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

Mes Bach Pre School

Llangorse VP School
Llangorse
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7TR

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Mes Bach Pre School

Name of setting	Mes Bach Pre School
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Powys County Council Childcare and Play Services
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Harriet Wadsworth
Person in charge	Catherine Gore
Number of places	32
Age range of children	3 – 12 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	30
Number of children who receive funding for early education	28
Opening days / times	08:00-17:30 Monday to Friday term time only
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This is a service that is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and intends to become a bilingual service or demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	July 2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection	First since registration
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	21/05/2024
We did not consider the breakfast and after school clubs at this inspection.	

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	**Excellent**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Further develop observations, assessments and planning to support children's learning and to monitor progress more effectively

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

Nearly all children are happy, settled, and confident at the setting. They have an extremely strong voice, and their well-being is prioritised by leaders and practitioners. They have excellent opportunities to make choices and decide how they spend their time, and they explore the environment freely. As a result, children learn to use the extensive range of resources and equipment to construct their own play and develop their ideas confidently. For example, children choose from a variety of 'ingredients' in the mud kitchen to make dinner and drinks which they serve at the table or use props and resources in role play areas to act out their own stories. Most children are skilled communicators, including those who do not rely solely on speech, and they know practitioners will listen to them and respond.

Nearly all children cope exceptionally well when separating from parents and carers. A few who need a little support respond quickly to gentle reassurances from practitioners. They form close, friendly relationships with practitioners and readily seek them out to support their play and for help if needed. This has a highly beneficial effect on their well-being and helps them feel safe, secure, and valued. Children enjoy attending and are very familiar with the routines of the day, which helps them develop a sense of belonging and self-esteem.

Nearly all children behave extremely well and need little support from practitioners to achieve this. They have opportunities to name and talk about their feelings which helps them develop sensitivity to the feelings of others. Many children play in friendship groups whilst others are content to play alone or alongside their friends, as

is appropriate for their ages and stages of development. Nearly all learn to be kind, to follow rules and respect other people.

Nearly all children are active, engaged learners who greatly enjoy the worthwhile opportunities to play and learn. They are curious about the world around them and move between exploring water or sand to experimenting with how to programme an electronic toy enthusiastically. Nearly all show concentration and resilience as they work together to build a wall out of large construction blocks or patiently wait their turn at the interactive screen. They have valuable opportunities to join in with adult-led activities in both large and small groups. For example, they enjoy daily singing and story times, craft activities and music and movement sessions.

Nearly all children develop skills and learn through the extensive range of exciting and stimulating opportunities and experiences provided for them. They develop confidence in making independent choices or asking for help. Nearly all develop effective self-help skills that enable them to do things for themselves successfully such as eating independently, cutting up fruit and managing their own personal care.

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

Nearly all children are happy and curious and engage with the learning opportunities available to them with enthusiasm and confidence. They make good progress from their individual starting points, particularly in developing their communication and social skills. For example, they co-operate well with one another when deciding on the roles they play when making meals for their friends in the role play kitchen. Many children demonstrate high levels of perseverance and concentration as they play, such as when hammering screws into potatoes to make bees.

Most children are confident communicators and enjoy talking with one another, adults, and visitors. They share their views on things that interest them effectively, such as when talking about how a piece of honeycomb smells and feels. Many children enjoy singing and join in with familiar songs and rhymes enthusiastically. They listen to stories and handle books confidently, joining in with familiar parts and retelling their favourite stories to one another successfully. A few are beginning to recognise their names in books they have made. Many children develop their mark making skills effectively. For example, they draw pictures of their families and friends and make large marks on paper to the accompaniment of music.

Many children join in with Welsh songs and rhymes and are beginning to respond to simple questions and directions effectively. For example, they respond to questions about the weather, name colours, and count to ten in Welsh during whole group sessions and when playing when playing.

Many children develop their understanding of mathematical concepts successfully and use mathematical language confidently during their play and exploration. For example, they talk about heavy and light blocks and small and big buckets as they throw balls into them. Many children enjoy exploring numbers and count items as they play reliably. For example, they count scoopfuls of sand as they fill large shells.

Many children develop digital skills well as they play and explore. They code pre-programmable toys to send them in different directions and use a tablet computer to take photographs of the things of interest around them. A few children use an interactive board to play simple games to develop their language and mathematical skills.

Many children solve problems as they occur naturally during their play and work with their friends to find suitable solutions. For example, they build structures with blocks and off cuts of wood, working out how to extend them and find the best places to add ramps.

Most children develop their physical skills well and enjoy being active. They arrange beams to balance on, ride bikes and play football with control and co-ordination. They develop manipulative skills effectively, such as when picking up small pom poms with tweezers and using pipettes to add drops of water to containers.

Many children enjoy creative activities and use a range of art and craft materials to make collages, such as using strips of card to make bees and concocting potions with flower petals and water in the outdoor area.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners follow an effective range of policies and procedures that support them to keep children safe and healthy. Leaders follow safe and robust recruitment procedures and ensure that practitioners have relevant up to date training that includes child protection and paediatric first aid. Practitioners have a secure knowledge of child protection procedures, fully understand their responsibilities, and know how to report any concerns. They complete relevant records consistently such as in relation to accidents, existing injuries, any medication they administer, children's attendance and regular evacuation drills. Leaders monitor records to enable them to recognise any patterns that may emerge. Practitioners supervise children well and complete suitable relevant risk assessments. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners successfully promote a healthy lifestyle through following good hygiene practices and ensuring children have many opportunities to be physically active. They ensure children get plenty of fresh air. They ask parents to provide fruit for snacks and provide milk or water to drink, which they have access to freely throughout the day. Practitioners follow effective procedures to ensure allergies and preferences are well managed and respected.

Practitioners are kind and caring. They interact with children in a way that creates a friendly and relaxed environment where children flourish. Practitioners develop warm, positive relationships with children. They have a focus on helping children to develop language and encourage them to manage their own behaviour effectively through praise and explanation. Practitioners speak respectfully to each other and children and are excellent role models. This has a positive impact on children's confidence and self-esteem.

Practitioners plan and provide an extensive range of exciting play opportunities for children that promote their all-round learning and development. They support them to explore resources and promote learning through conversation, discussion, and appropriate questions well. For example, they prompt children to consider why they think a beekeeper would wear long gloves, what they think will happen next in a story or how many cups of water will it take to fill a container? Practitioners encourage children to learn about the wider world through activities such as visits to the local shop or lake, Forest School sessions and visits from the police and fire services.

Support for children with ALN is a strength of the setting. Practitioners meet the needs of all children including those with additional learning needs (ALN) successfully. For example, they ensure that children have opportunities to engage with sensory resources regularly and time to use the school's gym equipment to be physically active. They implement effective strategies and maintain effective records to ensure they support children's additional needs well. As a result, children with ALN make good progress and develop their skills and knowledge successfully.

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

Practitioners have a good understanding of how young children learn through play and exploration. They provide them with access to a wide range of stimulating activities in the indoor and outdoor areas, which promote children's learning and development well. For example, practitioners provide a height chart for children to find out how tall they are and resources for them to make roads for vehicles to use.

Practitioners allow children sufficient time to become engrossed in what they are doing. They are good language role models, introducing new vocabulary and asking children simple questions to promote their thinking skills. For example, practitioners support children to find suitable ways of making patterns using recycled bottle tops.

Practitioners actively encourage children to respond to questions and express their views and opinions well. For example, when trying on a beekeeper's suit, they encourage children to describe how it feels and how it works to keep them safe. Practitioners provide cosy reading areas, where children relax and enjoy listening to stories alone or with others. They encourage children to engage in mark making activities, such as drawing on large sheets of paper, which help them to develop their fine motor skills successfully.

Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop their numeracy skills, such as counting scoopfuls of sand and drops of water as they play. They encourage children to use mathematical language as they explore resources, such as talking about heavy blocks and big and little balls when playing outside.

The setting promotes children's physical skills well and encourages them to be active. For example, they provide worthwhile opportunities for children to develop their balance and coordination skills, such as balance beams to travel over and space for them to run and play with balls. There are beneficial opportunities for

children to use tweezers, pipettes, and paintbrushes, which promotes their manipulative skills well.

Practitioners encourage children to speak Welsh and provide worthwhile opportunities to develop these skills through their play. They encourage children to count objects and name colours in their play. They support them to sing simple songs and rhymes and name food items at snack time. Practitioners plan activities that promote the cultural heritage of Wales appropriately such as celebrating St David's Day, where they provide opportunities for children to talk about Welsh rugby and football, dress in National costumes and cook traditional food such as leek and potato soup.

The setting promotes the development of children's digital skills effectively. Children freely access a tablet computer to take photographs and operate pre-programmable toys in the learning environment successfully.

Practitioners support the development of children's spiritual, moral and cultural development suitably, through providing a range of cultural resources, including musical instruments and books. They celebrate festivals from a range of cultures and beliefs. These experiences help to support children's understanding of people's lives and beliefs that may be different from their own.

Practitioners gather a range of useful information as children start at the setting and are beginning to use this to plan the first steps in their learning. They identify targets for individual children and support them towards achieving them. However, practitioners do not carry out meaningful or regular observations of what children are doing to inform next steps in learning well enough. As a result, activities do not always reflect children's current interests and fascinations well enough. In addition, the systems for monitoring children's progress in learning 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 beneficial information about their child's progress and well-being through daily updates and useful end of year reports.

Environment: Excellent

The environment both inside and outside is of an exceptional quality and provides excellent and challenging opportunities for children. Leaders and practitioners provide children with an extremely rich environment that supports their play and learning effectively. They ensure that they care for children in an environment that is safe and secure. They assess risks and ensure they reduce or minimise any potential hazards. Thorough systems are in place to manage access for children and visitors to and from the nursery. Practitioners show a good understanding of safety procedures and consistently carry out daily checks of the environment. They work closely with the school to ensure relevant building checks are carried out. All areas of the premises are extremely clean and well maintained.

Playrooms are light and welcoming, and practitioners ensure the environments are interesting and exciting. Practitioners have developed a highly enabling environment

with many stimulating areas that provide excellent and inviting spaces for play, learning and exploration as well as a place to have quiet time if they choose. There is plenty of space in both rooms for children to move about freely and access and explore toys and resources independently. Attractive wall displays celebrate the uniqueness and creativity of each child's artwork. Interactive displays around the room such as interest tables, the feelings tree and number lines further support children's learning. Bathroom facilities support children's growing independence and ensure that they have appropriate privacy.

The outdoor play spaces which include a secure, attached area, the wider school playground, and a Forest School area provide children with excellent opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. For example, there are areas where they grow plants and observe the natural world, run, jump and balance, and explore water, sand, and mud. The setting's wooden cabin allows the opportunity for children play outside in all weather conditions.

Leaders provide an excellent range of high-quality furniture, equipment, and resources both inside and outside. They include an abundance of natural and sustainable materials that children use imaginatively. There are plentiful resources and displays of activities that promote diversity and cultural awareness and give children a valuable sense of belonging.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders are dedicated and have a clear vision for the setting. They aim to create a warm, caring, and homely atmosphere where children receive high quality care and education. Leaders convey this vision appropriately and practitioners feel well supported and are comfortable to approach them with concerns and ideas. Leaders ensure a positive sense of teamwork throughout the setting, and practitioners support each other well. They reflect on the provision to make improvements regularly. As a result, they make valuable use of all the space available at the setting to ensure children have access to a wide range of stimulating learning opportunities.

Leaders have developed a clear statement of purpose that provides an accurate picture of the setting, and they ensure that a suitable range of relevant policies and procedures are in place.

Leaders have developed valuable self-evaluation processes that feed effectively into the setting's improvement plans. They identify the setting's strengths and areas for improvement successfully and set appropriate actions that bring about the desired improvements. They ensure that actions focus well on improving outcomes for children, such as providing opportunities for children to develop their communication skills. Leaders make effective use of grants to enhance provision. For example, they have provided resources to enable children to experience the natural world in the Forest School area regularly and have erected a wooden cabin, which have had a positive effect on children's wellbeing and understanding of the natural world.

Leaders ensure that practitioners have up-to-date job descriptions, which include clear information about their roles and responsibilities. Leaders follow suitable

induction processes, which helps new practitioners to feel part of the team. They implement an effective system for practitioners' supervision and appraisal that leads to agreed targets. These arrangements also identify beneficial opportunities for them to develop professionally. For example, practitioners have received training on Curriculum for Wales, the value of singing songs and rhymes and supporting children with additional needs, which has improved their knowledge and practice in supporting children's learning.

The setting has established worthwhile partnerships that contribute positively to children's learning and development. There are strong relationships with parents and carers. Practitioners communicate with them effectively through social media to share photographs and accompanying explanations of what children have been doing. They provide parents and carers with written reports on children's progress and achievements, which ensures that they know how well their children are progressing.

Leaders make good use of the beneficial advice and guidance from partners, such as the local authority's advisory teacher and health professionals. For example, the advisory teacher has supported them to develop their provision and given advice and guidance to ensure children with additional needs receive the appropriate support.

The setting has beneficial links with the local community. Recent activities include visits to the local church, farm shop and post office. Visitors to the setting provide children with beneficial opportunities to develop a greater understanding of the world around them.

Leaders ensure that there are effective transition arrangements for children to move on to the next stage of their education.

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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Publication date: 24/07/2024

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. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

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.

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Date Published 24 July 2024