



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**The Mill Childcare Centre
Lôn Parcwr
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1BX**

Date of inspection: November 2011

by

**Nicholas Jones
Reporting Inspector**

for

**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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About the setting

The Mill Childcare Centre is a bilingual setting based in Ruthin, Denbighshire. All the children attending the setting come from the town and the surrounding villages. The area is recognised as being socially and economically advantaged.

The setting has been in this location since 1996 and has sole use of the building and the outdoor areas.

The setting reports that around half the children come from homes where Welsh is spoken. Children represent the full range of ability and the setting accepts children with additional learning needs. A few children in the current group are recognised as having additional learning needs and the setting receives assistance from outside agencies to support children that have additional needs. One child attending at present is from a minority ethnic background and none come from socially disadvantaged homes.

The setting is registered for a maximum of 28 children and it accepts children from two years old. There are currently up to 12 children attending the setting at different times during the week. Four of these are three years old. The local authority supports the setting.

The leader has held the position since 2006. Three members of staff assist her and they are all suitably qualified.

There is an informative booklet available for parents and carers that provides them with details of the setting. Parents and carers bring their children into the setting and this provides for a meeting with the staff if needed. The setting is open for five days a week between 8am and 5.30pm.

The setting is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. The setting's owner and its manager oversee the work of the setting.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in September 2011. The National Day Nurseries Association awarded the highest quality award level to the setting in November 2011. The setting also holds the Investors in People standard, awarded in March 2011. Estyn has not previously inspected the setting.

Summary

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

Current performance

The performance of the setting is good because:

- the learning experiences are planned very well;
- all children are supported well and benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum;
- the teaching is effective and concentrates well on Foundation Phase outcomes;
- good resources are available, both indoors and outdoors;
- adults speak Welsh well and this has a positive effect on how children learn the language;
- the setting is led and managed well;
- there is a very good relationship between adults and children;
- there are effective links with the local schools, colleges and the local authority; and
- the staff work very effectively together and everyone contributes purposefully to the success of the setting.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leadership and staff provide a positive direction for the work of the setting;
- changes and developments over time show that the setting has a good record of improving for the sake of the children;
- all the staff have active attitudes towards development and training;
- good support links are used consistently; and
- the learning environment is stimulating and challenging.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the setting needs to:

- R1 set clearer learning objectives and success criteria at the start of focus activities that are linked directly to the areas of learning; and
- R2 use detailed success criteria and timescales to target areas for improvement in the development plans.

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Standards:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is planned well to meet the philosophy of the Foundation Phase curriculum and to achieve the identified outcomes of children's learning. The curriculum builds effectively on children's previous knowledge and experiences and incorporates good opportunities for the development of skills across the curriculum.

Time is set aside weekly, when all staff meet to plan the curriculum. This provides the children with useful and interesting activities. The curriculum is flexible and is matched appropriately to the children's interests.

There are worthwhile opportunities incorporated into the day-to-day working of the setting for children to develop their self-confidence and to become independent learners. Whilst specific activities are planned, children have the freedom to select their own tasks and activities. This is a very positive aspect of the provision.

The purposeful provision includes opportunities for all children to develop respect for each other; opportunities to form good relationships with each other and with adults; and to become tolerant of each other.

Very good opportunities are provided for children to develop their basic and key skills of literacy, numeracy, understanding of the world, physical and creative skills. An effective aspect of children's learning experiences is the provision made for children to acquire the Welsh language. Welsh is not the natural language of communication between adults and children, however, through coherent opportunities, nearly all children, whatever their background, display enjoyment in speaking the language.

Children have many opportunities to develop their thinking skills through challenging

activities like food preparation, which focus on wellbeing.

The traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales are given due emphasis, like the celebration of St. David's Day. Good opportunities are also provided for children to acquire knowledge and understanding of other cultures and traditions, such as during their study of the Chinese New Year and Diwali. Such activities help children to develop a good understanding of the wider world and raise their awareness of age appropriate global citizenship effectively.

All children have very good opportunities to plant seeds, look after plants and recycle. This begins their understanding of plant growth and sustainability effectively.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching shows that the staff have a good, practical knowledge of children's development and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. There is a very positive relationship between all the staff and the children.

The staff have high expectations of the children and these expectations are put into practice well. The staff's active role in planning the curriculum ensures the best use of their expertise. However, when a focus activity is introduced, there is not enough reference made to the learning objective and the success criteria of the activity.

The system of sharing responsibilities and key worker roles means that staff have a detailed knowledge of a small number of children and as such are well aware of their achievements and progress.

There is a good balance between adult directed and child selected activities, both indoors and out of doors. All children are free to select from either independent or adult led activities.

Staff model language effectively to the children's development levels and use questioning well to develop children's thinking and communication skills. The standard of the staff's Welsh is good. The staff provide a very stimulating environment that successfully ensures every child's involvement and enjoyment.

Assessment procedures and recording children's achievements are completed efficiently and thoroughly. There are records of children's achievements available to parents at any time. Staff know the children well and plan the next steps in their learning effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing is good. All children enjoy their time at the setting. They arrive showing a sense of anticipation and are keen to get involved. They partake enthusiastically in activities set out for them. The broad curriculum, which consists of visits and visitors, develops and extends children's experiences well.

Follow-up work in the classroom shows the wide range of experiences that arise from their activities and the children's sense of wonder. Visits to the community and visitors to the setting develop children's knowledge and understanding of their own community effectively.

The setting's provision for ensuring children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Values, such as honesty, fairness, respect and an understanding of what is right and wrong, are fostered through the day-to-day activities and accepted without question. All children know and accept the social norms of living together, sharing and accepting the views of others and being members of a community. Individual children, in turn, accept specific responsibilities that develop their self-esteem. The setting is an organised unit, where children value each other and in turn, the staff value them.

Children's cultural development is good, which incorporates Welsh customs and traditions and it extends to other cultures when the children celebrate events like the Chinese New Year and Diwali.

The setting's staff are vigilant in identifying children requiring specialist help. They make use of professional help and guidance effectively when necessary. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. Staff have received regular and appropriate training. Staff undertake thorough risk assessments routinely.

The setting is secure, where the entrance door is locked and only opened by a member of staff, consequently no one can enter or a child leave unaccompanied. Good care is taken when children are being collected to ensure they are in the care of their parents or of a known carer.

Regular reviews of children's progress ensure that any child suspected of requiring additional help is noted and their progress is monitored closely. The centre's manager is the additional learning needs co-ordinator and is familiar with the necessary procedures for supporting such a child.

Where necessary external agencies are involved and support is provided if needed. At present a few children have additional learning needs.

Learning environment: Good

The setting, through its day-to-day activities and the approach adopted by the staff promotes a very positive ethos. Staff know the children well and their individuality is recognised. All children have equal access to a stimulating curriculum enriched by well resourced and interesting outside areas.

The homely atmosphere and the friendship provided by the staff ensures that a tolerant attitude pervades the setting. The setting employs positive behaviour strategies that have successfully eliminated any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. All children enjoy equality of opportunity.

The setting's staff are well qualified and experienced and there is a very favourable adult-child ratio. Staff expertise is used well both in planning and in supervising

activities. The setting is resourced well to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the needs of the children. The resources are accessible to children and this promotes the children's sense of independence and responsibility.

The local environment and the setting's resources are used very well on a regular basis and they contribute well to children's understanding of the world around them.

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

Staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team, sharing values, aims and objectives. The leader and managers involve all staff in planning and this ensures the best use of their expertise. The leader is actively involved giving clear directions and a sense of purpose to the work of the setting. There is a positive ethos and a commitment to provide the best possible experiences for the children.

The leadership of the centre and all staff are focused well on children's needs and the setting successfully achieves this aim in practice. Staff have received relevant and appropriate training and this has impacted well on the quality of provision provided.

Effective links with the parents and carers are in place. They are kept well informed of their children's achievements and progress and this helps them to support their children's learning.

There is a well-established management structure in place with a clear definition of duties. The leader and managers delegate responsibilities effectively to others when needed to do so. The management of the centre has taken very good account of relevant legislation and the guidance meets legal requirements in full.

The setting has taken good account of national priorities, including implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum. It has also made good use of opportunities to work with local schools, colleges and the local authority to ensure effective links.

Improving quality: Good

The setting self-evaluates appropriately and identifies areas for improvement, implementing them for the benefit of the children. This has included developing the outdoor areas to improve storage areas and to broaden the children's experiences and independence.

However, the areas for improvement are not targeted effectively against relevant success criteria and timescales in the setting's development plans.

Staff have made very good use of training opportunities and professional learning experiences, including vocational qualifications, which are impacting well on

children's learning and wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

Parents, in the questionnaire replies and comments expressed their very high levels of satisfaction with the setting and are highly appreciative of the standards of care and the quality of education available. They appreciate the open door policy and the opportunities they have to meet staff on a daily basis.

By the time the children leave the setting; parents feel that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The links with the local schools, colleges and the local authority are good.

The support provided by the local authority staff benefits the setting. The advice and suggestions have helped in developing the setting and this has contributed to the current high standards of provision.

Resource management: Good

The setting's staff teach well and the staff work together very effectively. Planning is completed collaboratively and this results in individual expertise being used well.

The setting is resourced well and the resources are used very effectively to further the aims of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The resources are also accessible to the children and this encourages independence and has a positive impact on their learning.

The setting provides stimulating outdoor experiences, which are planned well. The management team lead effectively use support agencies purposefully.

The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Seven questionnaires were returned. The additional comments indicate a very positive support for the setting. Nearly all parents and carers are particularly pleased with all aspects of the setting, especially the care provided and their children's progress.

Responses to discussions with learners

All children are happy in the setting. Their enthusiasm is evident when they arrive and meet with their peers. Nearly all of them are self-confident from knowing that they are supported well and that they are provided with interesting and challenging tasks.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Nicholas Jones	Reporting Inspector
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Copies of the report

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