sound progress in their number skills. They count and recognise numbers to 10 successfully, and a few count numbers beyond 10 confidently. Many recognise two- and three-dimensional shapes well, and older children discuss the properties of these shapes effectively. Most children use their number skills purposefully across the curriculum, for example when creating a class pictogram of their favourite pets.

Most children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing successfully. They handle ICT equipment confidently when choosing apps independently and moving objects around the screen to complete a jigsaw. Most give simple instructions to a programmable toy effectively and use an art package skilfully to create pictures of rockets travelling to space.

Most children's physical skills are developing effectively. Many strengthen their fine motor skills successfully by weaving laces to make a pattern. Most ride bicycles confidently and change direction skilfully on a slalom course.

Most children develop sound creative skills. They choose instruments sensibly to compose a simple piece of music with a very effective awareness of musical elements, such as dynamics. Within a limited selection, they use a range of materials suitably to create pieces of art, such as the poppy for Remembrance Sunday.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all children enjoy coming to school and have a very positive attitude towards learning. Nearly all feel safe at school. They convey their feelings very effectively on the 'feeling tree' each day and justify their choices very maturely; for example, when a child is sad, others offer ideas in order to make them feel better. They treat their friends, staff and visitors with genuine care and respects, and work together very happily.

An exceptionally good feature is the way in which nearly all children develop independence and leadership roles soon after starting at the school. They complete practical tasks themselves, such as self-registration in the morning, fetching milk and selecting suitable equipment for activities without assistance from an adult. After using equipment, they tidy up and put the equipment away completely independently.

Members of the school council and eco committee play an active part in the school and represent the views of other pupils extremely maturely. By participating in these committees, most take advantage of the opportunity to express simple opinions and make decisions that affect their life at the school. For example, they have recently planned a public celebration to recognise an important milestone in the school's history. The councils work together very successfully to promote children's health and look after the school's environment. A very good example of this is the way in which children take advantage of regular opportunities to recycle across the site. These features are very effective when considering that they are nursery-age children.

Nearly all children are very well-behaved in lessons and around the school. They are welcoming and take pride in their school. Most children show high levels of maturity when working in small groups and plenary sessions, and they respond enthusiastically and very sweetly. Most children work very well together and show a sound level of perseverance in lessons. Most respond curiously to their work and apply themselves effectively when accepting new and unfamiliar ideas. An exceptionally good example of this is the way in which children recite and pronounce words skilfully during literacy sessions. Nearly all children move between activities and learning areas smoothly and very effectively.

Most children are aware of the importance of eating healthily, drinking water regularly, and the need to take part in physical exercise. They choose a variety of fruit each day and make regular use of the water fountain during the day. Most children have a very sound understanding of how to stay healthy. They do so successfully through activities such as riding balance bikes in the outdoor area regularly and by growing vegetables in the garden. By taking part in the Designed to Smile scheme each day, they understand the importance of brushing their teeth regularly. An unusual feature for children of this age is their sound understanding of the importance of warming up their voices before singing in order to avoid putting unnecessary strain on them.

Most children show a high level of respect towards the school's pets; for example, after buying a rabbit for the school, the children visited a pet shop in order to give it treatment. They give the animals fresh food and water completely independently. This makes a valuable contribution towards their development as ethical citizens.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is good. All members of staff have high expectations and plan beneficial activities that challenge children of all abilities effectively. Staff model language exceptionally well and ensure regular opportunities to extend children's vocabulary during activities, for example when role-playing in the cafe. They make excellent use of songs to develop children's language patterns and numeracy skills. In the English stream, staff use the Welsh language skilfully during everyday activities. These activities have a very positive effect on children's oral skills.

All practitioners work closely as a team. This ensures consistency in the use of learning strategies and activities that are used in both streams. They question skilfully and encourage children to think, and give them enough time to do so before responding. In general, learning sessions have a lively pace although, at times, formal sessions have a tendency to be too long. As a result, a very few children begin to become restless and lose interest.

Practitioners use a good range of strategies to enable children to know what is good in their work and how to improve it. Plenary sessions enable children to reflect on what they have learnt successfully. Staff provide appropriate opportunities for children to assess their own work regularly.

Practitioners plan an interesting and stimulating curriculum that engages nearly all children's interest successfully. Schemes of work ensure continuity and progression in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively across the areas of learning. Provision for developing pupils' oral, reading and numeracy skills is comprehensive and has a positive effect on children's early skills. However, there are not enough regular opportunities for children to write freely when working independently.

Practitioners give careful consideration to the children's voice when planning activities; for example, following a visit to a charity shop, children created a similar shop in the school's role-play area. A particularly good feature of provision is the extensive use of visitors and visits to enrich children's experiences. Work with the Children's Poet Laureate of Wales and local artists to create verses and new characters for nursery rhymes, for example, develops children's literacy and creative skills skilfully.

In general, staff plan interesting focus and continuous tasks for children. However, at times, overdirection from practitioners limits children's ability to be creative when making decisions about their learning, and there is not always an appropriate balance between formal and informal activities.

Planning to develop the Welsh language is a strength in both streams. Practitioners ensure very beneficial opportunities for children to learn and sing Welsh songs and nursery rhymes regularly. Practitioners plan valuable opportunities to develop children's awareness of Welsh history and culture, for example by learning about the history of Hedd Wyn in a school assembly around the time of Remembrance Sunday.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school's procedures for supporting children with additional learning needs are thorough. Teachers identify children's needs at an early stage and provide appropriate support for them quickly. This contributes beneficially towards improving their standards of achievement. Individual education plans include clear targets and are discussed regularly with parents and children. They outline specific activities to ensure progress. The additional learning needs co-ordinator monitors plans and children's progress regularly. As a result, these children make good progress against their individual targets.

The school has appropriate procedures for tracking children's progress. Members of staff use this information efficiently to identify the needs of individuals and specific groups of children, and to provide for them. However, processes are not manageable enough to enable staff to make the most effective use of information to meet a very few children's learning needs.

The school's arrangements for promoting and developing children's knowledge and understanding of the importance of making healthy choices in terms of eating and drinking are effective. This is achieved successfully in lessons, by arranging visits from people such as Gari Gofal and by taking the children on purposeful visits. A good example of this is a visit to the local supermarket to buy ingredients to prepare fruit kebabs and healthy smoothies. The school makes extremely creative use of the outdoor area to enable children to develop their physical skills successfully. This includes using balance bikes and working together to solve problems in the ball pool in the Dragon's Cottage. This enriches children's knowledge of the importance of regular exercise.

The school has a very beneficial relationship with parents. Effective communication ensures that relevant information is available to parents continuously. The school takes active steps to include parents and carers in the school's life. A successful example of this is the way in which they encourage the parent and child to work together to develop resources for the outdoor area.

There is a strong partnership between the school and the local community. The school ensures beneficial opportunities for children to take part and perform in the community by entertaining the elderly, for example. A large number of visitors come to the school, which enriches children's learning experiences and social development very well; for example, a member of the fire service visits to teach children about the dangers associated with fireworks.

The personal and social education programme provides children with valuable information about important issues that are appropriate for their age and needs. This includes beneficial opportunities to learn about diversity, the importance of identity and the difference between right and wrong. The school develops children's understanding of other cultures effectively, for example by studying celebrations such as Diwali. They are given consistently good opportunities to reflect during the day, in collective assemblies and on the classroom floor. The school's work in terms of explaining the importance of fair trade to children, and the effect that it can have on helping farmers and traders in poorer countries, is positive. This makes a valuable contribution towards their spiritual, moral and cultural development.

The arrangements for managing the site and safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides robust and effective leadership for the school's strategic development. She has a clear vision that is based on providing stimulating and rich learning experiences for children in a happy and safe environment. She shares this vision very successfully with staff, governors and parents. All staff contribute fully towards realising this vision by working together very closely. This is a strong feature of the school's work.

The governing body contributes purposefully towards the school's development. By receiving comprehensive information from the headteacher and visiting the school regularly to observe learning activities, governors have up-to-date and detailed knowledge of the quality of provision, standards of achievement and children's progress. This enables them to contribute effectively to discussions to set the school's development priorities. They use this information appropriately to ensure accountability and hold the school to account for its performance.

The school's self-evaluation arrangements are rigorous and based on a wide range of useful evidence, including scrutiny of work, talking with children, lesson observations and close co-operation. All staff play a key part in self-evaluation procedures. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and they discuss these regularly as a core part of their staff meetings. The school development plan outlines the school's priorities clearly, in addition to purposeful actions and appropriate success criteria. Leaders and staff evaluate progress against priorities regularly and effectively. As a result, the school is making good progress towards the priorities.

All staff shoulder a range of leadership responsibilities confidently. They work together and share expertise among themselves successfully, for example by providing internal training that takes advantage of their expertise. This focuses effectively on improving the standard of provision and children's standards. Leaders provide a good range of useful professional learning experiences for staff. These are based on the school's priorities and staff's personal development needs. Training to develop reading strategies, for example, has a very positive effect on children's skills.

The headteacher and governing body manage the school's budget carefully. They link decisions on expenditure with current development priorities effectively. They make successful use of the early years development grant to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals by implementing specific interventions. These interventions have a positive effect on these children's literacy, numeracy, and personal and social skills.

The school has an appropriate level of high quality staff and resources to meet the needs of the curriculum in full. Staff use these resources skilfully to enrich children's learning experiences. The outdoor areas are extremely effective resources that are used creatively to develop children's skills.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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