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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Toy Box Nursery
Deeside College
Kelsterton Road
Connah's Quay
CH5 4BR**

Date of inspection: April 2011

by

Mr Eifion R Morgan

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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Context

Toy Box Nursery is located in the Deeside College in Connah's Quay, Flintshire. It primarily caters for children of students at the college, but when space allows, accepts children of staff working at the college and children from the immediate locality. It is registered by the Care & Social Services in Wales (CSSIW) to care for up to 106 children of ages from 3 months until they move on to the next stage in their education.

The Nursery is registered to accept up to 36 children aged 3 years. Currently there are 43 on the register, 26 attending at any one time of whom 5 are funded. Children generally pursue their primary education in the term following their fourth birthday. There is some variation dependent on the school of their choice since students attending the college come from different locations.

The socio-economic background of the children is highly variable, including one parent families and those living in community first areas. A few are from socio-economic advantaged areas. All are from English speaking backgrounds with very limited knowledge of the Welsh language.

The Nursery is open from 8 a.m. to 17.45 p.m. 5 days a week for 50 weeks of the year. Children are allocated into 5 groups depending on age.

The accommodation is very well maintained and provides exceptionally good facilities for the 3 year olds. Internally children occupy a large, warm and comfortable room, suitably differentiated into activity areas in keeping with the Foundation Phase outcomes for children's learning. Parents/carers approach this room along a corridor that provides children with coat hanging facilities and notice boards provide information for parents. Outside children use a well resourced play area enabling independent and group activities and providing children with opportunities for physical activities.

Children are admitted at around 3 months of age after prior consultation with the Nursery manager and after parents have visited the Nursery. The Nursery is well able to cater for children with additional learning needs (ALN) and is ideally suitable for those with physical disabilities. Whilst staff are vigilant in evaluating children's ability and progress, there is currently no child identified as having such needs.

The Nursery was last inspected by CSSIW in February 2011. There were no recommendations and the Nursery was reported as meeting, and often exceeding, the National Minimum Standards for full care.

The Nursery has not been previously inspected by Estyn.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

- * All children achieve and progress well in their learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- * All children show very good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- * Children are self-confident, form very good relationships, are considerate and courteous.
- * Children have good decision making skills and work independently or in small groups as the occasion demands.
- * All children have positive attitudes to keeping healthy and safe.
- * Curriculum planning is child focused and successfully engages all children.
- * Teaching is innovative with a very good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities.
- * Care, support and guidance is well directed and impacts well on children.
- * Leadership and management, including self-evaluation, has impacted very well on standards and provision.
- * Partnership with the College and parents is very good and makes a significant contribution to children's achievement.

Prospects for improvement

Excellent

- * The outstanding quality of leadership has provided clear aims and objectives and pervades all aspects of the Nursery.
- * The very high standard of leadership has very successfully promoted a positive ethos, high expectations about learning which is shared by all staff.
- * The highly effective self-evaluation is well established and information used to prioritise areas for development.
- * Staff appraisal (including performance management) is highly effective and is undertaken annually and identifies staff training requirements. The impact of such training is evaluated and has proved highly effective in terms of benefit to the children.
- * An outstanding sense of purpose is evident in the Nursery's day-to-day activities and provides children with challenging activities whilst supporting their development.

Good

- * The Nursery has a track record of implementing change and has benefited from the effective close working relationship with the College.

Recommendations

To improve, the Nursery needs to

1. improve the current provision for the development of children's competence in the Welsh language.
2. further refine assessment procedures so as to identify the next steps in children's learning and to use this information in curriculum planning.
3. develop better access to the outside play area. (This is recognised in the development planning).

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?

Good

Standards: Good

All children's standards of achievement and progress are good and sometimes very good. Children enjoy learning and persevere on their tasks for considerable periods of time. Most children are capable of working independently but most often work in small groups, happily sharing materials and resources. Nearly all children have the ability to make choices from the wide range of activities provided for them.

All children have good listening skills, relative to their age and enjoy listening to stories as told by an adult. More able children ask questions and can talk about characters in stories they know. All children have a good basic language that enables them to make themselves understood and the majority have a developing vocabulary that enables them to talk about themselves, their feelings and their homes. All children listen to the staff and carry out instructions willingly and many seek opportunities to help, such as when tidying up the classroom.

All children enjoy looking at books and the majority do so without prompting. These children hold books appropriately and in some instances they can re-tell a story they have heard. All children, some with prompting, recognise their name as when hanging up their coats and bags.

All children at some point during the day show their ability at basic mark making. Many are beginning to make recognisable shapes and know some of the functions of writing, such as making a shopping list.

Most children use basic mathematical language and recognise patterns, sequences and different shapes. Many children recognise basic numbers and some count to 9 and beyond.

All children in turn demonstrate basic computer skills involving the computer mouse. Many children recognise some computer icons, move characters on the screen and produce simple drawings. They also use a digital camera independently.

All children have well developed creative skills, such as when painting. They enjoy role play and respond well to music and dance.

All children's physical skills are good with some very good examples as were seen during the Jymtots activities. In such instances children knew different ways of moving, many demonstrate very good balancing skills and have good hand-eye co-ordination.

All children have a basic Welsh vocabulary, such as to describe themselves, colours and number. They clearly understand more words than they can speak as was obvious when they respond to basic instructions. They repeat familiar words and

phrases and join in Welsh songs and rhymes. However, their ability to follow stories in Welsh and to look at Welsh books is more limited.

Wellbeing: Good

All children have an appropriate understanding (in line with their age) of how they can keep healthy. Many wash their hands without prompting when they have been painting or playing in sand and water and before snacks. Many children have a basic understanding of healthy eating such as the importance of fruit in the diet. These children have a developing perception of the importance of physical activity.

The outside environment and the sports hall they use for Jymtots provide them with a safe environment where they can engage in vigorous physical activities.

Relationships are very good and children are free from verbal or physical abuse.

A good and notable feature of the Nursery is children's enjoyment in learning. Behaviour is well above expectations and all children have very good attitudes to learning and are willing participants. Children's positive attitudes to learning are well illustrated by their perseverance and concentration on their tasks. Their conversations show that they relate very well to each other, co-operating and working together happily.

Most children are adept at making decisions but are amenable to suggestions as to what they should do. They enjoy community involvement such as visiting the library to select books and visits by visitors from the community.

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

Staff collaborate in planning. A good and notable feature of the planning is that it is based on children's interest. Children are actively involved in deciding what they study and this very successfully engages all children. Planning subsequently is flexible and responds very well to children's needs and expectations. Planning takes very good account of the Foundation Phase outcomes, is innovative and suitably challenges and motivates children. All staff fully understand the Foundation Phase philosophy and produce a curriculum that builds systematically on individual children's knowledge, understanding and skills.

Learning activities are well designed to develop children as independent learners through giving them opportunities to select their tasks and so develop their self-confidence. This confidence and the development of self-respect is a good basis on which they form relationships and tolerance for people whatever their backgrounds. Children's learning experiences include ample opportunities for them to develop their physical and creative skills and an understanding of living things.

A good and notable feature of the planning is the provision made for developing children's skills coherently across all areas of learning. The staff are adept at

exploiting opportunities to develop their skills during child-centred activities and more adult focused work.

The provision to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the Welsh culture and traditions is good, including the celebration of Welsh festivals such as St. David's day and Santes Dwynwen. The Welsh language is developed through incidental use of the language but overall it is not sufficiently planned for so as to develop the language systematically and whilst children use the language it is not used sufficiently in their day-to-day activities.

The planning incorporates opportunities for children to learn about recycling of materials, such as when growing seeds and looking after them. Children have suitable opportunities to meet and hear about people who look after them in the community and to being to understand the roles different people play in society.

Teaching: Good

The well qualified and experienced staff have a good working knowledge of child development and understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase objectives for children's learning. There are high expectations of children and these are realised in practice. The "key worker" arrangement works well in practice in that individual staff have a very good knowledge of a small group of children. This enables them to match tasks to children's age and ability and to meet individual needs flexibly.

The day-to-day working of the Nursery enables children to choose activities and overall there is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities. Staff know when to intervene so ensuring that children are actively involved, questioning is well used to develop children's thinking skills and to challenge them.

Overall, staff work together very well and are well briefed about their roles.

The Nursery assesses children regularly and observations recorded and dated. "Key workers" know their children well and use this knowledge in planning activities. However, comments tend to be descriptive and do not always focus on the next steps in children's learning. As such assessment results are not always sufficiently used in curriculum planning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good and often very good.

The day-to-day activities effectively promote children's health and wellbeing. Most children are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of healthy eating and the value of exercise in a healthy life style. Children enjoy snacks and lunch which, as well as providing healthy foods, are important social occasions where children help each other and converse over food. There are ample opportunities for children to engage in robust physical activities in their well resourced play area. A very good feature is the opportunity made available for children to use the College's sports hall.

This provides them with a range of activities well designed to improve their cardio-vascular performance as well as developing their hand-eye co-ordination.

Visits to the locality help to develop children's curiosity about the world around them and visitors to the nursery extend children's knowledge of people in the community.

The day-to-day working of the Nursery, particularly the very good relationships between adults and children, help to foster values of honesty, fairness and respect for each other.

All children's social development is very good. They interact well and are becoming sensitive to each others' needs and care for each other.

All children have a clear understanding of right and wrong and practically all children behave accordingly. Many children show initiative and take responsibility with little prompting from adults. Overall, behaviour is very good and children are eager to take part in activities set out for them.

Children's cultural development is good and they are familiar with some of the cultural traditions of Wales.

The Nursery has effective links with local professional support and services and have been used in the past. Children identified with ALN have full access to all areas of learning and in the past have had access to external agencies as required. Parents have been consulted regularly and kept involved with their children's education. Overall, the Nursery has provided quality support for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for safeguarding children. A senior member of staff is the child protection officer and all staff have received recent and relevant training. The procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008).

Learning environment: Good

The Nursery displays a positive inclusive ethos that provides equality of access to all children whatever their background. Staff know their children well and are sensitive to their needs and show children affection, consideration and understanding.

The Nursery is a homely, supportive environment where children display a tolerant attitude free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. Policies and procedures for dealing with specific instances of discrimination are in place but never have they needed to be implemented.

The Nursery is ideally situated to accept children with any form of disability, particularly physical disability, and has policies in place to promote equal opportunities. Complaints procedures are displayed but have never been used.

The Nursery is generously staff with well qualified and experienced practitioners. Resources are well matched to the demands of the Foundation Phase curriculum

and accessible to the children. There is a generous supply of resources and materials and are well focused on the specific needs of the children.

Overall, the accommodation provides a very good environment for children's learning and is used effectively. The local environment is used well to support the learning.

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

All staff have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities as set out in their job descriptions. Staff working in the Nursery are highly effective in meeting the needs of the children and seeing what needs to be done. As a result the day-to-day activities and experiences children have are highly imaginative and of a very high standard.

The innovative overall leadership of the Nursery provides clear direction and a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement. The leader, working alongside senior staff at the College, is regarded as a highly efficient, innovative and accomplished member of the senior management team, contributing effectively to strategic planning.

Staff share values, aims and objectives, there are high expectations and these have been realised in practice. Staff are highly professional and the group leader for the 3 year olds – (the grasshopper group) fully understands her role in the organisation and plays a highly significant role in managing her responsibilities based on her thorough knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of the Foundation Phase objectives for children's learning.

There are effective and innovative procedures in place to induct, appraise and improve practitioners. Staff are appraised annually and their professional needs and the expectations of the Nursery addressed. This has resulted in all staff playing an highly effective and creative role in the Nursery and providing some superb experiences for the children. Overall, the outstanding impact of the leadership has provided the Nursery with clear innovative strategic direction and a fully committed staff.

Links with parents are very good and the Nursery is very effective in meeting the differing needs of parents and in responding to their personal situations.

The Nursery leader works effectively as part of the senior management team at the College. She is well aware about the performance of the setting and uses this information to make effective decisions. All legal duties are fulfilled.

The Nursery is highly effective in meeting national and local priorities and has taken good account of Welsh Assembly Government and Local Authority initiatives.

Improving quality: Excellent

Self-evaluative procedures are outstanding. The Nursery has consistently identified its strengths and areas for improvement in its self-evaluation procedures. It has been highly effective in building on its strengths and tackled areas for improvement consistently and innovatively. This has resulted in positive gains for the children and a highly innovative, imaginative curriculum well matched to their needs, interests and ability. An outstanding feature of the self-evaluation is that it is prioritised and planned within the overall Operational Business Plan and includes both on-going refinement to the Nursery (such as decoration) and innovative developments (such as acquiring a minibus) to extend children's learning opportunities.

Self-evaluation involves all staff taking into account their views, experiences and expertise. All staff are fully involved in professional development and actively contribute to the whole-setting professional learning experiences including in-house training.

The impact of training is routinely measured in terms of its effect on children's progress and wellbeing. This has proved to be highly effective.

Staff have good opportunities to develop their professionalism through visits and courses made available to them outside the setting.

Partnership working: Good

Parents, in the questionnaire replies expressed their complete satisfaction with the Nursery and are highly appreciative of the standards of care and the quality of educational provision provided by the Nursery. They appreciate the "open door" policy, the time they have to settle their children at the Nursery and the opportunity to meet with the staff.

Parents are appreciative of the "key worker" system. This means that parents can speak to the member of staff with specific responsibilities for their child. During the inspection it was observed that the key worker met and greeted each child arriving at the nursery and this was an effective method of settling the child and actively involving them in activities set out for them. No child was seen as being fractious but the support was available should any child be reluctant to join the group. Such arrangements also provided individual children with additional support and affection.

Parents are kept fully informed about the work of the Nursery and their child's achievement and progress.

Details of the daily activities, of the curriculum and other useful information are displayed on the notice board. There are opportunities at the end of the day for parents/carers to have some informal discussion with the "key workers" and to see examples of their child's work. Formal reports are produced annually. Parents, when necessary, are fully involved in decisions about their children.

Discussion with relevant staff from the Local Authority indicated a highly effective and useful partnership is in place. The Nursery has benefited from advice provided by

the advisory teacher who reported on the willingness of the Nursery to accept advice and to implement change.

The Nursery is acknowledged by Local Authority staff as a very good example of current Nursery practice.

Resource management: Good

Staff and resources are well deployed. The Nursery is generously staffed, by experienced and well qualified individuals who are very well committed to providing the very best experiences for the children.

There are ample resources that have been well chosen to meet the needs of the children and the Foundation Phase curriculum. The facilities children use are excellent, including the immediate outdoor play area and particularly the sports hall and facilities that children use in the Jymtots occasions. The impact of such activities on children's physical development and social skills is very good.

The Nursery, in its self-evaluation, has identified greater use of the outdoors, where possible to further extend children's skills. The current inspection, while noting the good and very good aspects of resources available fully supports such initiatives.

Overall, resources are very well used and the Nursery gives very good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Four questionnaires were returned. All indicated parent's total satisfaction with the Nursery. All strongly agreed with the statements in the parent's questionnaire that:

- (i) they are satisfied with the setting.
- (ii) that their child likes the setting.
- (iii) that their child had settled in well when starting at the setting.
- (iv) that their child is making good progress.
- (v) that the teaching is good.
- (vi) that their child is treated fairly and with respect.
- (vii) that their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.
- (viii) that their child is safe at the setting.
- (ix) that they are well informed about their child's progress.
- (x) that they are comfortable about approaching the setting.
- (xi) that they understand the setting's procedures for dealing with complaints.
- (xii) that their child is well prepared for moving onto school.
- (xiii) that the setting is well run.

There were no unfavourable comments.

Responses to discussions with children

All children are happy in the Nursery. By their very demeanour it is obvious that they enjoy their time at the Nursery. They arrive in the morning full of enthusiasm to partake in activities and are immediately part of the group. All children show a high degree of self-confidence and are willing to talk to a visitor and do so at length. Children talk about the many interesting things they do at the Nursery, the many friends they have and the help they get from the staff. Many children are happy to read to a visitor and talk about their favourite stories.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R Morgan	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)

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.