



*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**

**First Steps  
Y Garth  
Alexandra Road  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LS**

**Date of inspection: March 2013**

**by**

**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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

**© Crown Copyright 2013: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.**

**Publication date: 02/04/2013**

## Context

First Steps Nursery is a privately funded English-medium setting situated in the town of Llandrindod Wells in Powys. Most children who attend have relatively advantaged backgrounds and they come from a very wide geographical area. Nearly all children are British born and have English as their home language. A very few are from ethnic minorities and speak English as a second language. All the children come from homes where little Welsh is spoken. None require additional support for learning.

The setting is open from 8.30am to 5.30pm five days a week throughout the year. It provides childcare services for up to 20 pre-school children, including education sessions for up to 12 three-year-olds. At the time of the inspection eight three-year-olds and one four-year-old were enrolled. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership fund these children up to 10 hours per week.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales last inspected the setting in June 2012 and the previous inspection by Estyn was in February 2007.

During 2012 the setting achieved Healthy Preschool and Designed to Smile accreditation.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is generally good because:

- a wide range of learning experiences is provided;
- relationships within the setting are excellent;
- high quality care, support and personal guidance assure children's wellbeing; and
- a happy, inclusive family ethos is very well promoted.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- the leadership provides clear direction;
- a teamwork ethos and shared sense of purpose are evident; and
- the setting's improvement planning sets appropriate targets

However:

- the management of resources and plans to show how targets will be addressed lack sufficient rigour.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve planning to provide learning activities that challenge all children effectively
- R2 Provide clear guidance for teaching and use information from assessments to plan children's next steps in learning
- R3 Develop planning to show how key priorities to improve children's outcomes will be implemented
- R4 Review the organisation of resources and monitor their impact on children's learning

### What happens next?

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

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

N/A

#### Standards: N/A

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 at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

#### Wellbeing: N/A

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 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 setting provides a wide range of interesting learning experiences. These meet children's needs and appropriately promote progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes. Members of staff plan activities together and ensure an appropriate range of indoor and outdoor provision. They know the children's needs well. Good emphasis is placed on promoting skills in literacy, numeracy and communication, but there are too few opportunities to use information and communication technology.

Planning is appropriately structured. Imaginative topics provide a good framework to ensure progression in learning. However, plans do not contain enough detail of what children need to do or what they need to learn. This means that children are not always challenged well enough. This slows the progress of more able children.

The staff promotes suitable opportunities for children to solve problems and experiment with the world around them well. These experiences successfully foster positive relationships and promote awareness of other cultures, such as through celebrating festivals like the Chinese New Year.

Visits and occasional visitors encourage wider awareness of the natural and man-made world. Good use is made of facilities within the local community to enhance learning. Gardening, cooking, composting and recycling promotes awareness of sustainability and the impact people have on the global environment.

Provision to promote awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales is good. The staff, who are Welsh learners, promote the language well.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Members of staff successfully promote a positive learning environment. They enthusiastically interact with children and use questioning and praise well to promote learning. Learning through play is appropriately encouraged.

The staff has a sound knowledge and understanding of child development and the Foundation Phase. They use a range of teaching approaches well to gain children's interest, for example when using puppets and role playing stories. Teaching ensures children engage in both indoor and outdoor learning, but activities are sometimes over structured. This results in too few opportunities for children to choose to return to an activity. Children are given plenty of time to complete adult led tasks. The staff intervenes appropriately, but they are sometimes slow to adapt teaching to meet the differing needs of children. Their awareness of the activities planned is sound, but their understanding of how to develop skills within a task is less well developed.

The arrangements for assessment are appropriate. Day-to-day observations and assessments of children's achievements usefully inform individual learning records. However, the use of assessment information to help shape the next steps in learning is at an early stage of development.

Parents value informal communication with practitioners about their child's progress before and after sessions. Appropriate information is provided about children's achievements in written reports when children leave the setting.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The setting provides high quality care and support in a homely environment. The promotion of personal development is a strong feature of the setting.

The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This has a positive impact on children's personal and social development. It encourages a sense of curiosity about the world, fosters the values of honesty and fairness, promotes good behaviour and engages children well in a range of community and cultural activities.

There are well established arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting. The setting has appropriate procedures to provide children with personal and specialist support when required. Liaison with supporting agencies is appropriate. There are arrangements to support and integrate children who need extra help with their learning, but the provision to support more able children is at an early stage of development.

Established procedures ensure that the setting is safe and secure. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented and members of staff have a valid criminal records bureau disclosure. The setting has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding, which meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting has a happy, inclusive family ethos. It provides a friendly and supportive learning environment that values individual qualities. Excellent relationships help to ensure that children feel safe from undue worry. Practitioners appropriately promote awareness of diversity. They strongly encourage sensitivity and understanding towards others and skillfully promote good behaviour. Equal opportunities are well promoted, but arrangements to ensure that any child with disabilities does not suffer disadvantage are not formalised.

There are sufficient appropriately qualified practitioners. Overall, the provision of learning resources is sufficient to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The setting makes good use of the space available. However, the organisation of resources restricts the variety of activities offered.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
--	-----------------

### **Leadership: Good**

The proprietor and nursery manager provides enthusiastic leadership. The setting is well managed so that practitioners have a sound understanding of their role and responsibilities. The required policies and procedures are in place and members of staff work well as a team. The setting leader successfully promotes shared values and works hard to raise expectations further.

The setting has a clear mission statement. The staff meet regularly to plan and discuss activities. Their involvement in helping shape provision is developing steadily. Planning to help achieve the setting's goals is seldom recorded in enough detail.

The proprietor maintains appropriate oversight of the setting and communicates clearly with parents. Procedures for staff appraisal meet requirements. The impact of arrangements for the professional development is developing.

The provision incorporates the Foundation Phase principles and practitioners reflect on professional advice. They readily embrace national and local priorities. The focus on healthy development and sustainable living is particularly well established.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

Much good provision identified in the last inspection is maintained, but there is limited evidence of further improvement. Procedures for self-evaluation are systematic and the current improvement plan is well focused. The proprietor promotes enthusiastically clear direction in improving the business.

A culture of self-improvement is developing among practitioners. Appropriate account is taken of the views of parents, and carers. The focus on improvement among practitioners is promoted through discussion, but their involvement in self-evaluation is limited. The self-evaluation report appropriately identifies strengths and areas for improvement and links closely with targets identified in the setting's improvement plan. However, this planning does not include plans of action to clearly identify how further improvements will be secured and resourced.

Networks of professional practice support practitioners' professional development well. Activities within the local cluster, attended by the proprietor, promote the sharing of good practice. For example, a recent visit to another setting has prompted changes to planning and assessment.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting has beneficial partnerships with parents, local and national organisations, the community, a local college and the local authority. These links impact well on the quality of the service it provides.

The close partnership with parents and carers develops positive relationships, encourages their involvement and impacts well on children's wellbeing and development. Parents receive an informative prospectus and regular newsletters. Informal day-to-day communication is effective in keeping parents informed about their child and planned activities. Appropriate links with receiving schools help to ensure a smooth transition when children begin school.

Partnership working among the staff is steadily developing. They respond positively to the support and advice received from a range of external agencies.

The setting makes good use of resources within the community to enhance provision. For example, the link with a local project successfully promotes awareness of organic growing and healthy eating.

Partnership with the local authority is both rigorous and challenging and results in beneficial support and training. In particular the setting leader gains information from attending the training provided.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The deployment of appropriately qualified staff across the day care provision promotes incidental learning well. Activities, including circle time and messy play, in addition to daily educational sessions enhance provision effectively.

During educational sessions adult led activities are managed well. However, the deployment and training of staff to prepare and manage learning activities is not fully developed. Furthermore, the organisation of learning resources limits their accessibility to children without help. This limits both the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational provision.

The proprietor ensures effective financial controls, but the audit of resources and planning to renew and enhance provision is not formally linked to improvement plans. Expenditure over time has ensured sufficient resources are available.

Taken overall, the setting uses its resources appropriately. The provision provides good value for money because it provides a wide range of learning opportunities and a high of quality care for children.



## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. Brief conversations with a few parents confirm they appreciate the work of the setting and confirm their children enjoy attending.

#### Responses to discussions with children

During the sessions observed children quickly settled and engaged in activities with the staff. They have excellent relationships with practitioners and a homely ethos ensures children feel safe and secure. This was clearly evident in their confidence to talk to the adults. They know that practitioners help them and that they are expected to be kind to others and to behave well.

## Appendix 2

### Reporting inspector

Michael Ridout	Reporting Inspector
----------------	---------------------

### 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))

## 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 partnerships 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.