



Childcare Inspection Report on

Mathern Day Nursery

**The Old School
Mathern
Chepstow
NP16 6JH**



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Description of the service

Mathern Day Nursery (Childcare Services) Ltd has been registered with CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) since 2004 to provide day care for up to 48 children under the age of 12 years at Mathern Day Nursery. Care is currently provided for children between the ages of 6 weeks and 5 years. The nursery is owned and managed by the Responsible Individual (RI), Mandy Gore, and is situated in the old school building in the rural village of Mathern, near Chepstow. Full or part time places are offered between 8 am to 6 pm all year round, with the exception of the bank holidays. An early start from 7 am is offered at an extra charge. This is predominantly an English language service; Welsh words and phrases are woven naturally into the activities, particularly for the older children. The service is a registered provider of Early Years Education for Monmouthshire County Council and was last inspected in November 2013.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Mathern Day Nursery provides a happy and caring environment where children experience a good range of activities and enjoy themselves. They are able to forge close relationships with staff and friendships with their peers. There is an experienced and committed childcare team and many members of the team have been with the nursery for a number of years. Staff feel they receive good levels of support and their views are listened to. The RI and deputy are visible and involved in all aspects of the service. The feedback from parent questionnaires indicates that they are very happy with the care provided to their children. The premises is welcoming and child friendly; drawbacks with the building are managed well and the RI is keen to address the recommendations we made, particularly around the room used by the two to three year olds.

2. Improvements

- All recommendations raised at the previous inspection have been satisfactorily met;
- staff have continued to attend training to develop their professional knowledge and skills;
- further developments have been made to the outside area, including a covered area with cushions and seating, planting areas and a woodwork table;
- more resources have been provided such as wooden planks and a water butt with solar powered pump;
- resources have been developed for parents to use with their children at home to strengthen nursery:home links.

3. Requirements and recommendations

The nursery is compliant with the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010. We made some recommendations to develop the service; these are discussed in the report and outlined in more detail towards the end.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children are welcomed into the nursery and are able to form positive and warm relationships with the staff. Their views are listened to and they are able to follow their own routines. They enjoy the activities, are involved in their play and able to spend good amounts of time outside. Unfortunately children's free flow to the outside is limited due to the layout of the building. But, overall, they are able to make choices in their play, develop their skills and follow their own interests. We did recommend that the choice of activities and availability of resources in the base room for the two to three year olds is expanded to enhance their opportunities to direct their own play and increase their level of choice.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children of all ages can choose which activities they would like to do and overall, can select toys and equipment from a good range of resources. They also have a lot of choice within the activities set out. For example, we saw children in the toddler room were asked what song they would like to sing during circle time and what music they would like played on the CD. Children in the two to three year old room were able to choose what colour paper they would like to draw on and asked what they would like to create at the sticking table. We did recommend giving the children in this room more choice of activities however, as we felt these were limited at certain times during the day; the RI agreed to review. Staff respond to children's suggestions and interests and welcome their ideas. For example, we saw how children in the pre-school room are invited to brainstorm their topic to give their ideas about what activities they would like. We recommended that systems are developed to evidence how the planning is influenced by the children's ideas. Staff told us the children had shown a particular interest in cutting; they had set up a box with paper and scissors so the children could easily undertake this activity when they wished. Unfortunately due to the layout of the building, children can't access outdoor play easily. However, they are given lots of opportunities to go out. During our visit, all the children went out happily when suggested by staff. Outside they had lots of choice of activities and staff responded to what they wanted to do. For example, some children chose to play at the woodwork table; staff followed their lead and facilitated their play.

We saw staff knew the children well and responded accordingly; for the very young children, they understood each child's attempts to communicate, knowing for example when they were tired or wanting a drink, and understood what they would like to do. Children were always asked if they would like their nappy changed, which shows that staff respect and consider their views.

Children are encouraged to express themselves and their feelings and needs are respected.

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

Children feel secure, happy and relaxed. They are given time to settle into the nursery at their own pace; we saw one child arriving who was a little unsure, but staff made sure they could say goodbye to their parent in their own time and then gave them extra support to help them feel settled and secure. The small numbers of children, particularly in the baby and toddler rooms, and generally consistent staff team in each base room, allows children to form close bonds with the staff. One parent commented in their questionnaire returned to us: *“Our [child] loves attending the nursery and had developed a strong bond with each of the room staff she has been in so far.”* We saw children receive very good support and care. Staff we spoke with knew their routines and preferences and these are followed, particularly in relation to sleep patterns and eating for the younger children, which helps them feel safe and secure. We saw that children are also able to go to sleep in a way that is accustomed to them; babies always have the same cot and staff ensure children have their comforter with them. This gives them a good sense of security and well-being. We did however, note that the children sleeping on mats would benefit from a higher staff:child ratio to help them go off to sleep more easily. While we were there the numbers of staff to children were less than those required by the NMS and some children, although calm, had to wait for a member of staff to finish soothing other children off to sleep before they could be soothed themselves. Children moving to a different base room when they are at the right stage in their development are well supported and able to spend short sessions in their new room before moving permanently to help them feel settled. We saw one child who was spending their first full day in their new base room; they were relaxed and happy and clearly felt secure in their new surroundings. Older children were confident to approach staff if they required help or reassurance and staff knew their individual personalities and understood their needs well. We saw children throughout the nursery are cuddled, given lots of individual attention and receive smiles, praise and words of encouragement.

Children feel secure, settled and are valued by the staff team.

1.3 How well do children interact

Children are developing social skills and positive relationships with their peers in line with their age and stage of development. We saw children happily engaging in adult-led group activities such as singing and playing games. They also initiated their own group games such as working together to make an obstacle course or in pairs to complete a jigsaw. They have developed friendships and enjoyed sitting together and chatting whilst eating their lunch and snacks. Children co-operated well with staff, following routines such as hand washing and tidying up. They responded well to

praise for example for “*good sharing*” and “*it’s nice to share with your friends*” and were able to take turns, sometimes with the support of staff.

There is a positive, caring atmosphere; children enjoy each other’s company and respond positively to staff.

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

Children can spend time on activities that suit their interests and developmental needs. We saw children enjoying a variety of activities both indoors and outside. The majority of the day for all the age groups was given over to free play, where children happily chose their own activities. We saw children in the two to three year old room enjoying “looking after their pets”, sticking and painting. They were very engaged and spent time on what they were doing. This free play was well balanced with adult-led circle times and games of varying lengths to suit the different age groups. We saw children in the older babies’ room having fun singing songs and joining in with the actions. Children in the pre-school room were enjoying group games and circle time sessions designed to help them develop their Welsh language and listening skills. Their play was focused and levels of concentration were good. They were happy and animated and clearly gaining a sense of achievement from what they were doing. We did recommend giving further consideration to how the children in this age group have their afternoon snack as the current system meant they had to leave the group game when their name was selected. This may lead them to feel they are missing out. Outside we saw children loved the space and variety of activities they could take part in, such as the sand and wheeled toys. One of the children told us about all the herbs they had been planting. The cook told us that the children love going to pick them for her to use in their lunch. They also enjoyed making up their own games such as with the dinosaurs. Parents’ comments in their questionnaires returned to the nursery show they feel their children are happy and have “*loved the nursery*”.

Children enjoy their play. Activities engage their interest and promote their learning.

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

Overall, children are developing their skills, including those which allow them to become independent. They have a good level of unstructured play which encourages their natural curiosity and allows them to self-direct their learning whilst being well supported by staff. The different activities set out are planned to meet their individual needs and develop specific skills. Children’s independence is generally promoted as, for example, they can easily help themselves to resources and are encouraged to make their own decisions and solve problems themselves. We saw a good example of this with the pre-school children who were trying to build an assault course with the new planks. They found some parts were a bit wobbly; the member of staff talked with

them about why it wasn't stable and encouraged them to find their own solution to the problem. Older children can access their upstairs washroom independently and are encouraged to manage their own personal care. Younger children are also well supported to manage their own hand washing independently, although due to the layout of the nursery, they cannot access their washrooms by themselves. Children managed their own meals and snacks well. We did discuss developing more ways to increase the opportunities for children to develop their self-help skills, particularly at snack times, and staff were keen to implement some changes in this area. We also recommended more consideration is given to the way lunch times are organised so that more staff can sit with the children; this will help children develop their social skills further.

Overall, children are able to take part in activities which promote their self-help skills, learning and development and encourage them to make decisions about their play.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Staff are well qualified, experienced and motivated. They implement effective systems to monitor and assess children's progress and plan activities which promote their development. Staff are keen to ensure that children with additional learning needs receive good levels of support. They create good opportunities for children to develop a healthy lifestyle. Staff give warm and sensitive care and have consistent and realistic expectations of children.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff are clear about their roles in keeping children safe and promoting their health. They have a clear understanding of their role in protecting children and have undertaken appropriate training, including *Prevent*, which is part of the Government's counter-terrorist strategy to protect children from radicalisation. The timetables for each base room shows that outside play forms part of each day and staff told us children are able to go out even in inclement weather. During our visit, children enjoyed being outside for a significant part of the day, both in the area directly outside the main building and in the field behind. Staff were careful to ensure children wore hats and applied sun cream on them regularly to protect them from the sun. Drinks for the older children were freely available and staff ensured that younger children were offered water and were kept hydrated throughout the day. Robust systems are in place to ensure that sleeping children are well monitored and sleep safely. The nursery has undertaken an audit of their infection control measures to ensure staff are following appropriate procedures to promote children's health in relation hygiene matters. We saw staff following good nappy changing procedures and they encouraged all ages of children to learn about hand washing. All staff have attended training in food hygiene and so are able to follow appropriate procedures when giving children food. The nursery employs a cook who has completed training in food safety and allergy awareness. She works closely with the RI and deputy to ensure the menu is varied and provides the children with a balanced diet. Suitable systems are in place to ensure that the cook is aware of children's allergies and dietary needs and to ensure that children who have allergies are given the correct food. All staff are up-to-date in paediatric first aid. Accident records show that, where necessary, appropriate first aid is administered. Incident and medication records are also maintained appropriately, with parents signatures obtained as required.

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 have realistic expectations of children. Strategies to manage children's behaviour are appropriate to the children's age and stage of development and are in line with the nursery's behaviour management policy. Children are encouraged to make their own decisions and their ideas, views and feelings are valued. We spoke with staff who knew the children very well and ensured that activities are differentiated so all children can succeed. These approaches help children feel positive about themselves and promote their self esteem. Staff show respect for the children, inviting them to take part in activities and asking them if they would like help. Children are prepared for changes of activity and given time to finish what they are doing. Circle times gave children the chance to take turns and enjoy social interactions with their peers and staff. Staff act as good role models and use low key strategies, such as distraction and simple explanations. Older children are supported to sort any minor issues themselves with staff giving them words and strategies that will help them.

Staff work closely together to promote positive interactions between the children and develop their self esteem. They help children develop their social skills using consistent and appropriate strategies.

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

Staff plan activities which promote children's play and development. Children's progress is monitored and assessed, and their specific needs are identified in order to plan for their next steps in their learning. Planning takes into account the children's interests and suggestions. Children's activities are differentiated so they meet the needs of all children in line with their level of ability. One parent commented in their questionnaire: *"[My child] really enjoys coming to nursery and it is clear that her developmental needs are being met."* Another commented: *"[My child] has come on so much and I can see [them] growing in confidence with other children."* All staff have child care qualifications with nearly all having achieved level 3 or higher. Staff attend regularly training so they are up to date with current child care practice. Some staff have recently attended training on brain development and they told us how they had applied their knowledge to help one particular child in their care. They explained how their revised approach had made a big impact on the child's progress. Staff extended children's learning and play by using appropriate questioning and guidance to help them develop skills, think for themselves and make their own decisions. For example, we saw one child using the woodwork table. The member of staff helped them learn how to use the equipment safely and why they needed goggles. They participated in the children's activities, but also knew when to step back and allow them to play independently. Incidental Welsh is integrated well into the activities. In the pre-school room we heard lots of Welsh being promoted by staff and children were confident to

use simple Welsh words and phrases. We observed them enjoying a circle time with a Spanish teacher and they had lots of fun with the activities whilst learning some simple Spanish. Staff help children learn about other cultures and religions by celebrating a variety of festivals, such as Diwali. They told us they work closely with the children's families to help them with their understanding of the different beliefs and traditions of the children attending and try and celebrate these at the nursery. Staff in the pre-school room have developed nursery-home bags with different activities for the children to take away to help extend their learning and build strong nursery-home links. Younger children have "two stars and a wish" which tells parents what their child is doing well and what their next step is. One parent commented: *"I love [my child's] 'two stars and a wish' forms which show that [their] development is being checked."* Another said *"I really enjoy getting the 'two stars and a wish' cards and all the art work – it's really nice to know what [my child] is working towards so [they] can do it at home too."*

We saw staff are nurturing and responsive to children's individual needs. They follow the babies' individual routines and organise themselves so that these very young children are fed on a one to one basis and held to have their bottles. This allows staff to engage with them well and promote their development and sense of security. Staff we spoke with told us that if the babies are finding it too noisy in the main dining room they will take them back to their base room.

Staff have the experience, qualifications and commitment to understand children's individual needs which enables them to promote their play, learning and development.

3. Environment

Summary

Robust systems are in place to ensure that the environment is secure and safe. Overall, the base rooms are stimulating, bright and comfortable and the lay out and range of resources and equipment allows children to make choices, follow their interests and develop their independence. Although children cannot freely access the outside and sometime use different base rooms for different activities, the movement of children is well managed and does not impact on their well-being. We did identify some improvements that could be made to the room used by the two to three year olds which the RI is keen to address. The different outside areas allow children to explore and learn new skills.

Our findings

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

The RI ensures children are able to enjoy a safe and secure environment. The front door is kept locked and access is via a buzzer; a record of visitors is kept. The outside play spaces are enclosed and we saw staff following appropriate procedures when taking children to the nursery field. The nursery is part of a health and safety consultancy which provides appropriate systems and support to ensure all health and safety aspects are addressed, including robust risk assessments. There are good systems in place to ensure that daily checks of the premises are carried out, so that any actions required to ensure children's safety take place promptly. Maintenance records show that systems such as the heating and fire safety equipment are checked annually, or as required. Accident records are maintained appropriately and are audited regularly to help identify any recurring accidents with specific children or certain areas of the premises. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised regularly and recorded. We found the nursery was clean and staff follow an effective cleaning schedule for toys and equipment. An infection control audit has ensured that practice and record keeping is in line with current guidelines and our discussion with the RI showed that the recommendation made was implemented straight away.

Leaders are proactive in ensuring that the nursery is a safe and clean environment for children.

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

The environment provides a child-friendly, welcoming space for children. There are four main base rooms for the children depending on their age and stage of development, and each base room has suitable space for the numbers of children the RI told us they accommodate. There is a dedicated sleep room; older children who need a sleep generally use the older babies' base room after lunch. So children can access a variety of experiences during the day, including the outside, groups of children are directed and taken to the different base rooms and outdoors depending

on what is going on. Although this can restrict some of their free flow, we saw this was managed well and did not impact on children's well-being. In the main, the rooms are appropriately set out to suit the various age groups. However, we did note that the room used by the two to three year olds is also used as the main dining room and so resources have to be cleared away at certain times during the day. As mentioned earlier, we felt that improvements could be made to this room in terms of increasing the number of resources and activities available for the children at any one time; this would increase their ability to make choices and direct their own play. We also felt their area used for circle time was quite small for the number of children present. We discussed these issues with RI who agreed to implement changes to develop the room to improve outcomes for children. The outside play area has different surfaces such as tarmac and astro turf and is thoughtfully designed so it accommodates the needs of the different age groups and children can enjoy a good range of play activities. The field gives children the opportunity to enjoy further activities such as group games and a mud kitchen and the allotment allows children to learn to care for living things by planting seeds and looking after the plants that grow. One parent commented that "[their child] enjoys having such a great outdoor space to play in." We noted the door to the washroom upstairs was propped open all the time which meant that children were not afforded much privacy. The RI agreed to review this and make appropriate changes.

Overall, the premises are suitable and meet children's needs. There are some difficulties with the layout but in general these are managed well.

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

The nursery has a suitable range of age-appropriate resources, furniture and equipment. There are good systems in place to ensure that resources are clean, replaced if damaged and varied to meet the children's interests. The RI told us that staff can raise any resource needs with her and, funds allowing, these are then provided. New resources acquired recently include the woodwork table and wooden planks. These, together with other resources such as wheeled toys, allow children to take some risks in their play. A cosy covered area with a bench and cushions was recently erected in the outside play area which creates additional play opportunities for children. The nursery uses recyclable resources for some activities and we saw some natural resources such as cones, as well as some made of natural materials such as wood. Babies and younger children in particular have a good range of sensory resources. The nursery has some resources which reflect a multicultural and diverse society. There are suitably sized tables, chairs and highchairs for children to sit and undertake table top activities and eat their meals and an armchair for staff to cuddle the babies. Resources are clearly visible and easily accessible to the children.

The RI ensures children benefit from resources and equipment that are of a good standard and enhance their play experiences.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

The RI is committed to providing a good service for the children and to building positive relationships with parents. There are effective systems in place to support staff which creates a valued and motivated team. The views of parents and children are welcomed and any issues identified are addressed. We recommended that the system to review the quality of care is developed to show how the service is meeting the needs of the children and is addressing improvements identified.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

The service is well run, compliant with the Child Minding and Day Care Regulations (Wales) 2010 and promotes children's safety, development and well-being. We made some recommendations to help develop the service. The RI sets high expectations; she works with staff to ensure the service runs smoothly and creates an environment where children and staff feel valued and supported. The statement of purpose enables parents to make an informed choice, although we did recommend that the maximum number of children that would be accommodated in each base room is included for clarity. Comprehensive policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, appropriately implemented by staff and shared with parents. We did recommend some additional information is included in the complaint procedure so parents can be clear regarding CIW's role.

Good leadership ensures that the nursery is well run and staff are supported to do their best.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

There are systems in place for evaluating the service and improving quality. The report that is produced reflects on the views of the children, their parents and staff. An action plan is then provided so parents and staff can see how their views will be addressed. We recommended that, where possible, actions to be taken in response to the children's views are also included. We advised the RI that the report also needs to show how the nursery has measured its success in meeting the assessed needs of the children. Staff in the pre-school room work closely with the Local Authority Early Years Adviser Teacher who assists with advice and support. They were last inspected by Estyn in 2013 and have taken on board the recommendations made. Staff questionnaires we viewed show they feel their views are listened to and there is culture of continuous improvement. We found staff and the RI to be open to our suggestions and keen to apply our recommendations in order to improve outcomes for children.

The RI takes account of the views of parents, children and staff to develop the nursery, but could strengthen their review system to show how they are making improvements to meet the needs of the children.

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

Recruitment procedures are robust to ensure that staff employed are suitable to care for children. We saw records to show that all mandatory staff training and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are up to date. Staff we spoke with felt well supported to attend additional training to develop their professional knowledge. As a team staff have attended a wide range of courses and have very good levels of experience. A feedback system allows staff to share their knowledge from their training and put any new ideas into practice to help develop the nursery and improve outcomes for children. We saw staff worked very well together. They have specific roles and responsibilities which helps share out the workload and allows them to feel part of a team. One member of staff commented in their questionnaire that *“the strong team bond between staff allows staff to be a very pro-active and effective in their work.”* The RI undertakes regular supervisions and annual appraisals with the staff to help them identify strengths and areas for development. Staff we spoke with said they found these very helpful.

There are effective procedures in place to support the staff and assist with their development in order to ensure good outcomes for children

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

The nursery works well with parents. Parents are invited to share their knowledge about their child before they start so that their child’s needs and preferences may be identified and appropriate plans put in place to support them. There are a number of systems to ensure good communication with parents, including noticeboards in the main entrance and base rooms, regular newsletters outlining current events, and daily diaries for the younger children summarising their routines. We heard staff share information verbally with parents about their child’s day and also took time to speak with them when they dropped them off. One parent commented *“staff are always very helpful, happy and chatty.”* Another stated that *“All staff are extremely caring, approachable and friendly.”* The ‘two stars and a wish’ mentioned earlier for the younger children helps parents see how their child is progressing and what their next steps are. For the pre-school children, journals are shared with parents so they can see how their child is developing. The parent we spoke with indicated they feel well informed about their child’s experiences and development and activities within the nursery.

The nursery works effectively with parents to ensure children’s well being is promoted.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

- Consider having more staff with children when they are first going to sleep so they can receive greater levels of attention from staff while they are settling;
- at snack and lunch times: consider the arrangements for the two to five year olds so that more staff are able to sit with the children for the duration of the meal; provide more opportunities for children to develop their self help skills, and consider how food is served, to create a more family feel; consider how the three year olds snack time, particularly in the afternoon, is arranged so that they do not have to leave the group activity they are taking part in;
- ensure pre-school children are able to use their upstairs washroom in private;
- consider the lay-out in the room for the two to three year olds so that children have access to more resources and activities and have more room in their circle time area;
- develop a system to show how the activities planned in the pre-school room are drawn from children's ideas;
- develop the quality of care review to show how the service has improved in relation to meeting the assessed needs of the children in addition to reflecting parents' and children's comments and the actions that will be taken to address any suggestions or concerns made and
- review the statement of purpose to include the maximum number of children that would be accommodated in each room.

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 reviewed a sample of questionnaires completed by parents and children for the nursery and ten parent questionnaires completed for CIW 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 and documentation relating to safety measures and took account of the security measures in place;
- we spoke with the RI, deputy and staff to obtain their views and clarify information about the running of the nursery and future plans; we took account of staff comments in 11 CIW staff questionnaires, and
- our findings were fed back to the RI and all recommendations were discussed.

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

www.careinspectorate.wales

7. About the service

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Responsible Individual	Amanda Gore
Person in charge	Amanda Gore
Registered maximum number of places	48
Age range of children	6 weeks to 5 years
Opening hours	8 am to 6 pm, all year round with the exception of bank holidays. An early start is offered from 7 am at an additional cost
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	30 October 2015
Dates of this inspection visit	19 and 21 June 2018
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	Yes
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, or intend to use their service. We recommend that the service provider considers Welsh Government's <i>More 'Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care'</i> .
Additional Information: None	