Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

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

A report on

Usk Nursery

Old School Building
Monmouth Road
Usk
NP15 1SE

Date of inspection: November 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Usk Nursery

Name of setting	Usk Nursery
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Alison Janick and Jan Henstridge
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Jan Henstridge
Number of places	30
Age range of children	2 to 4 years of age
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	17
Number of children who receive funding for early education	12
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 8.45am and 3.15pm during term time, excluding bank holidays and INSET days.Breakfast Club Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 8.45am.
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service does not provide an ‘Active Offer’ of the Welsh Language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	October 2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection	October 2019
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	12/11/2024
The setting provides care for two-year-olds and education for three- and four-year-olds. It is registered as a Flying Start setting. Presently, there are no children eligible for Flying Start funding.	

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Well-being	**Excellent**
Learning **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Good**
Care and development	**Good**
Teaching and assessment **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Improve observations of children's learning and use them to plan experiences that enable all children to develop effective cross-curricular skills

R2 Evaluate the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously and act upon findings consistently

What happens next

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Children have an exceptionally strong voice and make many purposeful decisions regarding their play. They make meaningful choices, engage well in activities that interest them and move confidently from one learning area to another. They find and select resources they need to complete tasks independently, such as finding a magnifying glass so they can go looking for bugs in the garden area. Nearly all children speak or express themselves well and know that practitioners will take good account of their ideas. For instance, they express their feelings regarding aspects of their care confidently, such as when they are cold and want to go inside or if they want extra fruit at snack time.

Nearly all children settle quickly and well, and are relaxed in the care of practitioners. They enter the setting happily. They register themselves carefully by adding their name to a 'tree' and place their photograph on a board to show others how they feel that day. Children often express their enjoyment through smiles and with laughter. For example, children squeal with delight as they successfully pour water from a saucepan into a weighing scale and get wet in the process. Many chat spontaneously with practitioners and other adults about topics that interest them and events in their lives, such as their visit to a chocolate factory.

Nearly all children are learning to understand their own feelings and manage their own behaviour successfully. They enjoy engaging with and participating in activities with practitioners. For instance, children spontaneously invite adults to help them water the plants and offer them one of the watering cans so they can help. Most

children share resources thoughtfully, such as blocks in the construction area. They co-operate with others well, for example moving large blocks in the outside area to build a bridge. Nearly all listen well and follow instructions from practitioners.

Children enjoy their activities greatly. They are learning to be resilient and persevere with tasks until they succeed. For example, when children try to walk and balance across a beam, they keep trying until they successfully reach the other side, where practitioners and their peers congratulate them happily. Most children are curious learners and spend extended periods of time concentrating on tasks, such as cutting and examining pumpkins, taking photographs of the inside and counting the seeds they find.

Nearly all children strive to do things for themselves, such as putting on their wellies and coats to play outside with little support. They are developing a good understanding of the importance of good hygiene. For example, most children wash their hands independently before snack. Nearly all serve themselves independently at snack time, buttering their own crackers and pouring their own drinks carefully. They wash their own plates and recycle left over food sensibly.

Learning (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Good

Nearly all children make strong progress in developing their knowledge and skills during their time at the setting. They enjoy learning through play and engage in activities enthusiastically. Many children make particularly beneficial progress in developing their independent skills. They make decisions about what they want to do and how they are going to approach activities confidently. Many identify and choose materials and resources that they need to undertake chosen tasks effectively. For example, they locate and select different utensils, such as saucepans and a measuring cylinder when they want to make flower soup in the garden area.

Most children listen well and speak confidently, expressing preferences and sharing their thoughts and ideas happily. They respond to questions positively and enjoy making comments that cause themselves and their friends to laugh. Many children enjoy singing songs in Welsh, for example joining in happily with the ‘bore da’ song. A majority respond appropriately to simple language, such as to answer the morning register. However, children do not always have enough opportunities to hear Welsh spoken to them throughout the day.

A majority of children show interest in books and enjoy listening to stories. They comment on pictures in texts and can link them to what is happening in the narrative. A majority share a few of the main ideas from their favourite stories suitably. A few children are beginning to recognise a few letters in their play environment. A majority of children enjoy mark making and recognise that they can use these skills for a purpose. For example, they draw maps to show the way to different places, and enjoy using large chalks to make marks in the outdoors. A few children are beginning to understand and talk about the purposes of writing, for instance adding addresses to envelopes to send invitations.

Many children recognise and use numbers in their play activities and throughout the day independently. For instance, they identify how many pieces of fruit or cheese

they can have at snack time from the numbers written on the chalkboard and measure water up to a mark on a measuring jug. They count to at least 5 accurately, such as when counting the seeds they find in a pumpkin. Many children use mathematical vocabulary confidently, for example describing sticks as longer and shorter and objects as heavier or lighter. Many children are developing a useful understanding of the uses of digital devices. For example, they use video cameras independently to record themselves and their friends during play activities.

Most children develop their physical skills well. They collaborate effectively to lift large blocks and build structures which they can walk across carefully. In the woodwork shed, they hold hammer and nails, and knock them into wood carefully. They develop co-ordination skills effectively and are beginning to handle small tools with improving control. For example, children cut and slice pumpkins, and roll and pinch dough with dexterity.

Many children are developing their creative skills well and use this to express themselves successfully, particularly in their independent play. For example, children create imaginative scenarios that allow them to practice language and act out events, such as setting up an ‘anniversary tea’ to celebrate the anniversary of their friendship or engage in extended games where they search for pirate treasure when digging in the sand. Many children use their creativity in their artwork beneficially, rolling pinching and manipulating dough patiently to make imaginative models, such as different animals.

Care and development: Good

All practitioners are conscientious and motivated, and place a high priority on children’s health and well-being. All have relevant childcare qualifications and have good opportunities to undertake additional training relevant to their role.

Practitioners understand their role in caring for, and safeguarding children well. The setting’s arrangement for safeguarding children meets requirements and give no cause for concern. Practitioners record accidents and incidents carefully and share this information with parents promptly, when appropriate. They encourage and support children to understand and develop healthy lifestyle habits, promoting a choice of healthy food at mealtimes and ensuring that children get exercise for much of the session.

Practitioners have positive and supportive relationship with children and treat them with care and with respect. They implement strategies to support children who need encouragement to manage their own behaviour highly effectively. They know the children well and use this knowledge to adapt their practice thoughtfully. They work sensitively with children to find solutions to issues and act promptly to engage with children before any incident escalates. For example, they supervise children playing discreetly and intervene sensitively if they see children becoming frustrated with others or who are reluctant to share. They recognise good behaviour at every opportunity and praise children beneficially. As a result, there is a positive ethos throughout the setting.

Practitioners support children’s development effectively and seek support quickly for children with any emerging additional learning needs. They have a particularly good

understanding of children's interests and use this to tailor activities thoughtfully. For example, they adapt water-based activities so that children can continue with their investigations in different scenarios over several days after noticing children's fascination with this activity.

Practitioners provide a few interesting opportunities for children to celebrate cultural events such as Diwali and Remembrance Day, and play resources that reflect a diverse society. However, their work to develop children's understanding of diversity is still at an early stage of development.

Teaching and assessment (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Good

All practitioners develop nurturing relationships with children and value their contributions, ideas and achievements. They interact with children sensitively and create a calm and inclusive learning environment. Practitioners generally have a secure understanding of how children learn through play and exploration, and provide them with a worthwhile range of experiences that reflect their interests and fascinations. All practitioners are effective in developing children as confident, independent learners who enjoy exploring the environment, risk-taking and finding ways to problem-solve during their play. They make good use of the indoor and outdoor environment to develop children's physical skills and encourage children to be responsible for the resources they use.

Practitioners allow children extended periods of independent play and create a highly engaging environment that allows them to follow their interests productively and revisit those they enjoy. They allow children to build on their ideas and their learning through purposeful questioning. They use daily routines effectively to reinforce the children's language and mathematical skills. For example, when children line-up to go outside they ask them about their position in the line, such as 'who is in front of, who is behind, and who is in between…' However, a minority of practitioners sometimes intervene too quickly in children's play and exploration, instead of allowing them the time they need to think and to try out their own ideas and solutions.

Practitioners use observations to collect suitable information about children during play, such as their engagement and independence. These often identify helpfully what children are doing and they use this information to make changes to the environment that meet children's interests and fascinations thoughtfully. However, these observations do not identify well enough activities and areas in which children do not engage effectively, or skills that children need to develop better. As a result, they do not ensure that all children experience a wide enough range of different learning opportunities and develop a broad range of cross-curricular skills.

Central to the setting's curriculum is the range of experiences that enable children to develop an understanding of how nature changes with the seasons. This thoughtful approach is effective in developing a range of skills and dispositions, such as children's understanding of their place in the world and how to care for it. Practitioners ensure that children have plentiful opportunities to be creative, such as creating collaborative art to represent cultural festivals and providing a range of natural materials that foster children's interests.

Practitioners provide a suitable range of resources for children to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They model language effectively and develop children's vocabulary well, such as when reading in the well-resourced book area. Role-play areas are inviting, and practitioners use them well to encourage talk and imaginative play. Opportunities for children to develop early writing skills are suitable. The setting provides a readily available and appropriate range of digital devices that children use naturally to enhance their learning and play. They consider how to include opportunities for children to extend their knowledge and understanding of technology outside of the setting, for example when checking out books using a scanner in the local library.

The setting supports children's social, moral and spiritual development well. They provide books that help children learn about diversity and celebrate festivals that represent a variety of cultures and religions. However, work to develop resources more significantly with relevant opportunities within the curriculum for children to learn about people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds is still in its infancy. Practitioners support children to develop their awareness of the culture of Wales appropriately.

Environment: Good

Leaders ensure that the setting is a safe and secure environment for children. They have clear policies and procedures in place to ensure that practitioners understand their role in keeping children healthy and safe. Practitioners implement procedures robustly, for example ensuring doors to the setting are locked and visitors are routinely recorded and identified by wearing a lanyard with safeguarding information. Leaders consider risks assessments appropriately and seek advice from outside agencies where necessary. They ensure that the build is well maintained. There are sufficient facilities for children, such as suitable nappy changing facilities in which practitioners ensure that children's privacy and dignity is respected.

Leaders ensure that the setting is welcoming and suitable for the care and development of children. Practitioners organise the environment well, with children's needs at the forefront of their design. For example, children have free and direct access to an extensive and well-resourced outside area that provides them with exciting opportunities to develop their skills. They have supervised access to a woodwork bench and resources which they use enthusiastically to develop their physical and creative skills.

The setting has plenty of good quality resources to create a rich play environment. Practitioners use these resources well to stimulate children's interest and their imagination. They use photographs of local buildings in the construction areas to encourage children try to create structures from wooden blocks. They set up areas to promote children's curiosity, with many natural and real-life resources, such as kitchen utensils and China crockery. They ensure that areas are inviting and challenging to sustain children's interest. For example, the home-office area contains a laptop and writing resources, along with family photos, which helps to make feel homely.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders work effectively and collaboratively to ensure that the setting provides high-quality care and education for young children. They have high expectations of themselves and practitioners. They lead by example and support practitioners beneficially. As a result, there is a strong culture of teamwork and shared responsibility across the setting. All practitioners understand their roles well and contribute effectively to the supportive and caring ethos that permeates the setting.

Leaders consider practitioners professional development thoughtfully. They have useful systems for appraisal and supervision that encourage practitioners to reflect on their own practice. Leaders ensure that practitioners have good access to a wide range of beneficial training, such as how to develop children's communication skills. However, leaders do not always help practitioners to identify targets for improvement sharply enough.

Leaders and practitioners meet regularly to discuss the children's needs and the effectiveness of provision. They make thoughtful observations of different areas of provision and the opportunities that these give to children, such as opportunities to problem solve in the outdoors. As a result, leaders have a good understanding of the effectiveness of the learning environment and of how well children engage in activities. However, strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are too informal and do not always consider the impact of provision, or practitioners' interactions, on children's development. As a result, leaders do not always identify a few important areas that need improvement, such as practitioners questioning skills or creating a better balance of adult-led and child-led learning activities to develop children's cross-curricular skills. Where leaders do focus on making improvements, they often bring about beneficial changes, such as in improving outdoor learning. These changes have resulted in an engaging environment that supports children's progress highly effectively.

Leaders align funding, such as the Early Years Development Grant, effectively with improvement priorities. For example, their focus on improving resources for the outdoor area has helped provide children with an engaging and exciting provision. Leaders maintain supportive links with local schools, education and healthcare professionals. This helps to ensure that they can access help and guidance for children quickly when needed, and ensures that children's transition to the next phase of their education is effective.

Leaders work closely, and well, with parents and carers. They share day-to-day information helpfully and have a wide range of strategies for helping parents to understand the progress that their children make while at the setting, such as regular, carefully written reports, and 'Stay-and-Play' sessions, which allow parents to experience what the setting offers their children.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from CIW and Estyn's websites (http://careinspectorate.wales) (www.estyn.gov.wales)

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
Poor	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required

© Crown Copyright 2025: 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: 17/01/2025

Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	**What each means**
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this	N/A

	inspection	

Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

Was this report helpful?

We want to hear your views and experiences of reading our inspection reports. This will help us understand whether our reports provide clear and valuable information to you.

To share your views on our reports please visit the following link to complete a short survey:

- Inspection report survey

If you wish to provide general feedback about a service, please visit our Feedback surveys page.

Date Published 17/01/2025