



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg  
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
For Education and Training in Wales

## **THE INSPECTION OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN BEFORE COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE**

### **NURSERY REPORT ON:**

**St John's School Early Years Unit**

**Registered Nursery Education Inspector Dr Arlene Thomas- Ramasut**

**Date of inspection 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006**

**Contract number T/069/05**

**(c) Crown Copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes provided that all extracts are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.**

## REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF NURSERY SETTINGS IN THE NON-MAINTAINED SECTOR

**Name of nursery --St John's School Early Years Unit**

**Address Newton, Porthcawl**

**Post code CF36 5NP**

**Telephone 01656 783404-**

**Person responsible for day-to-day management Mrs Karen Price**

**Position Teacher-in-Charge**

### **About the inspection**

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

<b>Very good</b>	<b>(Grade 1)</b>	<b>many good features, some of them outstanding;</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>(Grade 2)</b>	<b>good features and no major shortcomings;</b>
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>(Grade 3)</b>	<b>good features outweigh shortcomings;</b>
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>(Grade 4)</b>	<b>some satisfactory work, but shortcomings in important areas;</b>
<b>Poor</b>	<b>(Grade 5)</b>	<b>many shortcomings</b>

## 1.0 CONTEXT OF THE SETTING

### **Context of the nursery setting:**

St John's School, Porthcawl is a fee-paying school which was established as a boys' boarding school in the 1920's. It is now a co-educational day school which accepts pupils from the age of 3 to 16. The Early Years Unit which has two classes, is an integral part of the school's Pre- Preparatory Department.( Yr N to Yr 3.) which is led by the deputy head teacher. Currently there is a total of 23 children on the register; five 3 year old children, sixteen 4 year olds and two five year olds. Of these-17-are part funded by the local education authority's Early Years Partnership Programme. Many of the nursery children continue at St John's for their primary and secondary education

Children attend the Unit from a very wide catchment area and most are brought to school by car or in the school bus. The majority are from socially advantaged family backgrounds. School starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.20pm.The lunch break is between 12 and 1.15pm. Most children stay at school all day. The school also provides after school facilities and some children remain at school until 5pm at the request of parents. The vast majority of children are from English speaking families. There are no children with special educational needs at present.

The Early Years Unit is housed in free standing timber built accommodation overlooking the school 's sports field. The younger children i.e the 3 year olds and youngest 4 year olds are in one classroom and the rising fives are in an adjoining room. The children are taught separately in the mornings but combine for afternoon activities. The Unit teacher has overall supervision of both classes and teaches the older children in the mornings. The qualified nursery nurse has responsibility for the younger children in the mornings together with the classroom assistant who is also the school nurse. The three staff work closely as a very effective team. They deliver a broad and ,overall, balanced curriculum which covers the required six areas of learning of the Desirable Outcomes for Learning. Music lessons are given by a specialist teacher and the children are timetabled to use the school gym once a week.

The Unit classrooms are limited in size. There is sufficient room for small scale equipment but not for large scale play equipment. This is situated in an enclosed grassed area behind the classrooms. The lavatories are situated in an adjacent building so that children must go outside. The enclosed concreted play area which is used at break times, is shared with older children in the Pre- Prep Department. The head teacher, who has been in post for just over a term , recognises the limitations of the accommodation for nursery aged children and has brought this to the attention of the school governors. Plans for purpose built accommodation for the Early Years Unit are part of the School Development Plan.

St John's School is situated in an historic village on the outskirts of the town and the children benefit from being a part of this small community. The Early Years Unit children regularly explore the village and make visits to the beach, the park and the church. Visitors from the community enrich the children's learning experiences.

## 2.0 MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

**2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision successfully promote the goals for children's learning.**

### 2.2 Standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

Six areas of Learning	Judgement for 3-4 year old children	Judgement for 4-5 year old children
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills	1	1
Personal and Social Development	1	1
Mathematical Development	1	1
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	1	1
Physical Development	3	3
Creative Development	2	2

### 2.3 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

Quality of Education	Judgement for 3-4 year old children	Judgement for 4-5 year old children
Quality of planning for children's learning.	2	2
Quality of teaching.	1	1
Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress, and reports for parents and carers.	2	2
Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community.	1	1

## **2.5 The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

Provision for children's social and moral development is very good, Children learn to be aware of other's needs, to be kind and polite and to care for animals and the environment. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is good. Children have many opportunities throughout each day to begin learning Welsh through songs, rhymes and basic phrases. They celebrate St David's Day and some festivals of other cultures such as Chinese New Year. Spiritual development is fostered through awareness of the wonders of nature and through prayers of thanks and short times for reflection in assemblies.

## **2.6 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report**

This setting has not been inspected by Estyn previously.

## **3.0 THE STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN IN THE SIX AREAS OF LEARNING**

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds and standards achieved by 4-5 year-olds

### **3.1 Language, Literacy and Communication Skills**

#### **Good features**

Children 's language, literacy and communication skills are developing very well .

3 year olds sit and listen well to the teacher during group activities such as registration and snack time. When they are guided towards activities, they follow instructions promptly. They enjoy listening to short stories and anticipating what comes next. They answer questions enthusiastically. Younger children approach adults confidently to talk about what they are doing or to ask for help. They use an appropriate range of vocabulary and some children express themselves in full sentences. They look at books with pleasure, turning over the pages correctly and following the story through the pictures. They know that the written word carries meaning. The younger children are developing good pencil control and enjoy colouring in and tracing over shapes which many do well.

Four year olds listen very well. They maintain good concentration when the teacher is introducing an activity or explaining something to them. They ask relevant questions demonstrating good understanding and are keen to contribute their own ideas. The majority use an extended vocabulary and some use complex sentence structures in their conversation. They enjoy books and stories and are making very good progress in learning to read. They can talk about favourite characters and the main events in a story in correct sequence. They chose their own book every morning and enjoy 'reading' independently. They recognise their own names and most can identify a range of common words in English and Welsh around the classroom. Some children are beginning to read simple words such as 'add' in their

arithmetic books. Writing skills are developing well. Younger children within the group can write their own names with guidance and are learning to copy letter shapes. Older and more able children write their names without help and copy write with confidence. They are poised to become independent writers.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

## **3.2 Personal and Social Development**

### **Good features**

Children make very good progress in personal and social development.

The 3 year olds separate easily from parents and carers and greet their teachers happily. They settle quickly to the morning table top activities and are showing increased skill and perseverance at completing jig saw puzzles both independently and with guidance, With encouragement, they join in the clearing up and help putting away. During registration, children respond readily in English and Welsh to morning greetings and songs. They enjoy playing independently but are happy to join group games or activities when invited. Most respond readily to the teacher's requests to change activities. At snack time children sit quietly in a group and wait their turn. They are polite and patient. They are friendly towards each other and, with gentle guidance, are learning to share and to co-operate. They are making good progress in developing independence skills such taking off and putting on their own coats. They know the importance of washing their hands after they have used the toilet and before they eat.

The 4 year old children know the class routines well. On arrival, the majority take off their coats and hang them up independently. They happily chose a book and sit at their table looking at pictures or sometimes telling their friends about the story. They eagerly join in registration and listen carefully to their teacher's introduction of the morning's activities. The older children settle to tasks quickly, helping each other and organising themselves with minimum help. They demonstrate very good concentration in their work. Younger children in the group respond well to adult support and try hard. All the children are proud of their achievements and the praise they receive. At snack time, children learn how to make choices and express preference. They take turns in buying and selling fruit and drinks which change price every day. The children thoroughly enjoy this experience which they conduct in a very serious way. The 4 year old children behave in a sensible and mature manner throughout the day. They change activities and classrooms without fuss and are helpful and friendly towards the three year olds with whom they play in the afternoons.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### 3.3 Mathematical Development

#### **Good features**

Children are making very good progress in their mathematical development. The 3 year olds can count to 10 in English and Welsh and with help can arrange themselves in ascending order by number. They sing counting songs and rhymes with great enthusiasm and with adult support, can work out descending numbers such as in the song 'There were 10 in the bed' which they thoroughly enjoy. They can name and match shapes and they manage large piece jig saw puzzles well. They are particularly good at completing patterns. They recognise and can name colours in English and Welsh and can group objects by colour or shape. Understanding of capacity and weight is developing well through sand and water play which are favourites with most of the children.

The 4 year olds are confident in naming and recognising numbers to 10 in English and Welsh and some can count beyond. Most are able to arrange numbers in ascending order with very little help and some understand the concept of 'the number before' and 'the number after' The younger children in the group can copy write numbers to 10 and are learning their names. With help, they can work out 'how many more to make 5'. The older children are able to add objects together by placing them in a container and the more able can calculate the sum in their heads. They can write numbers to 10 and are making very good progress in recording calculations in their books. The 4 year olds recognise and can name shapes and colours with confidence. They can sort and match independently and understand the concepts of bigger and smaller which they demonstrate in construction activities. They recognise and can name coins of different value and with varying levels of support, can calculate how many coins they need to 'buy' their snacks each morning.

#### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### 3.4 Knowledge and Understanding of the World

#### **Good features**

Children in both age groups are making very progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Both 3 and 4 year olds join in songs about the weather and understand the meaning of different weather symbols. They know which clothes are appropriate for the different weather and how it effects their activities. They are aware of the different days of the week and with help the 3 year olds can name them all. The 4 year olds name the days of the week confidently and know the months and seasons of the year. They can talk about the differences between night and day and know about the different creatures which come out at night. Through walks around the local area at different times of the year, all children are aware of the changing seasons and the impact of the seasons on nature. They marvel at the different 'treasures' which they find on the beach and learn that nature must be respected .by not removing what

they find. They know what they as children need to grow and be healthy and the older children can compare this to what plants need to grow. They were all delighted to sow their own seeds and watch them grow. They are beginning to understand the concept of the passing of time. Visitors to the Unit help the children to understand the role of different people in society.

All the children know that different communities celebrate important festivals such as Christmas, St David's Day and Chinese New Year. They were all able to recall what they had learned about Chinese New Year such as the significance of the 'hong bao' envelopes they had made. They know that in China, red is a lucky colour and they compared this to the red of the Wales rugby shirts and on the Welsh flag. Children are aware that in different countries people speak different languages and greet each other in different ways. The 4 year olds were proud to be able to greet each other in Chinese.

#### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **3.5 Physical Development**

#### **Good features**

Children are making satisfactory progress in their physical development overall.

Th 3 year old children manipulate small objects with increasing control and confidence. They are successful in fitting jigsaw pieces into place, threading beads onto string and building with bricks. They hold pencils and brushes appropriately and use them with purpose, for example, they took great care in making patterns using glue to stick small shapes onto paper. They move around the confines of their classroom carefully, showing growing physical awareness..

The majority of 4 year old children demonstrate very good dexterity in their handling of small instruments and objects which they use correctly. They have particularly good pencil control which they put to good use in writing and drawing. Their hand-eye co-ordination is developing very well as demonstrated by the building of tall towers and complex shapes with building blocks.

In music lessons, both the 3 and 4 year olds are eager to move in time to the music and to run and jump. When they are outside, children take turns playing on a small number of large toys. Most show developing confidence on the larger play equipment such as scooters and when running around.

#### **Shortcomings**

Opportunities for children to experiment with movement and to develop improved co-ordination and control are very limited at present. Access to outdoor play is insufficient.

### 3.6 Creative Development

#### **Good features**

Children make good progress in this area of learning.

Both the 3 and 4 year olds enjoy painting when it is available and are successful in applying paint of different consistency using a variety of methods. They produced imaginative collages of day and night applying a range of different materials and textures. The 'hong bao' envelopes which the children made for Chinese New Year provided a very good opportunity for them to fold, cut and stick with an end product in mind and they were very proud of their achievements.

Children enjoy acting and role play in the puppet theatre and with the dressing up clothes. The 3 year olds are happy to make the appropriate animal noises for their puppets and to play by themselves whilst the 4 year olds make up simple dialogues which they perform for an audience.

Children of both age groups enjoy singing familiar songs every day in English and Welsh. The 3 year olds are especially happy to take part in action songs. In the music lessons, children learn to beat time using a range of untuned instruments and to vary the tempo. The 4 year olds can name many of the instruments and they show good awareness of the 'conductor' when making music together. They observe a pause and can follow changes in rhythm. Children sing along in tune to recorded music.

#### **Shortcomings**

Opportunities for children to exercise free choice in their creative activities are sometimes limited.

## 4.0 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds and for 4-5 year-olds

### 4.1 The quality of planning for children's learning

#### **Good features**

The very good long term planning for the Early Years Unit forms part of the progression across the Pre- Preparatory department. The scheme of work covers all six areas of learning to meet the desirable outcomes for learning over a two year cycle. The planning is suitably detailed in the long and medium terms term so that there is evidence of continuity and progression. The Unit teacher plans the weekly activities for both 3 and 4 year olds in consultation with the nursery nurse and classroom assistant. The weekly plans provide good detail for the three aspects of language, literacy and communication and outline guidelines for the other areas of learning, Staff meet informally at the end of each week to evaluate activities and forward plan for the following week.

### **Shortcomings**

Written evaluation comments are very brief. They lack sufficient information to enable the close match of future activities across all the areas of learning to meet the needs of individual children.

## **4.2 The quality of teaching**

### **Good features**

The very good teaching is underpinned by close effective teamwork under the very able guidance of the Unit teacher. All staff have very good knowledge of the children and the stage of development of each child. Relationships with the children are warm, friendly and supportive. Teaching is clear, focussed and well paced. Staff employ a wide range of strategies to gain the children's attention and maintain interest. Learning is made fun and the children respond with enthusiasm. Staff have high expectations and provide the right level of help and encouragement to enable each child to succeed. Extension activities to stretch the older and more able children ensure that they are suitably stimulated. Activities are well organised and maximise the use of classroom space despite the constraints of the accommodation and lack of internal facilities. The frequent movement in and out of the classroom is managed very efficiently to minimise the disruption to teaching and learning.

The teaching staff provide very good role models in promoting respect and care for others.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

## **4.3 The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports to parents and carers**

### **Good features**

Assessment procedures in the Early Years Unit form the baseline for monitoring children's progress throughout the school. Good practice is evident from the child's entry into the Unit with information gathered from parents and ongoing monitoring of how the child settles and progresses. Both 3 and 4 year olds are formally assessed each term with examples of work kept on file. Significant difficulties are quickly noticed and child is closely monitored. Parents are informed and there is open communication between staff and parents. If the difficulty persists, ways forward are discussed and additional support is offered. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is involved at each stage. The school is an outpost of the British Dyslexia Association and there is expertise in the school which can be drawn on. Informal feedback to parents and carers occurs daily when children are brought into class or collected at the end of the day. Parents are invited to school for a more

detailed discussion on their child's progress each term and they also receive a written report.

#### **Shortcomings**

On-going evaluation procedures are underdeveloped. Increased participation by all team members in recording the children's progress across the different areas of learning would provide valuable information to further assist assessment and reporting.

### **4.4 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community**

#### **Good features**

The quality of relationships with parents is very good. Teachers meet children and their parents or carers at the gate each morning and hand over children at the end of the day . They are also readily accessible to parents in the classroom. There is a notice board at the gate for general information and a newsletter is sent home every term. The school's web site also keeps parents informed of school news which includes the Early Years Unit. Parents are very appreciative of its work.

The Unit uses the local community facilities regularly. The children walk around the village, visiting the church, the park and the beach throughout the year. Visitors to the Early Years Unit from the community enrich the learning experiences of the children.

#### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

## **5.0 THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The quality of leadership and management

### **The quality of the leadership and management of the setting**

#### **2.4 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting**

##### **Good features**

The quality of leadership and management is good overall . There is a clear structure with responsibilities well defined. The teacher in charge has responsibility for the day to day management of the Unit. She works closely with the deputy head teacher who is responsible for the Pre-Preparatory Department where the Unit is located. They both report to the head teacher who takes a keen interest in the Unit and its future development. The head teacher has a clear vision for the development of the Unit and its work. It is viewed as the ' seedbed' of the school and it is seen as essential for the growth and well being of the whole school. A plan for purpose built accommodation has been proposed to the school governors.

Appropriate policies are in place for the delivery of education which promotes the desirable outcomes of learning for the under 5's. There is a broad and, overall, balanced curriculum and the quality of teamwork is very good. The Unit teacher provides a very good role model for her assistants which is reflected in the quality of teaching in both classes throughout the day.

### **Shortcomings**

The need for immediate modifications to the existing accommodation as a health and safety issue, and improved access to outdoor play activities , were identified during the inspection.

The continuing professional development of staff has been identified by the senior management team as a hitherto neglected area for attention.

## **6.0 SPIRITUAL, MORAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for 3-4 year-olds and for 4-5 year-olds

### **The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

#### **Good features**

Provision for children's social and moral development is very good, There are clear rules on behaviour and staff provide very good role models, treating the children with courtesy and kindness. Behaviour is very good. Any infrequent inappropriate behaviours are dealt with gently but firmly. Children learn to be aware of other's needs, to be kind and polite and to care for animals and the environment. They are developing a clear sense of right and wrong.

Provision is for cultural and spiritual development is good. Children have many opportunities to develop a sense of their Welsh identity. They are learning Welsh through songs, rhymes and everyday phrases and they celebrate St David's Day with enthusiasm. They are taken on visits to museums and the theatre and visiting musicians perform for them. Children have awareness of some other cultures through the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year. Spiritual development is fostered through awareness of the wonders of nature when the children are out on walks and through opportunities to see plants growing. The children say prayers every day and have short times for reflection in assemblies

#### **Shortcomings**

Multi- cultural awareness has been identified by the Unit teacher as an underdeveloped area of learning.

## **7.0 PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION**

**The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for inspection identified in the last inspection report.**

The setting has not been inspected by Estyn previously.

## **8.0 THE KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

**The key issues for action**

**The setting needs to:**

**Attend to the health and safety issues reported to the head teacher during the inspection.**

**Ensure regular access to outdoor play and increase the quantity of large play equipment, so that children have better opportunities to improve their physical development.**

**Further develop the current system for evaluating teaching and learning in order to monitor the progress of individual children and plan for their future learning.**

**Continue to develop and maintain the good practice observed during the inspection.**

**The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to Estyn. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.**