

The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

Nursery report on: Mathern Day Nursery

Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Mary Dyas

Date of inspection: 24th October 2007

Contract number: T/022/07N

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Report on the inspection of nursery settings in the non-maintained sector

Name of nursery: Mathern Day Nursery

Address: The Old School
Mathern
Chepstow
NP16 6JH

Post code: NP16 6JH

Telephone: 01291 622007

Person responsible for day-to-day management Amanda Gore

Position Proprietor

About the inspection

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

- Grade 1** good with outstanding features
- Grade 2** good features and no major shortcomings
- Grade 3** good features outweigh shortcomings
- Grade 4** some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
- Grade 5** many important shortcomings

1.0 Context of the setting

Context of the nursery setting

Mathern Day Nursery was established in 1989 by the present proprietor. It is housed in the old school building in a rural village and caters for children from six months old until they start at primary school. Many of the children in the Pre-school group for three and four year olds have been part of the nursery for most of their lives. A few children also attend nursery classes in primary schools.

Children attending the nursery come from a widespread area and move on to a number of different primary schools. They come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

The Pre-school group has the use of two relatively small rooms upstairs in the building with an adjoining toilet and wash basin. Other toilets downstairs are used when going to lunch or playing outside. The rooms are light and bright with children's work attractively displayed on walls and ceilings.

Outside is a walled playground with an expanse of tarmac painted with a track. There is also a small area with a safety surface for a climbing frame and an area of stones where they are able to play with sand and diggers.

At the time of the inspection there were eleven children receiving funding from the local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership of which ten were three year olds and one a four year old. There were twenty three children on roll with twelve attending on the morning of the inspection and fourteen in the afternoon. There were no children from ethnic minority groups or with identified additional needs, although policies are in place to accommodate these. Most children spoke English as their main language at home.

The nursery was last inspected by the Care and Social Standards Inspectorate in September 2006 and by Estyn in 2000.

2.0 Main findings of the report

2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision and whether or not the provision successfully promotes the goals for children's learning

The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the desirable outcomes for children's learning.

2.2 Standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

Six areas of learning	Grade for under-fives
Language, literacy and communication skills	2
Personal and social development	1
Mathematical development	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	2
Physical development	2
Creative development	2

2.3 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

Quality of education	Grade for under-fives
Quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
Quality of planning for children's learning	2
Quality of teaching	2
Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress, and reports for parents and carers	2
Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community	2
The contribution made by the setting to children's well-being	2
Quality of the leadership and management of the setting	2
The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report	2

3.0 The standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds and standards achieved by 4-5 year-olds

3.1 Language, literacy and communication skills

Good features

Children make good progress in this area. They speak in sentences and long phrases and are able to explain what they are doing. They ask appropriate questions and listen to the answers.

They listen well to stories, pay attention and anticipate what is coming next. Most are able to remember familiar stories and to retell the main points. During their play they enjoy looking at books themselves and are able to explain what is happening in illustrations. They also listen attentively through headphones to stories on CD.

On entry to the section they identify their name and stick it on a board to show their attendance. Most are able to recognise their name independently in different contexts and some are also able to write it.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.2 Personal and social development

Good features

Children make excellent progress in this area. Relationships in the nursery are very good; children know each other very well and interact with one another freely. They have close relationships with their leaders and are friendly and welcoming to visitors. They understand the need to share and take turns and demonstrate this when playing games in small groups.

Children have many opportunities to show their developing independence and are able to pour their own drink at snack time, put on and take off their coats, and mix their own powder paints. They also maintain a record of who wants to use the computer next by selecting their name on a small card and sticking it in order on the wall. When it is their turn they use a sand timer to monitor how long they have.

They have begun to understand that living things need care and attention and they help to feed the nursery guinea pigs and to water the plants they have grown.

Children concentrate for lengthening periods and are able to see a task through until it is finished.

They have learned some simple Welsh words and greetings and are beginning to use these spontaneously alongside English words.

Shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified.

3.3 Mathematical development

Good features

Children have many opportunities to count during the day. They count the names in the register and check that this agrees with the number of children actually present and with the name board in the corridor. They also count the number of children on their table at snack time and are able to go and collect the correct number of cups. Children are able to identify numbers past ten on a number board and to count by rote to twenty.

As part of a recent topic the children have worked on shape recognition and are able to identify squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, diamonds and stars. They can identify simple shapes from a verbal description, for example "my shape has four sides and they are all the same length".

Children use mathematical language naturally in the course of their play such as big, small, too small, under and flat/not flat for thick and thin.

They know and join in with a range of number rhymes and songs and are able to hold up the correct number of fingers.

Shortcomings

There are not enough opportunities for children to experience the mathematics of money.

3.4 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Good features

Through the wealth of exciting planned activities available the children make good progress in this area. They have begun to understand about the changing seasons and have linked this to when their birthdays fall. They are able to talk knowledgeably about autumn. They are also able to discuss the weather and record it pictorially and to identify the correct day of the week.

They have daily access to a computer and a range of age appropriate software which enables them to use a mouse to make purposeful choices.

Children are familiar with the routines of the nursery and are able to discuss what is happening and what will happen next.

At snack time they take turns to choose what the group will have that day from a range of items on offer and stick pictures on a board for display outside in the corridor. They also have choose activities to be put out during free play sessions.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.5 Physical development

Good features

Children's fine motor skills are well developed through a range of table top activities. They are able to roll and cut playdough skilfully and to manipulate small pegs into holes on a board. They handle a range of implements correctly to make marks; for example painting on walls with water, writing on the ground and/or boards with chalks and using pens and crayons.

Outdoors they develop their gross motor skills through a range of enjoyable activities. They steer different pedalled vehicles, play with hoops and balls, balance along low beams, twirl long ribbons and enjoy running, skipping and hopping. They develop their hand and eye coordination by trying to throw beanbags into hoops.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified,

3.6 Creative development

Good features

Children select materials from a range for their creative activities. They select colours for their painting and also mix their own colours from powder paint, using a chart to mix secondary colours.

They play very imaginatively in the role play area and also with the various small world settings on offer.

Children enjoy and join in with singing familiar songs and play a range of multicultural percussion instruments with great enthusiasm along to an African song. They are able to respond to suggestions to play slowly, quickly, loudly and softly and can stop on command.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.0 The quality of educational provision

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds and for 4-5 year-olds

4.1 The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Good features

The nursery has clear aims about values and principles and these are evident in the warm and caring ethos found in the Pre-school group. Staff provide strong role models and give much praise and encouragement to the children. Discipline is not a problem and any small issues are dealt with positively.

Children are able to form an understanding of the diversity of cultures in the world in which they live through books, multicultural dolls in both home corner and small world settings, celebration of social and cultural traditions and festivals and singing songs from around the world. They have been introduced to simple Welsh vocabulary, phrases and greetings and these are reinforced throughout the sessions.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.2 The quality of planning for children's learning

Good features

Planning is based around general themes and is based firmly on the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Plans are well balanced between the six areas of learning and good use is made of the resources available. Weekly plans list the focus for each day and activities for the week, identifying learning intentions and opportunities for assessment.

Although there were no children with identified additional needs present at the time of the inspection, the planned activities would be accessible to all.

Shortcomings

There is no specific planning for outdoor activities and opportunities are missed to link outdoor activities with themes followed indoors.

4.3 The quality of teaching

Good features

Staff are appropriately qualified. The leader of the Pre-school section holds a diploma in Nursery Nursing and she is supported by three other staff who either hold or are pursuing recognised Early Years qualifications. All are knowledgeable about the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. The learning intentions for the different activity areas around the rooms are listed on the walls as an aide memoire when interacting with children. The setting is well resourced and resources are effectively used to support the intended learning outcomes. Very good use is made of the limited indoor space to ensure that all areas of learning are provided for.

Staff know the children very well and interact with them to help them in their learning and development. They are extremely vigilant and intervene when necessary to help and encourage individuals.

The nursery is well supported by regular visits from an advisory teacher from the Local Education Authority.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.4 The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports to parents and carers

Good features

Good systems are in place for assessing children's progress and achievement. Daily planned activities feed into the assessment information for each child and are affective and manageable. All staff participate in assessments and take turns to deliver the adult focus assessment opportunities. Notes from these assessments are transferred to children's individual records.

Formal records are kept in line with the current recommendations of the Local Education Authority. These are shared with parents and passed on to the child's reception class.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.5 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community

Good features

The nursery practices three levels of communication with parents and carers: Passive, which involves an ever open door for free communication and a prominently displayed suggestion box; active, involving regular sample surveys; review, offering feedback if requested.

Parents say that they are very happy with the provision of the nursery and speak warmly about the caring ethos and personal attention their children receive from all the staff. They report that they receive a regular newsletter and daily information about activities planned for the nursery on the notice board in the corridor.

Parents of children starting in the Pre-school group are offered the opportunity to visit the nursery to discuss their child's progress and the changes in the provision they will be experiencing.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing

Good features

A comprehensive range of policies ensures that children are safe and well protected. Staff are trained in first aid, child protection and health and safety and all safety checks are up to date. The indoor environment is safe and the outdoors securely enclosed.

The ethos of the nursery is a very warm one and children are relaxed and happy in their relationships with each other and with the adults who care for them. There is a positive behaviour policy and bullying is not tolerated.

All staff have enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau and there is a clear policy for employment of new staff ensuring that references are taken up before employment.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting

Good features

The leader of the Pre-school group has begun the process of self evaluation. Aspects of provision have been evaluated on a five point scale and she has identified ways to improve those areas which scored lower. Advice and support from the visiting teacher from the local authority Early Years Childcare and Development Partnership has been noted and acted upon. Staff also attend and benefit from regular cluster meetings organised by the LEA.

All members of staff are appraised termly by the nursery proprietor . Training needs are discussed and appropriate courses are identified for them to attend.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.8 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for inspection identified in the last inspection report

Good features

The policy document has been revised to reflect the issues raised during the last inspection and these policies are regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.

Effective records of children's progress are now in place.

Steps have been taken to provide more challenge for older and more able pupils and training has been given to ensure a good balance between intervention and allowing the children freedom to learn independently.

Shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

Ensure that outside activities are planned to provide continuity and progression in learning linked with those inside the classroom.

Continue to build on the very good start made with introducing children to the Welsh language and culture in order that they become confident in using their knowledge in the course of their play.

Provide opportunities for children to reflect on what they have learned and to enjoy and appreciate the work of others.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to Estyn. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.