

Sector summary

Non-maintained nurseries

2022-2023



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Teaching and learning

What's going well

- Most children make good progress during their time in non-maintained nursery settings.
- An increasing number of settings are successfully embracing the philosophy of Curriculum for Wales and the Curriculum for Funded Non-maintained Nursery Settings. These settings are providing more child-led learning opportunities and a good range of opportunities for children to become involved in extended play.
- Many leaders and practitioners plan an exciting range of relevant activities and experiences across all areas of learning and development. They take account of children's fascinations and interests as well as their next steps in learning.
- In the strongest examples, practitioners are committed to facilitating child-led play and are becoming skilful at knowing when to step back and when to encourage children to persevere or think for themselves.
- A majority of practitioners use detailed observations to identify next steps in children's learning effectively.

What needs to improve

- In a minority of non-maintained nursery settings, practitioners do not provide enough opportunities for children to hear or use Welsh as part of daily routines.
- A minority of practitioners do not use observations and assessments of children well enough to effectively inform them of the next steps in children's learning. They do not take into consideration well enough children's play and exploration to aid in the planning process.
- Settings do not always plan well enough for developing children's skills in the outside area or allow children to access the outside areas unhindered.

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Care, support and well-being

What's going well

- As in previous years, most settings provide strong care, support and guidance to children that had a positive impact on children's well-being.
- Nearly all practitioners interact well with children and forge positive relationships. They interact in a warm, friendly manner, helping to create calm and relaxing environments.
- Practitioners are attentive and support children to become more engaged and independent. They create a strong sense of belonging.
- Children have valuable opportunities to express themselves clearly and have opportunities to make choices about their play and develop their own ideas.
- In nearly all settings, leaders develop a comprehensive range of relevant policies and procedures to support practitioners to keep children safe.
- Most practitioners identify children who may have additional learning needs accurately and have effective systems for supporting them and their families.

What needs to improve

- In a very few settings, practitioners do not have a sufficient understanding of the setting's safeguarding policy and procedures and do not implement them well enough.
- A very few settings do not always have robust enough health and safety procedures such as signing adults in and out of the setting and recording accidents and fire drill records.
- A very few practitioners do not always encourage children to choose healthy eating and drinking options available to them.

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Leading and improving

What's going well

- Nearly all leaders provide a clear vision for their settings. In the strongest examples, they share their vision with all staff and parents, and review their policies and procedures to ensure that these reflect their vision.
- The most effective settings utilise comprehensive information about their own practice, provision and the progress of children well to identify strengths and areas for improvement. These settings link the priorities they identify, and their plans for development, well. They identify clear actions to address these priorities.
- Many leaders conduct regular supervisions and appraisals with practitioners. They ensure that practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities well and encapsulate this in detailed job descriptions.
- Where this is most effective, leaders effectively identify practitioners' training needs and opportunities for continuous professional development. This enables practitioners to improve their performance by accessing a wide range of professional learning opportunities that develop their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Most settings have strong links with parents and guardians. They provide valuable information for them to be able to support their children's learning at home and understand the progress their child is making in the setting.

What needs to improve

- Too often, self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are weak. Leaders do not make links between the findings of self-evaluation processes and areas for development strongly enough. In a few cases the areas for development do not focus strongly enough on children's skills and development.
- Settings do not always have robust enough risk assessments in place to identify and mitigate foreseeable dangers. These often need updating or tailoring to the specific needs of the individual setting.
- Leaders do not always focus strongly enough, during staff appraisals, on identifying practitioners' strengths, targets for improvement or training needs.

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Overview of recommendations from inspections

92

Ninety-two non-maintained settings were inspected in 2022-2023

31

Thirty-one (34%) of the settings inspected received a recommendation related to the provision for the Welsh language. Eight of these settings were Welsh-medium, and 23 were English-medium.

31

Similarly, 31 (34%) of the settings received recommendations about observations. These linked observations to planning future learning for children.

19

Nineteen (21%) of the settings received a recommendation related to improving learning experiences, such as learning about their local area or the lives and cultures of others.

16

Sixteen (17%) of the settings received recommendations about self-evaluation and improvement planning.

15

Fifteen (16%) of the settings received a recommendation referring to where they did not comply with regulations.

15

Fifteen (16%) of the settings received a recommendation related to risk assessments.

12

Twelve (13%) of the settings received a recommendation related to teaching quality and methods, such as using effective questioning to encourage children's learning.

12

Twelve (13%) of the settings received a recommendation which related to increasing the independence of learners.

10

Ten (11%) of the settings received a recommendation related to outdoor areas.

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Reflective questions

Questions to help providers **reflect on their self-evaluation and planning processes**

- How effectively do leaders include all practitioners, parents, and other partners in evaluating the work of the setting?
 - How well do leaders take the comments and suggestions from these stakeholders seriously and use the most pertinent ones when developing their provision?
 - How effectively do leaders consider all the first-hand evidence available to them when planning improvements?
 - How well do leaders ensure that professional learning links to the setting's priorities?
 - How well do leaders consider the professional development needs of all staff when considering staff training?
 - How well do leaders consider the areas for development within the setting's development plans when considering professional learning opportunities?
 - Do leaders consider the impact of professional learning on the children within the setting?
 - How well do leaders monitor the effectiveness of changes they make or the effectiveness of new initiatives?
 - How well do leaders monitor the impact of the changes they make on the provision or the children?
 - How well do leaders adjust their practice or their plans when monitoring the changes they have made?
 - To what extent do leaders establish an effective culture of continuous self-evaluation practices and improvement planning?
 - Do leaders talk to staff regularly about their provision and what children are doing?
 - Do practitioners use their observations to evaluate their provision and what children are learning?
 - Do leaders follow a plan or a timetable to ensure that they consider the impact of their actions regularly?
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Effective practice

To read about individual providers that are working effectively in specific aspects of their work, visit our [effective practice summary page for 2022-2023](#)