



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cogan Nursery School
Cawnpore Street
Cogan
Penarth
Vale of Glamorgan
CF64 2JU**

Date of inspection: November 2019

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Cogan Nursery School

Cogan Nursery School is in Penarth in the Vale of Glamorgan. There are 50 children on roll aged three or four years. They all attend part-time in either the morning or the afternoon session.

The school identifies about 16% of children as having special educational needs. This is below the national average of 21% for primary schools. Around 38% of children come from an ethnic minority background or have English as an additional language.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2008. The school's previous inspection was in January 2013.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Cogan Nursery School is a highly effective educational setting where children enjoy greatly coming to school and make good progress. The headteacher and practitioners have an exceptional understanding of effective foundation phase provision. They use this knowledge very successfully to ensure that children receive the best possible learning experiences and develop a comprehensive range of skills and knowledge as they play. The involvement of children in leading their own learning is a particularly outstanding feature.

The school is developing very well as a self-improving organisation. Leaders and practitioners know the school's strengths and areas for improvement exceptionally well. There is a culture of continual evaluation and improvement that results in high quality teaching and learning. The school is very successful in gauging the views of all members of its community, including the children, in order to plan improvements to its provision. Overall, the school provides exceptional early years education for its children.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Excellent
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Excellent

Recommendations

The school should continue on its improvement journey. There are no specific recommendations following this inspection.

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare case studies for dissemination on its website on the school's work in relation to:

- ensuring consistently high quality teaching that aligns strongly with the foundation phase ethos teaching
- placing children at the centre of leading their own learning

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Most children join the nursery with literacy, numeracy, personal and social skills below those expected for their age. Many children begin school with speech and language difficulties or English as an additional language. Despite this, nearly all make good progress in the development of their skills during their time at the nursery. In many cases, children make very good progress.

Most children make particularly good progress in improving the quality of their spoken language. They join in with songs and rhymes enthusiastically as part of daily routines and express their views and needs with increasing clarity. Many speak to adult visitors with confidence, for example encouraging them to join in with their 'bear hunt'. Nearly all listen to staff and other children carefully. They follow a series of simple instructions well when, for instance, working with practitioners to thread fruit onto a straw to make fruit kebabs.

Nearly all children develop an enthusiasm for books and stories. They enjoy accessing the reading corner independently and sharing books with an adult. They hold a book correctly and turn the pages carefully. Many describe what is happening in the story and, with prompting, make simple predictions about what happens next.

The early writing skills of most children are developing well. Most understand that writing carries meaning. They create different types of writing, such as shopping lists, notes and letters, as part of their play. They frequently write for a real purpose, for example, writing to their local Assembly Member to request his help in reducing the use of plastic milk bottles.

Nearly all children make good progress in the development of their mathematical skills and knowledge. As part of their play, they regularly count to five and many count to ten or more. They begin to understand how to measure length and develop a wide mathematical vocabulary to support their work. For example, many identify which piece of wool is longer or shorter when measuring the distance around tree trunks. They start to understand how to measure time when using sand timers to decide how long they can engage in an activity before allowing another child to take a turn.

Nearly all children make good progress in developing effective physical skills to support their play and learning. For example, they demonstrate increasing levels of control and good hand-to-eye co-ordination when carefully pouring water from one container to another in the water tray. When preparing soup they develop their fine motor skills as they cut vegetables into small pieces. They improve their strength, co-ordination and balance during 'Monkey Mondays', as they climb the gym equipment to collect bean bags placed on the top.

The creative skills of nearly all children develop effectively as they play. For example, they improve their observation and drawing skills as they look closely at Bentley, the school guinea pig, and create pictures of him. Over time, most children's drawing skills improve very well. Nearly all children demonstrate imagination and creativity as they perform on the school's outdoor stage.

As they explore the indoor and outdoor provision, nearly all children develop a wide range of age appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, they use basic coding to control the movement of a toy caterpillar and use hand held devices effectively to read QR codes to access online songs and stories.

Nearly all children begin to apply their thinking and problem solving skills effectively. They do this as part of planned activities and in response to questioning from practitioners. For example, when a child gets their welly stuck in the mud, the children discuss the best solution to help release her.

The Welsh language skills of nearly all children are strong relative to their age. They join in with songs and rhymes with confidence and respond well to questions and instructions from practitioners showing good levels of understanding. For example, they answer questions about the weather that day, saying whether it is bright, cloudy or raining. In many cases, children use Welsh without prompting when asking for water or milk at snack time, or when saying thank you or good bye.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all children feel safe, secure and enjoy coming to nursery school. They engage very confidently with staff and visitors. Their behaviour in group sessions and around the school is exemplary. They show consideration towards one another and adults during independent and group activities.

Nearly all children have an age appropriate understanding of healthy and unhealthy foods. They enjoy using the café where they prepare healthy snacks and make soup. They develop a sound understanding of the importance of exercise and are physically active for a considerable time during their play and learning. They engage well with planned physical activities, such as the daily run and morning exercises. They recognise that exercise makes their heart beat faster and that this is good for them.

Children have a very strong voice in what and how they learn. Most children confidently offer ideas and pose questions to extend their learning. For example, children asked if they could have a new pet penguin. In order to investigate this possibility, they researched where penguins live, measured the size of the school pond and considered whether the weather in Penarth was cold enough to keep ice frozen.

The school council is open to all pupils and their decisions impact strongly on school life. For example, they decided to change the way milk is delivered and dispensed in school to minimise the use of plastic. They also designed questions and took part in the interview process for a new member of staff. Most children are eager to take on leadership roles, such as acting as 'helpwr heddiw' and taking responsibility for caring for the school guinea pig.

Nearly all children take on new learning opportunities confidently. Most sustain concentration and persevere well with a range of tasks and activities. For instance, they practise their pedalling skills and develop their steering until able to ride a trike without assistance. They work independently, accessing appropriate tools and resources as they need them. Nearly all children are willing to take risks, particularly in outdoor activities. For example, they enjoy using the climbing wall to access the bird hide and reflection area.

Most collaborate well and work happily in pairs and small groups. They support each other to resolve conflicts by reminding their friends about how to behave towards each other. Most children are developing resilience well. For instance, they attempt different approaches to solve a problem, such as when trying various ways to retrieve a ball from a tree.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Practitioners are highly skilled professionals with a thorough understanding of effective foundation phase practice. They know the children exceptionally well and use this knowledge effectively to challenge children consistently to achieve at a high level. During activities and when supporting children in their play, practitioners skilfully identify the learning needs and interests of the children 'in the moment' and modify their teaching accordingly. For example, when a child shows interest in a 'talking button', the practitioner uses this as an opportunity for the child to improve the clarity of his speech through recording and listening to his voice. Overall, practitioners' ability to identify and respond to the learning needs of children, is exceptional.

Practitioners are very effective in developing the learning skills of the children. In particular, they are highly skilled in improving children's independence. They ensure an excellent balance of challenge and support, consistently encouraging children to attempt tasks before intervening. For example, a practitioner observes closely as a child attempts to tick off a list of animals she is collecting in the small world area, before intervening at a suitable point to help improve her pencil grip. Practitioners ensure that children lead their own learning at all times. There is a strong focus on children moving around the indoor and outdoor provision independently with practitioners acting to monitor and support the children as needed, rather than over directing learning through too many adult led activities.

Through thoughtful and effective questioning, practitioners challenge children to improve their skills and extend their understanding. For example, as children engage in their play, practitioners frequently ask them to count items, describe shapes and think of imaginative adjectives. This helps to ensure that nearly all children make good progress in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills during activities and over time. Practitioners use questioning particularly well to improve children's problem solving and thinking skills. For instance, on a cold morning they encourage the children to think about where the 'white stuff' on the grass has come from and what will happen to the ice in the outdoor area if they bring it inside.

All practitioners maintain positive working relationships with the children. They have a consistently gentle and supportive tone that encourages children to try their best and to behave well. Practitioners work successfully to encourage children to consider how well they are doing and what they need to try to improve. They use imaginative age appropriate techniques to set targets with the children that encourage them to develop an understanding of how they can help themselves to improve their skills.

Practitioners plan well to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. This often involves imaginative activities that engage children's interest very successfully and develop a wide range of different skills. For example, a practitioner leads children on

a bear hunt through the outdoor area. As they progress, children expand their vocabulary as they describe the 'squelchy' mud they tramp through, develop their mark making skills as they use the mud to make squiggly patterns and improve their number skills as they count the bears at the end of the trail. All practitioners are excellent language role models in both English and Welsh. Frequent use of the Welsh language by staff develops children's understanding very well and encourages them to respond and use the language independently.

Opportunities for children to practise and improve their physical skills are frequent and of good quality. For example, children enjoy developing their balance and coordination as they slide down an artificial grass bank on their way back from activities in the forest area. They improve their hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills when making patterns on a magnetic pin board. Practitioners ensure frequent quality opportunities for children to work imaginatively and improve their creativity. For instance, they develop dance and drama skills in a group session as the children move and wave scarves in time to the music. Practitioners integrate skilfully the development of ICT skills into children's play. For example, children improve their ability to think logically when programming a toy caterpillar to follow a set of simple instructions. Overall, the quality of children's learning experiences is outstanding.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is a welcoming, inclusive and calm environment. Practitioners create a purposeful and fun atmosphere with high expectations of each other and children. Practitioners know the children and their families exceptionally well, as a result of the strong links they establish with them before and during their time at the school.

There are effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Practitioners provide healthy snacks each day and encourage children to make their own healthy snacks in the café. They plan meaningful opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the importance of healthy eating. For example, they make fruit kebabs and vegetable soup as part of their play.

Practitioners provide very good opportunities for parents to engage with their children's learning. For example, they invite parents to various 'stay and play' activities and use innovative ideas, such as running adult education courses in first aid and jewellery making to encourage parents into the school. The school keeps parents very well informed about learning activities and events through regular newsletters, social media, and a mobile phone app.

Practitioners undertake on entry baseline assessments to gain a clear understanding of children's stage of learning and the next steps they need to take. Practitioners use comprehensive systems for tracking children's progress very effectively. All practitioners participate in monitoring progress, updating tracking and identifying the small, but important, steps children need to make to progress in their learning.

All practitioners have an exemplary understanding of child development and ways to support progress in all aspects of learning. As a result, the provision for children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very effective. The special needs co-ordinator supports staff effectively to identify children's needs at a very early stage. She works closely with other staff, external

agencies and parents, to produce detailed individual play plans that include measurable and challenging targets for children. When appropriate, staff use well established and effective links with support agencies, such as speech and language and translation services, to ensure that they meet children's specific needs.

The school keeps parents very well informed about their child's progress. Practitioners share children's targets with parents as part of termly meetings. They provide well-planned learning activities at the child's level for children to practise at home.

Practitioners develop children's spiritual and cultural awareness well throughout the setting. For example, in the outdoors children access a peaceful area, with links to different religions to allow time for reflection. This also gives the children very good opportunities to revisit and explore artefacts related to other faiths. Practitioners create very good opportunities for children to experience awe and wonder in the natural environment. For example, they use a hide to observe birds and other wildlife quietly without disturbing them.

The school celebrates its multi-cultural community very well. It displays flags and examples of writing of families' countries of origin prominently around the school to support children to recognise the importance of their heritage. Practitioners provide books in home languages for children to take home and encourage parents to visit to talk about their religious festivals.

Arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides strong leadership and has a clear vision for the school. She shares this vision very effectively with practitioners, governors and the school community. The school has a highly caring and welcoming ethos and the headteacher and practitioners place children's wellbeing at the heart of their work. The headteacher has very high expectations of all practitioners and supports them well to work as an effective team. She is an excellent role model in her interaction with pupils and parents and leads by example. The headteacher makes very good use of their individual skills to lead initiatives. For example, one member of staff who is a trained gymnastics coach supports other staff members to deliver physical activity sessions. All practitioners have a thorough understanding of child development and the headteacher empowers them to take responsibility for their own practice. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning across the setting is consistently of very high quality.

Leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the school very effectively. They gather relevant, first-hand information to assess its strengths and areas for development. All practitioners have a strong voice in self-evaluation and leaders include governors and parents well in reviewing the school's practice. They find age-appropriate ways to consider the views of the children, and adapt and improve activities and areas on children's recommendations. There is an exceptionally strong culture of continuous improvement in the school.

Governors support the school very well. They visit the school regularly to gain first-hand information about provision and standards, and contribute to setting school improvement priorities. They understand their role in providing a suitable level of challenge to the school's leaders and keep well informed about national priorities and new developments in education. They are eager to support the children in having a strong voice in the school. An example of this is how they involved children in appointing a new member of staff. The children thought of questions that were important to them, such as asking about their favourite children's television programme and their super power. The children recorded applicants' responses on clipboards and fed back their thoughts to other governors.

Leaders and governors monitor the school's finances carefully to ensure that they allocate funds beneficially and address school improvement priorities appropriately. They ensure that the school uses its early years grant funding purposefully to meet the needs of vulnerable children, for example in improving their oracy skills.

The school addresses national priorities well. For example, leaders promote the Welsh language very effectively and have already begun to consider their provision in light of the new Curriculum for Wales.

There are robust procedures to manage the performance of all practitioners, and leaders ensure that all have suitable opportunities for effective professional development. Leaders use internal training very effectively to improve provision and to react to the needs of different cohorts of children. For example, two practitioners have trained others in the use of sign language to support children with communication difficulties. Leaders make very good use of strong links with other schools to improve children's standards and aspects of provision. For example, the school has worked with a cluster of other schools to improve children's awareness and understanding of their thought processes. The school shares its strong practice effectively with visitors and other schools. For example, the school has recently established a link with a school in Greenwich to look at provision and standards outside Wales and to learn from their provision. Practitioners are reflective of their own practice and continually look for ways to improve.

The school makes extremely good use of all available resources. Practitioners create and maintain exceptionally stimulating and engaging indoor and outdoor learning environments. They use these very effectively to develop children's independent skills. Leaders update and improve resources regularly to stimulate and respond to children's interests.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

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