



Childcare Inspection Report on

Little Stars Nursery

**Strand Annealing Lane
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6AN**



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Description of the service

Little Stars Nursery is registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to provide day care for up to 73 children between the ages of six weeks and 12 years. The service offers full day care from 7.30 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday. It also provides an after school and holiday club for children attending Ebbw Fawr Primary School, and a wrap around service for children attending the school nursery. It is based in a self contained unit within Ebbw Fawr Primary School. The service is privately owned and managed by two early years teachers. A person in charge is employed to run the service on a day to day basis. This is an English language service with good use of the Welsh language as part of the daily routine.

Summary of our findings

Overall assessment

Staff and leaders at Little Stars place children's well-being at the heart of the service. They know the children very well and treat them with exceptional levels of care and respect. They promote children's development and confidence by encouraging them to make their own decisions and providing varied activities which follow the children's interests and promote their sense of fun. The environment is bright and welcoming. Staff effectively follow robust procedures to ensure children are safe. The service is very effectively managed and there is an ethos of continual improvement to ensure positive outcomes for children.

Improvements

The nursery has made a number of improvements since the previous inspection:

- An area of the garden has been set up for babies to play safely and a mud kitchen has been provided;
- staff have attended training in areas such as Baby Whispering;
- opportunities have been introduced for children to serve themselves at breakfast and snack times;
- meal times have been reorganised so the toddlers and pre-school children eat in two separate sittings;
- incidental Welsh, Welsh songs and activities are firmly embedded, and
- the children's menu has been reviewed with the support of the local authority.

Requirements and recommendations

There were no non compliance matters identified at this inspection.

We made some recommendations to develop the service and improve outcomes for children, which are detailed in full in section five of this report.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children's well-being is central to this provision and they are able to form very warm and positive relationships with staff. They enjoy their time at the service and are happy and excited to take part in a good variety of activities, both indoors and outside. They are well supported to develop their self-help skills and encouraged to make choices and decisions to promote their independence.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children of all ages are encouraged to choose their activities and express their views and feelings. Staff know the younger children well; they understand their needs, preferences and attempts to communicate. For example a member of staff recognised a child was wanting to use one of the wheeled toys but was a little unsure; the member of staff helped the child and they pedalled off happily. Staff regularly ask children about what they would like to do, or if they need help. They respond to children's preferences and follow their ideas and interests, which helps increase the children's involvement in their play. For example, a member of staff sat with some of the pre-school children who were looking at books, engaging their imagination and promoting their love of books. Children can access resources easily and the structure of the sessions means children can determine their own play for most of the day. Children are invited to take part in circle times, but staff support children who prefer not to. During circle time activities, staff ask children for their ideas. For example a group of toddlers expressed which songs they would like to sing and whether to sing them fast or slow. Children can choose from a variety of foods at breakfast and snack times and staff told us they will find alternatives if a child doesn't like the lunch time meal. Children's feedback and ideas on activities is regularly obtained and changes made in accordance with their suggestions. For example the after school children recently suggested they want to learn Spanish and this is being introduced this term. The nursery has used some very good ideas to canvass children's views of all ages, but these could be embedded further.

Children are able to make lots of choices and their feelings and views are respected and valued.

1.2 To what extent do children feel safe, happy and valued?

There are very good systems in place to help children feel secure and confident. This includes an effective key worker system where each child has a key person who is responsible for their care and for forming close relationships with them and their parents. All children are greeted warmly by their key worker when they arrive. Nearly

all children arrive happy and are able to separate easily from their carer. The very few children who are a little unsure receive very effective support and settle quickly. Children approach staff confidently if they need extra support during the day. Staff are responsive to children's needs and know them well, providing lots of cuddles, comfort and support when needed. For example, one child was feeling a little unsure. The member of staff stayed close by and took out the tea set for them to play with as they knew this was a favourite play resource. The child smiled and became more animated, engaging the member of staff in their play. Staff manage themselves successfully to provide personal care to their key children which helps strengthen the bond between them. We spoke with staff who knew their key children very well, knowing for example how they like to go to sleep and how they like to be comforted, and children's preferences are followed. Children making transitions to the next age group within the nursery are given time to visit their new room in small stages, supported by their key worker, which helps them manage the change with as little anxiety as possible. Children explore their environment confidently and are familiar with the routine. For example, the tots happily moved to the mat after their snack to put on their coats and eagerly went to the door ready to go outside. Staff ask older children how they are feeling and about their day at nursery and school. They listen to their responses and as a result children feel valued and supported. Children are forming friendships and parents told us their children talk regularly about their key worker and friends. Children feel secure and valued and are happy at the service.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children interact well with each other and staff. They show concern for each other. For example one child gave another child who was feeling a little unsettled a hug. Children enjoy social occasions with their peers and staff such as meals and snack times, and older children take turns to help themselves to the food provided. Older children play well together and enjoy creating their own games. Children enjoy involving staff in their play and enjoy the support provided. They respond well to lots of praise and encouragement from staff as well as gentle reminders to share or use "*kind hands*". Children listen to the staff and are keen to wash their hands at the appropriate times, or follow their example to help tidy up.

Children interact very well with each other and staff within a positive and supportive atmosphere.

1.4 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Children are excited to take part in the play and learning activities such as role play, construction and playing in the sand. Older children told us about the things they have enjoyed doing. For example, making 'ants on a stick', smoothies and Friday parties. Children are very engaged in their play and staff support them well. For example, some children spent a good amount of time sharing books, reading and talking about

them with each other and the member of staff. Outside children have lots of fun playing with resources such as hoops and balls and riding wheeled toys. They respond well to new challenges set by staff. For example, a group of children playing with hoops were eager to try and roll them as far as they could, following the example set by the staff. Children engage well at circle times, laughing and joining in with the songs and activities enthusiastically.

Children are active, very involved in their play and enjoy their time at the nursery.

1.5 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?

Children make good progress. Staff use observations of children's play effectively to plan a very good range of activities to help children with the next steps in their learning. Children are becoming increasingly independent and can make decisions for themselves. For example the younger children are learning to manage their food independently and attempt to put on their own coats. Older children manage their personal needs very successfully. They wash their hands and brush their teeth independently and use self-help skills well at breakfast and snacks to serve themselves. One parent commented in their CIW questionnaire: "*Little Stars is a great nursery that supports children to become independent and learn new activities.*"

Children are able to take part in a very good range of activities which promote their learning, acquisition of skills and independence.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Staff give exceptionally warm and sensitive care and show exemplary levels of respect for the children and each other. They know the children very well and put each child's needs at the centre of their care. Staff follow effective systems to keep children safe and promote children's health successfully.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff promote children's health and well-being effectively. They read relevant policies and procedures and implement these appropriately. Staff have a very clear understanding of their role in relation to safeguarding issues and attend training regularly. The service is following schemes to promote all aspects of children's health. Through these schemes, staff encourage children to, for example, learn about the importance of looking after their teeth and of enjoying a healthy diet. Staff provide children with plenty of opportunities to play outside, either in their adjacent outdoor play area or at the local park and forest. They follow suitable procedures for taking children out on local trips and use appropriate equipment such as wrist bands to ensure children's safety. Staff follow good procedures to ensure the safety of children with allergies or specific medical needs. They all hold up-to-date, appropriate first aid qualifications and ensure accident logs are completed appropriately. All staff hold relevant food hygiene qualifications so know how to handle food safely. Hygiene procedures are good and staff encourage children to wash their hands at suitable times. Staff monitor sleeping babies and younger children carefully. Fire drills to leave the building and drills to come inside are practised regularly with the children so they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Staff are appropriately trained and implement the required policies and procedures to ensure that children's health and welfare is promoted.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

Staff promote children's behaviour by consistently and effectively implementing positive strategies. Staff praise children for their efforts and provide exceptional levels of support, attention and encouragement to promote their self-esteem. The very good range of interesting activities help children stay involved and interested. They share children's successes effectively to promote children's confidence. For example, when one child hugged another as they were upset, a member of staff praised the child and openly shared their actions positively with other staff. Staff use a number of effective reward systems to encourage wanted behaviour. They sit with children at meal and snack times, acting as good role models to support children's social skills. They

provide opportunities for children to practise taking turns through activities such as circle times and encouraging children to play ball games together. Staff use gentle tones to help remind children how to behave appropriately. They treat each other and the children very respectfully using kind words and phrases which creates a supportive and positive atmosphere.

Staff work closely together to promote positive interactions between the children using consistent and appropriate strategies.

2.3 How well do practitioners promote children's play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?

Staff know the children very well and have a clear understanding of their needs, preferences and stage of development. They use a number of strategies to assess children regularly so they can identify individual targets and plan suitable activities to promote children's next steps. Staff skilfully promote children's language development. For example, they provide running commentaries during children's activities, interweaving colours and numbers naturally, and sing nursery rhymes with children as they play. One parent commented in their CIW questionnaire: "*The girls work very hard with all the children and you can see this through the progress they make.*" Another commented that the staff "*deliver a superb standard of care. They provide rich activities to enhance the children's development.*" Staff provide nurturing and sensitive care and prioritise each child's needs. For example, they follow each child's routines in relation to sleep times. Staff show exceptional levels of respect for children. For example, they always ask children if they would like them to attend to their personal needs first before attempting to, for example, wipe their face or change their nappy. There are good systems in place to support children with additional learning needs and the service works closely with key agencies such as educational psychologists and speech therapists. Staff support parents with activities to help their children at home and regularly share information about their progress and development. Welsh is integrated very well within the sessions through songs, incidental phrases and planned activities.

Staff effectively support children and provide very responsive, warm and respectful care.

3. Environment

Summary

Robust systems are in place to ensure that the physical environment is secure and safe. The main play rooms are bright and spacious. The lay out and range of resources, equipment and facilities allows children to make choices, follow their interests and develop their independence. The outside space allow children to explore and learn new skills.

Our findings

3.1 How well do leaders ensure the safety of the environment?

Leaders and staff ensure children are cared for in a safe environment. The entrance to the nursery is secure and a log is kept of visitors. Staff follow robust procedures to ensure children leave with the authorised adult. Risk assessments for all aspects of the building are detailed and reviewed regularly. Staff sign to show these have been read and understood. Staff undertake daily visual checks and any issues are reported to the building owners. Children are well supervised and staff organise themselves very effectively to ensure children's safety. Leaders ensure relevant safety checks of fire, heating and electric are carried out when required. Staff follow appropriate procedures in relation to maintaining a clean environment. The kitchen has been awarded a level 5 food safety rating, which shows appropriate procedures are in place to maintain a suitable environment for food preparation. Leaders and staff take effective steps to ensure the environment is safe.

3.2 How well do leaders ensure the suitability of the environment?

The premises are warm and welcoming and provide a light and interesting environment for children to play. The design of the building and layout of play and learning resources promotes children's independence and decision making skills. For example, resources are clearly visible and easy for children to reach, and the washrooms are easy for children to access. Photographs of children enjoying various activities are thoughtfully displayed, there are bright displays of children's work, and children have places to put their belongings. This helps them feel valued. However, some of the displays are at adult height and difficult for children to see. Leaders use schemes to assess the quality of the environment and plan for improvement. Two members of staff have been appointed specific roles to ensure the garden provides a stimulating environment for children. Children can access this area easily, and babies can play safely within a newly developed enclosed area. There is also a covered area so children can play outdoors regardless of the weather. Babies have a dedicated sleep room. However, sleeping arrangements for the toddlers are less ideal. Each

base room has a book corner with some soft furnishings. However, these could be developed to provide cosier spaces for children to relax.

Leaders and staff ensure the environment is interesting and encourages children to learn and develop.

3.3 How well do leaders ensure the quality of resources and equipment?

Leaders and staff ensure there is a very good range of good quality resources and equipment that are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development. These are well set out both indoors and outside and help promote children's skills. For example, a ball pit in the baby room encourages the very young children to explore and develop their physical skills. Wheeled toys outside encourage children to be active and take risks in their play. There is ongoing investment to maintain the quality of resources and ensure children's interests are met. For example, a mud kitchen has been provided outside to develop children's opportunities to enjoy imaginative play and use natural resources. Tables and chairs are of an appropriate size so children can enjoy meals and table top activities comfortably. Staff clean resources as required to reduce the risk of cross infection.

Leaders and staff ensure the resources and equipment of are of a high standard and promote children's learning and development.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

Leaders and staff are very committed to providing an excellent service for the children. There are very effective systems in place to support staff successfully and ensure the continued development of the service.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

Leaders ensure the service is very well run, compliant with the relevant regulations and effectively promotes children's safety, development and well-being. They have a clear vision for the service so the service is continually improving. This is shared effectively with staff. Leaders value staff and support them very well to do their best. Staff have clear roles, responsibilities and objectives, and work very effectively as a team. This helps ensure the service runs successfully. There is an ethos of continual professional development and staff are keen to learn and apply their knowledge to improve children's well-being. The policies and statement of purpose are detailed, updated regularly and provide an accurate picture of how the service runs.

Leaders create a positive atmosphere which focuses on supporting staff well and developing the service to ensure very good outcomes for children.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

There are very good systems in place for evaluation and improving quality. Leaders work effectively with staff, parents and professionals to review the service and plan for improvement. For example, staff identified the need to provide babies with a separate play area outside so they could play safely but still be out with the older children. Parents' views are sought regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of various aspects of the service. For example, after 12 weeks parents are invited to share their views about the settling in process so this can be monitored. Impacts of planned changes and improvements made are identified in the annual quality of care report so it is clear how children will benefit. Leaders have addressed the recommendations from the previous CIW inspection successfully. For example, Welsh is now much more firmly embedded and staff very effectively implement an ethos whereby children are treated with a high degree of respect.

Leaders and staff work very well together to evaluate the service and bring about improvements which focus strongly on children's well-being.

4.3 How effective is the management of practitioners, staff and other resources?

The service has robust procedures in place to recruit staff. Staff are deployed effectively so the needs of children are met. Leaders ensure staff have suitable qualifications to fulfil their role and they support staff very well to attend further training. All leaders have qualifications over and above those expected by the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare (NMS). There are good contingency plans in place to cover staff absence which ensures continuity of care for children. Staff have up-to-date job descriptions and identified individual and team objectives so they understand their responsibilities clearly. They work very well together, provide very effective support to meet children's needs and commented that they are proud to be part of such amazing and well managed team. Staff registers show that staff levels exceed those required by the NMS. However, staff cover when staff take their lunch was not recorded so it was not clear who was looking after which children for certain parts of the day. This was rectified immediately following the inspection. Leaders use systems such as 'employee of the month' to motivate staff to work to the best of their ability. Leaders evaluate staff performance regularly and discuss their observations with staff individually as part of their monthly support meetings and annual appraisals. This process is used to monitor performance in relation to the identified objectives, and identify any support or training staff may need. However, the way these meetings are recorded does not always show clearly enough the effectiveness of this process.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

The service has range of good partnerships which support children's well-being. Communication with parents is very good. For example, parents are kept well informed about the activities at the service through newsletters, social media and parent notice board. Key workers share information very effectively with parents at drop off and collection times, through a daily diary for the younger children and annual parent consultations. This ensures parents are kept well informed about their child's day and progress. Staff give parents time to settle their child so they can leave knowing they are happy. If a child does start the session unsettled staff contact parents once they have relaxed. The setting has a flexible settling in policy so children are familiar with the setting and staff before they start. The setting encourages parents to share information about their child's preferences, routines and health needs before their child starts, and when they transfer to the next stage within the nursery. This ensures staff can meet each child's needs effectively. The setting works well with the local authority support services to benefit children. Leaders work effectively with the local authority to achieve awards which promote children's health and well-being. The service has very good links with the school nursery. For example, wrap-around children attending the setting are released to their key workers before the other children meet their carers to reduce any potential anxiety. The service works with the local community to enrich children's learning experiences. For example, children

regularly visit the local old people's home and take part in activities which both the children and the residents enjoy.

The service has a very good range of strong partnerships which effectively promote children's development, health and well-being.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

- Embed good practice in relation to obtaining children's views about activities and resources;
- review the height of the children's wall displays;
- consider the provision of cosier quiet areas within each base room for children to relax;
- give further considerations for toddlers' sleep arrangements, and
- strengthen supervision records so they more accurately reflect individual performance and progress.

6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full inspection undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. One inspector undertook two visits to the service.

- We observed the children undertaking their activities and the care provided by the staff;
- we spoke with children to ascertain their views;
- we used the Short Observation Framework for Inspection (SOFI) tool to assess the quality of interactions;
- we spoke with 8 parents and reviewed 10 CIW questionnaires to ascertain their views;
- we looked at an extensive range of records and documents including staff files, accident records, policies and procedures and children's records;
- we looked at the premises, risk assessments and other documentation relating to safety measures and took account of the security measures in place;
- we spoke with both owners and staff present, and reviewed 12 CIW staff questionnaires to obtain their views and clarify information about the running of the nursery and future plans and
- our findings were fed back to the owners and all recommendations were discussed.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website:

www.careinspectorate.wales

About the service

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| Type of care provided | Children's Day Care Full Day Care |
| Responsible Individual | Emma Matthews |
| Person in charge | Michelle Price |
| Registered maximum number of places | 73 |
| Age range of children | six weeks to 12 years |
| Opening hours | 7.30 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday |
| Operating Language of the service | English |
| Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection | 29 September 2016 |
| Dates of this inspection visit | 9 and 10 January 2019 |
| Is this a Flying Start service? | No |
| Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service? | No |
| Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer? | This is a service that does not provide an "Active Offer" of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of people/children who use the service. This is because the service is situated in a primarily English speaking area. However, we recommend that the service provider considers the Welsh Government's "More Than Just words" strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care. |
| Additional Information: None | |