A report on

Smarties

Mount Street Infants School
Rhosferig Road
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7NG

Date of inspection: March 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Smarties

Name of setting	Smarties
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Sarah Court and Beth Roberts
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Amber Graham
Number of places	38
Age range of children	3–4-year-olds
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	22
Number of children who receive funding for early education	22
Opening days / times	9.00 – 3.30 pm Monday to Friday during term time
Flying start service	No
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 it does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	September 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection	November 2016
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	25/03/2025

Summary

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

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1. Ensure that health plans are completed thoroughly and identify the needs of individual children

R2. Ensure that practitioners model the Welsh language consistently to improve children's Welsh oracy skills

R3. Make better use of observations to plan for next steps in children's learning

R4. Ensure that supervisions and appraisals are undertaken regularly and focus more clearly on practitioners strengths and areas for improvement

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: Good

Nearly all children are confident to express themselves and share their choices and decisions with other children and adults. They move freely between child led and organised activities and independently access the outdoor area intermittently during the session.

Most children arrive happily at the setting and cope well with separation from parents and carers. They feel valued as they know practitioners treat them kindly and listen to what they have to say. Most children build warm and stable relationships with practitioners and peers. Many children laugh, chatter, and show confidence when expressing themselves, communicating through gestures and speech. They form friendships and show an awareness of the needs of others, such as ensuring that their friends have aprons to wear during water play. Practitioners celebrate children's work and display it throughout the setting. For example, there is a display board showing photographs of children with their families, which helps children feel safe and promotes a sense of belonging.

Nearly all children take turns, share resources, and respect the feelings of other children. For example, they apologise when accidently bumping into other children and ride trikes carefully so as not to hurt others or bump into resources. Most children interact positively with visitors showing them toys and asking their names. They are comfortable to ask practitioners for help, support or to engage with them during activities. They show enthusiasm in their play, behave well, and show respect for others. Many children persevere with tasks and spend extended periods of time participating in activities. For example, they enjoy building an obstacle course and are visibly fascinated by the workings of a solar water fountain.

Many children engage well in their play and choose activities confidently, such as pressing a range of objects into dough. They explore their environment confidently showing curiosity and concentration, for example whilst using balance blocks and throwing bean bags into hoops.

Many children develop their independence well. For example, they self-register on arrival, pour their drinks at snack time and select food from their lunch boxes. Most children learn good hygiene habits, including how to brush their teeth and use the toilet independently.

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

Most children are curious about their surroundings and explore activities indoors and outdoors with enthusiasm. Many children make good progress in the development of their knowledge and skills, particularly their communication and social skills. For example, they listen to each other's contributions carefully when making pancakes in the mud kitchen and ensure that their friends have the utensils they need to make them. Many children demonstrate high levels of perseverance and concentration when playing, such as when pushing trucks through sand to make roads and pouring water into narrow tubes.

Many children develop their communication and literacy skills well. They speak to one another, adults, and visitors confidently. They respond to simple questions effectively and share their views and ideas with practitioners. Many children sing songs enthusiastically as part of their daily routines and listen to simple instructions attentively, such as when putting on aprons and washing their hands for snack time. Many enjoy listening to stories read by practitioners and often choose books to be read to them in small groups. They engage in mark making activities appropriately such as drawing pictures on large sheets of paper and on wipe clean boards. They are beginning to write their names at registration time with support from practitioners.

Children's Welsh language skills are at an early stage of development. They sing simple songs and rhymes and count to 10 during circle times. They are beginning to talk about the weather and a few respond in Welsh when asked what they would like to drink at snack time.

Many children use mathematical language confidently during their play and exploration. They talk about tall and short towers when playing with blocks, recognise heavy stones in the garden and identify round biscuits and triangular cheese in their lunch boxes. Many children recognise colours successfully, such as noting the colours of cars and toy animals as they play. Many count reliably to ten during circle time and count beads and small pom-poms as they press them into the coloured dough.

A few children solve problems naturally as they play and explore. For example, they decide which end of a spatula works best when stirring their muddy concoctions and find that by putting a small toy over a solar sprinkler it stops water from coming out.

Many children listen to songs and stories on an interactive white board to develop their digital skills and a few use it to play number games, including writing numbers independently.

Most children develop their physical skills well. They use tweezers to pick up small animals and use kitchen utensils competently to stir water and mud. They take part in weekly sessions in the school hall where they use large equipment such as balance beams, hoops and beanbags and play football. They ride bikes outside and climb on a low frame. These activities promote the development of children's fitness, agility, and co-ordination well.

Many children develop their creative skills well. They enjoy craft activities such as making paper daffodils for St David's Day. They enjoy singing and moving to action rhymes and develop their imaginative skills when role playing doctors and patients.

Care and development: Adequate

Practitioners support children's health and well-being effectively. They attend a suitable range of courses and follow good practice in relation to safeguarding children. They know what to do if they have concerns about a child and are clear about their responsibilities. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Practitioners are suitably qualified and complete mandatory training to support their working practices and to keep children safe. Practitioners ensure that children have healthy food to eat, and that water is always available. Practitioners generally collect useful information about children before they start at the setting, and key workers know their key children well. Practitioners complete attendance registers and note minor injuries bringing them to the attention of parents and carers appropriately. They complete daily records promptly and have a clear understanding of how to manage children's allergies and food intolerances. Practitioners promote healthy lifestyle choices and provide regular opportunities for children to be physically active both inside and outdoors.

Practitioners are kind and caring and develop good relationships with children. They communicate well with colleagues to ensure that children are supervised appropriately. Practitioners support children's behaviour effectively, and have consistent expectations that children understand. For example, practitioners encourage sharing and using 'kind hands'. Most children understand these rules and follow them successfully. Practitioners interact with children positively and create a calm environment where children can play confidently.

Practitioners provide a wide range of interesting activities to support children's play and learning. For example, children develop an interest in nature through planting and gardening, with a wormery to help with recycling. Practitioners carry out observations but do not always use the information to respond to children's individual interests and needs. Overall, practitioners support children with additional learning needs (ALN) appropriately. However, Individual health plans are not thorough enough and do not always contain clear enough information on how best to support children with specific health needs.

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

Practitioners have a sound understanding of how young children learn and plan a wide range of stimulating activities. For example, they make currant buns for nursery rhyme week. However, practitioners do not always notice and respond to what captures children's interests and what they prefer to play with well enough. As a result, they do not always provide resources that enable children to engage fully in leading their own learning.

Practitioners allow children sufficient time to become engrossed in what they are doing. They are good language role models and introduce new vocabulary as children play. They ask children simple questions to clarify their understanding, but do not ask enough questions that promote children's thinking skills.

Overall, practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop a range of skills. They encourage children to respond to questions and express their views and opinions readily. For example, practitioners ask them about their siblings and what they like eat for lunch. They encourage children to sing familiar songs, by passing a box of nursery rhyme characters around at circle time. There is a well-stocked book area, where practitioners read to children in small groups and link books to topics being explored. Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to make marks with a range of materials, such as crayons, water, and gloop.

Practitioners are beginning to encourage children to speak Welsh and provide sound opportunities for them to sing rhymes and respond to simple questions. However, they do not take advantage of opportunities to use the language with children as they play. Practitioners plan activities that promote the cultural heritage of Wales appropriately. They celebrate St David's Day and there is a display of Welsh artefacts, and photographs of local landmarks for children to discuss.

Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop their numeracy skills. They encourage children to use mathematical language as they explore resources, such as discussing tall and short towers when building with blocks.

Practitioners provide worthwhile resources to enable children to develop their physical skills, such as balance beams, and climbing apparatus. They support children to use tweezers, crayons, and spatulas, which promotes their manipulative skills well.

Practitioners support the development of children's spiritual, moral and cultural development appropriately. They provide a range of cultural resources, including dolls, books, and displays of artefacts from a range of cultures. They celebrate a wide range of festivals including Diwali and Chinese New Year. These experiences help to support children's understanding of people's lives and beliefs that may be different from their own.

Leaders and practitioners are developing planning and assessment procedures. They are beginning to gather a range of useful information to plan the next steps in children's learning. Practitioners undertake observations of children but do not always use the information to plan for the next steps. In addition, the setting's systems for monitoring children' s progress over time are underdeveloped and, as a result, practitioners do not have a good enough understanding of the progress children make in their learning.

Practitioners provide parents and carers with two written reports a year, but do not provide regular updates to keep them informed of their child's progress.

Environment: Good

Leaders are motivated and dedicated to providing a safe, interesting learning environment. Leaders and practitioners risk assess and constantly monitor and evaluate the play space, eliminating risks to ensure that areas effectively meet children's needs safely. For example, an area of outdoor play space was cordoned off as a steep path was being replaced with a gentler sloping path so that children could access the area easily. The environment is well maintained, and all required safety checks are completed appropriately. All visitors are greeted, identified, and signed in, and practitioners oversee the safe handover of children. Practitioners complete registers so that they know who is in the building and are clear about the children they are responsible for. Practitioners undertake regular fire drills with the children so that everyone knows what to do in an emergency.

Leaders plan the environment well, setting it up to be warm and welcoming, so that children feel safe and comfortable to play and explore. Suitable tables, chairs and rugs enable a choice of different levels so children can enjoy their play and learning together. Children's work is displayed, which gives them a sense of achievement and belonging. Leaders organise the environment appropriately to allow children to have easy access to activities and resources. This helps children to develop independence well. Children access the outside play space independently, although free flow to the outside is not always continuous throughout the session. The outdoor play space has sheltered areas and creative zones that spark children's imagination and encourages them to freely investigate and learn. Children are able to access toileting facilities independently, which promotes their self-help skills.

Leaders are motivated and have a clear vision of how to manage and improve the environment. The resources and equipment are of a good standard and ensure that the environment is child focused, which encourages children to be curious and explore their surroundings. Leaders ensure that the environment is light, spacious and well cared for. They ensure that hygiene procedures are followed and that risks of cross contamination are minimised. As a result, the play spaces and resources are fresh, clean and of good quality. Practitioners monitor the environment for broken or damaged resources and report these immediately to leaders who address issues quickly.

Leadership and management: Adequate

Leaders are newly in post and are developing practices to support children's learning and development. They share a clear vision for the setting to provide an inclusive environment where children engage in purposeful learning, are resilient and develop to their full potential. There is a positive ethos, where children are happy and supported by practitioners appropriately.

Leaders ensure that the statement of purpose is clear and provides an accurate picture of the setting. This assists parents in making informed decisions about the suitability of the setting for their child. Leaders ensure that a worthwhile range of relevant policies and procedures are in place and are implemented effectively by practitioners.

Leaders are developing effective teamwork and shared responsibility across the setting. They communicate with practitioners through regular meetings and informal discussions. Leaders identify practitioners' strengths and interests and ensure that they have appropriate opportunities for professional development. For example, practitioners have received training on identifying children's schemas, transition to school and assessment arrangements.

Leaders and practitioners undertake appropriate self-evaluation processes which identify the strengths and areas for improvement within the setting. They work together to review the effectiveness of the provision and identify improvements that will have a positive impact on children's outcomes. For example, they are working on developing inclusive and stimulating learning environments.

Leaders ensure that all practitioners have up-to-date job descriptions that specify their roles and responsibilities. Leaders are beginning to implement systems for supervision and appraisal. However, these are not fully developed to allow regular opportunities for practitioners to discuss their strengths and areas for improvement.

Leaders have established suitable partnerships to support their work and to enhance the provision for children. They are beginning to develop relationships with parents and carers. For example, they recently held an open morning to for them to find out what children are learning and to ask questions about their child. Leaders keep them informed about activities that the whole group enjoys through social media and there are noticeboards in the setting containing appropriate information about future events. However, they do not provide parents and carers with sufficient informal and regular information about individual children's progress and well-being while at the setting.

The setting has positive links with its host school. Practitioners attend relevant training sessions alongside school staff and use the school facilities to extend children's learning appropriately. For example, they use the school hall to provide children with large movement sessions and the Forest School site to promote their understanding of the natural world. There are appropriate arrangements for children to move on to the next stage of their education, including visits from teachers to share useful information.

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

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Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

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