



*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**

**Little Stars Day Nursery  
Monmouth House  
Mamhilad Park Estate  
Pontypool  
NP4 0HZ**

**Date of inspection: May 2012**

**by**

**Mary Dyas**

**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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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## About the setting

Little Stars Day Nursery is an English-medium setting situated on an industrial estate near Pontypool. The nursery is privately owned and operates from two buildings connected by a well laid out outdoor play area.

Children travel to the nursery from a wide area. The children who attend the nursery are considered to come from mainly advantaged backgrounds and all have English as their home language. The setting welcomes all children and makes good provision for those with additional learning needs. One child has been identified with additional learning needs and has an individual play plan.

The setting is open from 7.45am to 6pm every weekday for 51 weeks a year and is registered for up to 32 children in the pre-school area. At the time of the inspection there were 48 children on the pre-school roll comprising 32 three-year-olds and 10 four-year-olds. Twenty-seven of the three-year-olds and nine of the four-year-olds are in receipt of funded education provision from the local authority.

The setting first achieved accreditation with Investors in People in 2005 and was last successfully reviewed in 2011. It was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales in January 2012 and by Estyn in March 2006.

## Summary

<b>The setting's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of the provider is good because:

- All children make very good progress during their time in the nursery;
- Children are fully involved in planning and evaluating the activities provided for them;
- Practitioners provide a wide range of exciting and interesting experiences for the children;
- All staff in the pre-school area fully understand their roles in supporting the children's learning; and
- Children are happy in the setting and from good relationships with the practitioners who care for them.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- The setting is very self-evaluative as evidenced by the work they have done with the Effective Early Learning Project, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and Investors in People;
- The setting has a good history of self-evaluation leading to improvement, for example in the work that has been done to include the pupil voice in planning and evaluation;
- The setting owners are highly committed to developing both the provision for the children and the knowledge and expertise of their staff

## Recommendations

In order to improve the setting needs to:

R1 Continue to develop the recording of spontaneous observations; and

R2 Ensure that children have enough opportunities to develop autonomy in their learning.

### What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how the setting is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>
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<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Standards: Excellent**

All children achieve well and many make exceptional progress in relation to their age and starting points across all the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning. Most children demonstrate very good levels of knowledge and understanding and all cope well with challenging activities. Many are confident learners who are willing to learn from their mistakes, take risks and explore their surroundings. Nearly all children persevere well with the tasks set during free choice activities.

Most children listen attentively and communicate extremely articulately. Many use mature vocabulary and sentence structures to express themselves. Nearly all join in with songs and rhymes enthusiastically and all enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. Many take opportunities to mark make and most children recognise their name when selecting their name card at snack time. Older children write their own names on pieces of work and are beginning to understand the purpose of writing; for example when independently writing a 'message in a bottle' as part of their Pirates topic. All children develop their knowledge of technology through their independent use of a range of electronic toys, camera, CD player and 'talking spots'. They also use simple programs on the computer to select and move items on the screen and older children successfully program an electronic toy to move and turn in different directions.

Most children use early mathematical skills effectively to count accurately up to five and describe shapes such as circles, triangles, squares and rectangles. Most older children count to and recognize numerals to at least ten with good accuracy. Many use correct mathematical language and skills correctly in their play. They describe the position of objects accurately, for example using words such as 'behind', 'underneath' or 'on top of'.

Nearly all children show very good levels of independence for their age and stage of development. All are keen to explore and experiment with a range of techniques and materials and many play highly imaginatively in role play areas.

Children's progress in Welsh is good. All clearly understand the words and phrases used by adults in the setting and respond to questions and commands in Welsh with understanding. Most count confidently to ten and are very familiar with Welsh words for colour which they use in the course of their play.

**Wellbeing: Excellent**

Children are relaxed and happy in the setting and are eager to try new experiences. All children interact positively with one another and with adults and behaviour is very good indeed. Children are polite to each other and to adults. Most children take turns and share toys and objects without the need to be reminded. The majority are keen to talk about their experiences and are confident to ask for help from adults. A notable feature of the nursery is the children's enjoyment in their learning. All children have very good attitudes to learning and their positive attitudes are well illustrated by their perseverance and concentration on their tasks. This is an exceptional feature of the setting. Their conversations show that they relate very well to each other, co-operating and working together happily.

Most children show understanding of the importance of eating healthily. They enjoy snack time and lunch time, eating a wide range of fresh, healthy food prepared for them. Most children are aware of the need to wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet. At 'tidy up time' children know where equipment is stored and carry out their tasks quickly and efficiently.

The children's involvement in the planning and evaluation of their activities is sector leading practice. All children are fully involved in the planning and evaluation of their activities. At the beginning of each topic children are consulted in groups to discuss what they already know and what activities they would like to take part in. The setting up of role play areas is discussed in detail and adapted in line with children's suggestions. Each week a selection of children are invited to contribute their evaluation about what they liked, what they found tricky and what they would like to do next time. Their comments are recorded and taken into account when planning the following week's activities.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Good**

Practitioners work very well together to plan a wide range of activities which stimulate, engage and challenge most children to learn effectively. Plans are based on ensuring coverage of the areas of learning using the Foundation Phase Development Profile and Skills Framework and on specific needs identified from observations of children's learning.

Practitioners know the children very well and respond appropriately to their varying needs, abilities and interests. Planning clearly addresses the needs and interests of the children and, overall, learning experiences successfully enable children to develop communication, numeracy and ICT skills every day.

Practitioners develop children's Welsh language skills well. Welsh is used consistently for whole group activities such as registration or during singing and story sessions and all practitioners make good use of incidental Welsh during their interactions with the children. Children are encouraged to use Welsh. St David's Day is well used to teach children about the customs and traditions of Wales.

All children show a good understanding of the need for recycling. They place paper, cardboard and plastic into containers in their classroom and classroom 'helpers' take the contents to the nursery recycling area for collection.

### **Teaching: Good**

The quality of teaching is good. All practitioners are aware of the learning objectives for activities and have a secure understanding of Foundation Phase principles and practice. They use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning experiences which interest and appeal to children of all abilities. Children respond particularly well to staff efforts to make learning fun.

Adults give children sufficient time to complete a task or to develop an idea and intervene appropriately and sensitively when needed. Teaching is most effective when practitioners use open-ended questions to challenge children's thinking. Practitioners provide children with helpful oral feedback as they learn. Children's progress and wellbeing are tracked across all areas of learning and this information is used effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning.

The setting pays good attention to children's individual needs and organizes both enhancement and intervention groups to stretch or support children's literacy and mathematical skills as identified from assessment notes.

Daily observations are noted on sticky notes by all practitioners and then entered into children's personal profiles by their keyworkers. Together with the observations from adult led activities, this information is effectively used to inform the nursery's assessment documentation and the report which is given to parents at the end of the year. There is a daily verbal exchange of information with parents and carers during the handover at the beginning and end of sessions and opportunities for parents to meet with their child's keyworker more formally twice a year.

A consequence of the good staffing ratios and the careful planning and assessment procedures is that there are not enough opportunities for spontaneous child-selected activities. Too often children are involved in practitioner directed planned tasks and do not independently choose equipment and activities for themselves.



**Care, support and guidance: Good**

The setting has good arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing and arrangements for the support of children with additional learning needs. Practitioners work closely with professionals such as the speech therapist. There are good transition arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting. Children moving up from the toddler group, which is in a different building, visit in small groups with a member of staff to familiarize themselves with the change in environment. Children and their parents or carers say they feel happy in the setting and are willing to ask for help and support. Children are kept safe by regular careful risk assessments. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. All practitioners receive relevant training and understand their roles and responsibilities. Other policies are appropriately detailed and relevant. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

**Learning environment: Good**

The pre-school area provides a bright and welcoming environment for all children. The nursery is an inclusive community and respects and celebrates diversity and the pre-school area would be appropriate to both adults and children with a physical disability.

There is a good range of appropriate and good quality resources available to support the planned learning experiences and children have daily access to a good sized outdoor area which provides good opportunities to extend children's learning.

Staff in the pre-school group are well trained and demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The setting owners are currently leading this group as the current room leader is on maternity leave.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Leadership: Good**

The joint leadership of the nursery by the owners provides clear direction and a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement. Clear targets are set, addressed and reviewed. The setting responds positively to national and local priorities; for example the development of the outdoors.

The nursery is a happy and friendly place where staff work well together and are proud of the good reputations and high esteem in which they are held by parents of children who attend. There is a strong and well established culture of self reflection and self improvement in the setting which is driven by the owners and sustained by all staff. Minutes of monthly staff meetings ensure that all staff are kept up to date with new initiatives or requirements.

Practitioners work well together with shared goals for the development of the setting and to provide the best possible care and education for the children. They are encouraged to take responsibility and to show initiative. Some pre-school staff have had the opportunity to 'job swap' with practitioners from another local day nursery and have brought back examples of good practice which they have been enabled to set up in Little Stars – the recycling in the pre-school classroom is an example of this.

Staff are appraised annually and both their professional needs and the expectations of the nursery are addressed in clear targets. The owners give very clear direction to their staff. The current opportunity for them to lead the pre-school room has given good opportunities for them to model good practice and to observe the operation of the setting at first hand.

### **Improving quality: Good**

Practitioners reflect together daily on their practice and know their setting well. They recognise strengths and areas for development and take action to maintain good practice and initiate changes. The setting's self-evaluation report is a useful document, using the model provided by the local authority, and clearly identifies areas for further development with costings and timescales. Targets for improvement are reviewed and further areas for improvement identified. There is good evidence that these are being positively addressed; for example in the development of the outdoors in the setting.

Staff have good opportunities to develop their professionalism through visits and courses made available to them outside the setting. In addition to courses related to the Foundation Phase, staff members have been encouraged to pursue leadership training and to take responsibility for the development of initiatives such as the Effective Early Learning project which has had a positive impact on the settings self-evaluation of its processes.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting has good relationships with the parents of the children in their care and results from the parents' questionnaires show that parents are very satisfied with the care and the learning experiences provided for their children. Practitioners speak to parents every day about what their child has been doing and celebrate success. Children also take home a daily diary which gives information about the activities they have been involved in. Although children attending the nursery move on to a number of different schools, the nursery has established good links with one school which has taken several of the children and have accompanied children to an induction session and attended a Christmas concert.

The setting enjoys a very positive relationship with the Early Entitlement link teacher from the local authority who provides support and advice. Over the past two years at the request of the nursery, this has included support for planning, management of difficult children and lesson plans. There is clear evidence that this advice has been acted on to improve provision for the children.

The owners are very involved with the local National Day Nurseries Association and regularly visit other similar settings in the area. They have worked closely together to share good practice and to discuss new initiatives. They also attend regular meetings for non-maintained settings in the Local Authority.

**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 outdoor play area.

Financial management is shared by the owners who agree all spending and evaluate it for value and impact on learning. Overall, resources are very well used and the nursery gives good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirty-one questionnaires were returned. All indicated parent's satisfaction with the setting and many made additional comments to praise the dedication of the staff and to say how happy their children are at the nursery. One did not know the setting's arrangements for dealing with complaints and another disagreed that there is a good range of activities including trips or visits.

### Responses to discussions with children

All children are happy in the nursery. They arrive in the morning full of enthusiasm to partake in activities and are immediately part of the group. Most 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 and the friends they have made.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

Mary Dyas	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](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

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

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<p>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 partnership's conditions of registration.</p>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.</p>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<p>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.</p>

<b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<b>National (NDNA)</b>	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
<b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.