



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

A report on

**Little Steps Childcare Centre (Ystradgynlais) Limited
c/o Ysgol Bro Tawe
Ffordd yr Afon
Ystradgynlais
Swansea
SA9 1BU**

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Steps Childcare Centre (Ystradgynlais) Limited

Name of setting	Little Steps Child Care Centre (Ystradgynlais) Limited
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Karen James
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Karen Jones
Person in charge	Tracey Morgan
Number of places	51
Age range of children	0-12 years
Number of children funded for up to two terms	28
Number of children funded for up to five terms	6
Opening days / times	7.30am-6.00pm
Flying Start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service that does not provide the Welsh Language Active Offer
Date of previous CIW inspection	28/03/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection	N/A
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	19/02/2019
Additional information	This is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Non-compliance

We have advised the registered persons that improvements are needed in relation to regulation 28 and 29 in order to fully meet the legal requirements. A notice has not been issued on this occasion, as there was no immediate or significant impact for children using the service. We expect the responsible individual to take action to rectify this and it will be followed up at the next inspection.

The provider is not compliant with regulation 28, suitability of workers: this is because leaders had not ensured that they had received any references for two practitioners and only one reference for another practitioner.

The provider is not compliant with regulation 29, employment of staff: this is because staff have not received regular supervision and long standing practitioners have not had an annual appraisal since the beginning of January 2018.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that more able children make effective progress in developing their skills
- R2 Review and update the content of the child protection policy and ensure that all practitioners understand and implement all policies on all occasions
- R3 Improve provision to develop children's information and communication technology (ICT) and Welsh language skills
- R4 Plan effectively to develop children's skills across all areas of learning in the outdoors
- R5 Adhere to the national minimum standards regarding a supernumerary manager

What happens next

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

Main findings

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are happy when they arrive at the setting and cope well with separation from their parents. They settle quickly and engage immediately in free play. Nearly all children have a strong voice. Most are confident to express their ideas and needs within activities, however a few older children do not always take part well enough in group discussions. Many children offer their ideas well through mind mapping sessions and children who attend the out of school club contribute to planning the week's activities appropriately. Nearly all children make confident choices and know that practitioners will listen to them. For example, they choose the toys they want to play with contentedly and ask for more food and drink with confidence.

Nearly all children behave well. They show respect for each other and share resources appropriately. Most children develop their independence appropriately. For example, they pour their own drinks and many carry out tasks, such as sorting numbers without assistance. Many children co-operate well with their peers. Nearly all form good bonds of affection with practitioners who know them well and know they can turn to them if they need support.

Nearly all children interact well with each other and work effectively as a group. For example, during the treasure hunt most children co-operated with each other to find the laminated cards. During snack, many discuss favourite songs enthusiastically. Nearly all children feel secure, happy, comfortable and relaxed, and this is evident when they take part in group activities.

Most children enjoy their activities. For example, most children thoroughly enjoyed the numeracy activity and the treasure hunt. There were squeals of excitement and nearly all children were on task. Most children persevere well to complete challenges, such as to peel tangerines.

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

Nearly all children make appropriate progress in their time in the setting. However, more able children do not progress well enough overall.

Nearly all children talk confidently with their peers and adults and make themselves understood effectively, for example when they ask for resources and express their needs. Many children listen well to adults and each other in a large group. However, a minority of children do not concentrate well enough or contribute effectively to the whole group discussion.

Most children listen to a story read by an adult well and respond appropriately. A few children choose books independently in the reading area. Nearly all children choose a book that they enjoy for group reading when prompted by an adult. Nearly all handle books with care, turn pages and look at the content with interest. Nearly all children experiment with a range of mark making equipment confidently. They understand that print has meaning and make good attempts at making marks to represent letters and numbers.

Most children's numeracy skills are developing well. For example, children sort animal pictures in order of size and use mathematical language confidently. A majority of children count confidently up to twenty, such as when they count how many children are present in the session. Most children are beginning to recognise and write numbers appropriately such as to represent the objects they count. Most children copy a repeating pattern confidently according to size and colour when they play with different coloured plastic bears.

Many children develop their problem solving skills appropriately. For example, they think about what they could use to help them cross a river, make good suggestions and find suitable resources independently. However, they do not always apply their problem solving skills well enough across all areas of learning.

Many children's physical skills are developing well. They dance to music enthusiastically and most children jump and balance skilfully. However, children do not always make good enough progress in developing their co-ordination and skills systematically, such as their ability to run, throw and pedal bikes. Nearly all children develop their fine motor skills well. For example they use mark making equipment and tongs during snack time confidently and skilfully.

Nearly all children make good progress with their personal and social skills and develop their creative skills appropriately. They share well and form good friendships with each other and practitioners. A majority of children develop their ICT skills appropriately. They use electronic tablets and the interactive whiteboard successfully. However, in general, they do not practice and embed their ICT skills well enough over time.

Most children make suitable progress with their Welsh language skills. For example, many join in singing familiar Welsh songs and follow simple instructions such as at tidy up time and to sit on the carpet. However, overall, children do not develop their Welsh language skills well enough.

Care and development: Adequate

Leaders have effective policies in place to promote healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating, drinking and physical activities. Overall, they implement these appropriately. For example, practitioners promote healthy lifestyles and provide children with healthy home cooked meals. Most practitioners adhere to the service's hygiene policy and children and wash their hands frequently. The setting promotes fire safety appropriately by carrying out regular fire drills. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding do not always meet requirements and give a few cause for concern. For example, the setting's child protection policy contains incorrect contact details for the local authority and this could result in delays if a child protection referral needs to be made.

Nearly all practitioners implement the service's behaviour policy effectively and reward children for good behaviour appropriately. For example, children receive stickers for helping at lunchtime and this reinforces positive behaviour suitably. Many practitioners know the children very well and have a good understanding of their needs, their abilities and individual wishes.

In the main, practitioners plan appropriately so that children generally have a good variety of play opportunities. For example, children enjoy identifying jungle animals including a hippopotamus and a rhinoceros. The majority of practitioners have a good understanding of how and when to intervene in activities in order to further develop children's play and learning. However, not all practitioners implement the planning effectively and as a result there are some missed opportunities to engage children fully in activities.

In general, practitioners track older children's progress appropriately and use information from basic observations suitably to plan for the next steps in their play. However, practitioners do not always track progress made by the younger children effectively enough to plan for their next steps.

Practitioners keep appropriate records of accidents, which they audit on a monthly basis and file for future reference. Leaders ensure that practitioners are able to treat minor injuries promptly. For example, there are first aid boxes within each room and around half of the practitioners have a valid first aid certificate. Practitioners support children with medical conditions effectively and ensure that they have parents' written consent before administering medication.

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

Practitioners plan a suitable range of learning experiences that children enjoy and cover all areas of learning appropriately over time. Practitioners work well together as a team and they all contribute their ideas and suggestions appropriately when they plan activities. However, the setting does not plan well enough to meet the needs of all children. For example, in too many activities, children are in too large a group to allow all children to be fully engaged and involved on all occasions. Planning for developing children's skills in the outdoors is not well enough established and does not cover all areas of learning.

The setting has recently begun to improve opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills. However, this is at an early stage of development and the setting does not plan well enough to develop children's ICT skills systematically over time.

The setting provides suitable opportunities for children to develop their Welsh language skills during whole group sessions. For example, practitioners introduce words for the weather and they count in Welsh during circle time. However, they do not use Welsh consistently throughout the session or develop children's vocabulary well enough. There are insufficient opportunities for children to see Welsh print and to enjoy Welsh books. Children have appropriate opportunities to develop their cultural identity. For example, they look at a map of Wales during circle time and know where to put the weather symbol for their hometown. They also make Santes Dwynwen cards and celebrate St David's Day.

Practitioners make extensive use of visitors to the setting and visits to the community to enhance children's learning experiences. They plan worthwhile learning experiences regularly that promote children's personal development appropriately. This includes their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. For example, children have enjoyed visits to the setting from the police and St Johns ambulance.

There are good opportunities for children to learn about and care for living things. For example, a micro zoo with meerkats visited the setting and children plant flowers in the community with local volunteers. Recently, practitioners arranged for children to visit a local care home to play and learn alongside elderly residents.

Environment: Good

Leaders provide a safe, purposeful and welcoming environment. The doors to all rooms are locked and there are effective procedures to ensure that no unauthorised person can enter the setting. Leaders put sound measures in place to allow parents onto the premises and all visitors sign into the school and into the setting. There are effective procedures to ensure that children leave with a recognised parent or carer at the end of the session. Leaders and practitioners ensure that unnecessary risks to children are identified and eliminated as far as possible by carrying out a wide range of risk assessments.

There is sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of children. Children have easy access to resources that are suitable for their needs. The layout and design of the rooms promote children's independence well. For example, we saw many children accessing toys independently from boxes and water from the dispenser. Labelled coat hooks allow children to develop their independence skills well. The layout promotes foundation phase learning appropriately.

The indoor learning environment is purposeful and offers children good opportunities to learn. Generally, leaders create an effective learning environment that offers beneficial opportunities for children to develop their basic skills. The outdoor area provides good play opportunities but leaders do not always use the provision well enough to develop children's skills.

Children have access to suitable furniture, equipment, toys and resources that are mostly age and stage appropriate, well maintained and suitable for their needs.

Generally, leaders have created effective learning corners which offer beneficial opportunities for the children to develop their basic skills.

Leadership and management: Adequate

The setting is going through a period of expansion. Overall, leaders are responding appropriately to the challenges that this brings and leaders have a clear vision. Employing new staff and introducing a new structure has created challenges for the setting but leaders have put suitable measures in place. Nearly all practitioners accurately record their presence on the children's register. However, the registers indicated that a manager is not always supernumerary, in line with the National Minimum Standards.

Leaders keep records of staff appraisals and supervisions, and historical records viewed showed that practitioners are encouraged to review and extend their practice. However, there was no evidence of supervisions with staff employed during the last six months and appraisals for long standing staff have not been held since January 2018. As a result, practitioners are not currently given opportunities to discuss and improve their practice.

Leaders communicate well with practitioners and manage the setting appropriately. They share suitable expectations through regular staff meetings and they use a diary appropriately to convey important messages. This creates a positive ethos in the setting where staff and children feel valued. The responsible individual and person in charge review relevant policies regularly and these set out appropriate procedures for practitioners to follow. However, they do not always succeed in ensuring that all policies are clear enough to be fully effective. Leaders generally keep staff files in order. However, they do not ensure that their recruitment process is always in line with regulations.

There is a strong team spirit and vision for continuous improvement at the setting. All practitioners contribute informally to making helpful changes in the learning environment. They welcome advice from the local authority advisory teacher and act promptly on suggestions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Practitioners evaluate most aspects of the setting's work suitably. This enables them to identify appropriate strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the setting has identified that it needs to develop children's ICT skills and improve opportunities for learning in the outdoors. However, the setting's self-evaluation processes have not identified other important areas for improvement such as meeting the needs of more able children.

The responsible individual ensures that most staff have relevant qualifications and experience of working with young children. Leaders deploy practitioners flexibly to ensure continuity for the children and to meet their individual needs. The responsible individual provides good opportunities for practitioners to attend training, such as training provided by the local authority. This includes specific training to enhance children's listening skills.

Practitioners build strong links with parents and share information with them effectively. The setting's links with the school are developing appropriately. Practitioners meet with the reception teacher to share information about children's achievements to support them as they move on to the next stage of their education.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from CIW and Estyn's websites (<http://careinspectorate.wales>) (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

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

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