

**Inspection under Section 10 of the  
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

**Don Close Nursery  
Monnow Way  
Bettws  
Newport  
NP20 7RU**

**School Number: 6801018**

**Date of Inspection: 7 March 2006**

**by**

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- \* primary schools;
- \* secondary schools;
- \* special schools;
- \* pupil referral units;
- \* independent schools;
- \* further education;
- \* adult community-based learning;
- \* youth support services;
- \* LEAs;
- \* teacher education and training;
- \* work-based learning;
- \* careers companies; and
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Don Close Nursery was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Don Close Nursery took place between 07/03/06 and 09/03/06. An independent team of inspectors, led by Jean Laura Hannam undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

"There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

**Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.**

This school received a **full** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Don Close Nursery serves the Bettws Estate on the outskirts of Newport and feeds a number of local primary schools. It caters for children aged three to four years. Children attend the nursery, on a part time basis, at the beginning of the academic year following their third birthday. This follows the national and Local Education Authority (LEA) guidance for admission into a nursery class. However 16 children are admitted in the January following their third birthday and are funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) according to established guidelines. Most travel on foot to the nursery. The school states that a high proportion of children enter the nursery with an academic level lower than the average for the area, particularly in the development of communication skills. The school opened in 1978 and shares the site with a social services day nursery. Some children attend both settings each day. During the inspection, there were 68 children attending part-time, 34 of whom were girls and 34 boys. They are organised in two classes; 34 attend the morning session and 34 the afternoon session. All the children come from English speaking homes and Welsh is taught as a second language. At present, no children from ethnic backgrounds attend the nursery. There are five "looked after" children and no exclusions in the past year. In line with local trends, the school population is relatively stable. The headteacher is also the head of another local Nursery and works two and a half days each week, in each setting.
2. The school considers its catchment area to be predominantly economically disadvantaged. The surrounding housing is mainly council houses or flats but a significant number are now privately owned. The school has children from the full ability range. Seven children are on the special education needs (SEN) register, one of whom has a statutory statement of SEN. Baseline assessments are undertaken and results indicate that children enter the school with levels below the national and LEA average, particularly in communication and social skills.
3. The school was last inspected in February 2000. Since then, there have been various improvements made to the grounds, where an outdoor play area has been created to support the areas of learning. The present headteacher has been in post since September 2001 and has implemented the mission statement, "Nurturing children in a happy environment where they thrive, learn and enjoy."
4. The school has received the Basic Skills Agency's Early Years Quality Mark Award.

### The school's priorities and targets

5. **The school's vision states:**
  - Our school will have an open, welcoming atmosphere for all our families and visitors.

- Each child will be valued for his/her individuality. They will be encouraged to express themselves creatively, to love the natural world and to respect all living things.
- Every aspect of our provision will be to the highest standard and we will work together as a team.
- Adults will have mutual respect and a caring attitude towards each other, families and children.
- Our children will learn in a school that is relaxed but secure. They will want to come each day and be enthusiastic about their activities. Developing their enquiring minds and the skills and knowledge to find a place in the world.
- Each aspect of the school, education, SEN, provision and training will be complimentary to each other.
- Discussions will be open and purposeful.
- Children will learn through every area of the curriculum.
- We will continue to evaluate and develop all areas of our provision in order to continue moving forwards.

6. **The school aims to:**

- Provide a happy, secure and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to “learn how to learn” through first hand experiences.
- Contribute to the all-round growth and development of each child, physically intellectually, emotionally and socially.
- Encourage children to achieve their potential through a progression of appropriate activities.
- Make the transition from home to school easy for the child.
- Produce happy, confident children who are interested in life and enthusiastic about the challenges they encounter.

7. **The short term priorities outlined in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2005-2006 include:**

- Introduce and develop the “one step programme”.
- Further develop the nursery garden.
- Continue to develop the creative area.
- Further develop staff expertise.
- Continue to develop the multi-cultural and bi-lingual aspects of the curriculum.

## Summary

8. Don Close is a good school that sets high standards for all children. The school’s Self Evaluation Report (SER) matches the inspection team’s findings in five out of the seven key questions. Many of the issues highlighted by the inspection team had been identified by the school. The headteacher and the Nursery Management Group (NMG) are already preparing to implement strategies to ensure some of these issues are addressed. These actions are specifically designed to raise the standards of achievement and the quality of provision. The good behaviour of the children and their positive attitude to work,

contribute to the success of the school. The staff work well together as an effective team.

9. Through the clear leadership of the headteacher, the commitment of the staff and the support of the Nursery Management Group (NMG), significant progress has been made since the last inspection in February 2000. The school provides good value for money.

#### Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	2
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	3
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

#### Subjects and/or Areas of learning for under-fives

Language, literacy and communication	2
Personal and social development	1
Mathematical development	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	1
Creative development	2
Physical development	2

#### Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	
Under 5s	2 Overall

#### Standards

10. Don Close is a good school that has set a high standard of achievement for the children in its care. There is a close match between the judgements made by the school in its Self Evaluation Report and those made by the inspection team.

11. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning (DLOs).
12. From often a low achievement level on entry, children achieve a good standard in acquiring knowledge and understanding and skills. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) achieve a good standard relative to their age and ability. All children are beginning to develop their own ideas and increase their understanding of the learning process.
13. Standards of achievement in lessons observed are good, being above the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) all-Wales target for 2007 for at least 65% of lessons to be grade 1 or grade 2. The school has made good progress in raising standards since the last inspection.
14. According to teacher assessment there has been a trend of rising standards over the past three years, but firm, comparative data over a sustained period is not available at the time of the inspection. The school is beginning to look at trends in achievement, for example, by comparing the results of boys and girls. The school is aware that girls make more progress than boys in the more formal aspects of the curriculum and have adapted their planning accordingly.
15. Overall, children reach a good standard in the key skills of reading, listening, Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) and numeracy with no important shortcomings. The children apply their numerical skills to many areas of structured play and enthusiastically use the computer at every opportunity to extend their developing ICT skills. They apply these throughout the other areas of learning with growing confidence and in an age-appropriate manner.
16. In the key skills of speaking, writing and bi-lingual competence, there are good features which outweigh shortcomings. From a low base line, the children are gradually developing confidence in their own ability to use speech effectively. Overall, due attention is given to the age-appropriate promotion of bi-lingual competence.
17. Creative and problem-solving skills throughout the school have good features with no important shortcomings and children work independently for extended periods of time with growing concentration. These skills are enforced as they explore and help maintain the environment within the school grounds and during their visits to the Forest School.
18. Regardless of their social, ethnic, or linguistic background, children succeed. No groups of children are disadvantaged. All achieve well and attain a good standard with no important shortcomings. Children with SEN make good progress towards targets set for them in their Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).
19. Lessons are planned progressively and staff know the children very well. Overall, the children are given good guidance by the staff. Some children are

beginning to be aware of their potential as they are introduced to new skills that prepare them for the next stage of their learning.

20. The children's behaviour is good with no significant shortcomings. Teachers are excellent role models and children are polite, friendly and respectful to staff and each other. Observations during the inspection indicated a total absence of bullying.
21. Attendance is steadily improving since the previous inspection, but despite the school's best endeavours is still an area of concern and highlighted in the School Self Evaluation Report. The average attendance figure for the three terms prior to the inspection is 82.56%. Punctuality is generally good but there are a few persistent latecomers. Absenteeism is due largely to illness and occasional holidays that are taken in term time. Parents state that they are constantly reminded of the importance of regular attendance. There have been no exclusions in the past 12 months.
22. The children are developing very positive attitudes towards their learning and some are beginning to evaluate their own work. They respond well to the many opportunities they have to make their own choices and develop independence.
23. The children progress particularly well in their personal, social and moral development. This is a strength of the school. They play alongside each other harmoniously and are tolerant of others.
24. An ethos which values creativity and imagination pervades the school and this contributes to nurturing children's personal and social development.
25. All of the children appreciate equal opportunity issues, within the context of the school setting. They are developing an awareness of different cultures and traditions. There is total acceptance and respect for cultural differences, evident in their interest in visitors to the school from other cultures. They are developing a good age-appropriate knowledge of the cultures and traditions of Wales, for example as they take part in celebrations for Saint David's Day.
26. Very good use is made of the locality as a learning resource through the children's involvement in their Forest School and local events. This helps the children to identify with their local community and gain a sense of belonging.
27. Children's understanding of sustainable development is good and the school is working towards gaining the Eco Award. Children enjoy working in the school garden with a member of staff from the Countryside Council for Wales and plant trees and hedges to enhance the school grounds.
28. They are beginning to understand the concept of global citizenship when they talk about people of different cultures and how their lives and needs differ, for example when raising money for the Tsunami disaster.

## The quality of teaching and training

29. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was as follows;

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
24%	52%	24%	0%	0%

30. The standard of teaching in lessons observed is good with no significant shortcomings; at 76% per cent grade 2 or above. This exceeds the WAG target of 72 per cent of lessons to be grade 2 or above and shows a good improvement since the last inspection.
31. Teaching is at its best where staff use a range of multi-sensory strategies and resources to help the children to work independently and make choices. Where lessons are judged to have good features that outweigh shortcomings there is a lack of clarity in the learning outcomes for the lesson and the pace is slow. Where lessons were judged to have outstanding features, staff provide very good quality, first-hand learning experiences which foster independent learning. The majority of lessons have balance, structure, move at a good pace and incorporate "Class Moves", at an age appropriate level.
32. Staff use effective questioning to guide the children through their activities. Resources are well used, often independently, by the children. With help, some children are beginning to evaluate their own work at an age-appropriate level.
33. All staff promote equality of opportunity in all areas of learning and treat all children equally. They are mindful of gender issues and those relating to lack of basic social and communication skills. All children, regardless of age, gender, ability or ethnicity make good progress due to the high quality provision. This progress is supported by all staff and the NMG. The provision meets all statutory requirements.
34. Staff have a good regard for children with SEN and plan according to their needs as stated in the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). The school's arrangements for reviewing, recording and reporting the progress of children with SEN are in line with the Code of Practice. Staff work closely with outside agencies to support a range of identified needs.
35. Staff have very good relationships with the children and each other. They have a good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching strategies and resources to stimulate and motivate the children. Their knowledge of how children learn is a strength of the school.
36. They address the requirements of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning (DLOs), have due regard for local and national initiatives and have incorporated some principles of early years education from international sources.
37. Teachers ensure that lessons build on previous knowledge and skills and continually reinforce past learning. They have high expectations for the children's behaviour and create a stimulating, purposeful environment in which

the children develop a solid foundation for future learning. They offer a broad and stimulating curriculum through a range of activities which focus on developing particular skills. Schemes of work offer staff appropriate guidance across the areas of learning and ensure continuity and progression.

38. Good quality training is available for all support staff, who work as part of a strong team with teachers, to plan for and deliver the curriculum. The dedication of the staff to the pastoral care of the children is a strength of the school.
39. Teachers continually and accurately assess children's progress. They are diligent in their collection of vast quantities of evidence of achievement over the six areas of learning. However, this is not always used to ensure that future planning matches individual needs. As yet, staff have not developed a whole-school tracking system to facilitate overall assessment and calculate value added.
40. Children are assessed on entry using the criteria from the "Teaching Talking" scheme and all legal requirements are met. The school ensures that the children's achievements are accurately recorded and reported in the annual report to parents and carers. There are suitable opportunities for parents and carers to comment and discuss their child's progress.
41. The outside classroom and the Forest School are used effectively by staff to extend opportunities for children's learning and maintain their interest. Through circle time and other curriculum activities priority is given to fostering the children's understanding of the importance of working together co-operatively, in pairs and small groups.
42. Good attention is given to developing children's basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The school holds the Early Years Basic Skills Quality Award. In order to continue improving children's speaking and listening skills, the school has recently introduced the "One Step at a Time" screening programme. The school states that the implementation of this scheme, over time, will enable them to plan suitable strategies to further children's speaking skills. Although key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT feature consistently in curriculum activities, there are no arrangements to plan progressively for or monitor their delivery across the areas of learning.
43. Due to the persistence and approachability of staff, the partnership with parents and the community is good and a notable strength of the school. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school and many help both in the classroom with creative work and outside with the Forest School. Parents receive a home/school agreement to sign and a well presented informative parents' handbook which complies with statutory requirements.
44. Community links are well established and the school benefits greatly from its association with local businesses. Charitable organisations such as the National Children's Home benefit from the school's generosity.

45. Links with other schools are good. Staff from the local nursery and partner primary schools regularly visit and share information, thus facilitating the transition to the next stage of the children's education. The school's ethos successfully and sensitively promotes its inclusive nature through which all children, regardless of their background or circumstance, are encouraged to reach their potential.
46. The school gives very high priority to children's personal and social development, and their emotional well-being. This is an outstanding feature of the school. This emphasis is appropriate and is reinforced consistently through their daily routines. As a result children make significant progress in this area of their development and in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
47. There are no children in the school, at the present, who speak a language other than English or who are disabled, but strategies are in place for them to receive support should the need arise.
48. The school is a friendly and welcoming community that offers a vast range of opportunities for all. It conforms to statutory documentation for equal opportunities and racial equality and takes into account children's different backgrounds, gender and educational requirements.
49. There is little ethnic or cultural diversity amongst the school's population at present, but the school heightens children's awareness of these issues through its multi-cultural activities, which include celebrating the Chinese New Year.

### **Leadership and management**

50. The school has specific aims and values that promote a sense of purpose. These are reflected in all aspects of school life and every day practice. All staff and the Nursery Management Group (NMG) are involved in formulating and reviewing these aims.
51. The headteacher has a clear, inspired vision for the future of Don Close. She provides good leadership across the school and encourages a strong team spirit amongst all staff. She has high expectations for the staff and children and is well regarded within the community. Parents state all staff are approachable and supportive if concerns are raised. Structures, policies and procedures are established which promote a climate of inclusion, an understanding of diversity and equality of opportunity for all.
52. NMG has a general overview of progress in the areas of learning. However the strategic role of this group is limited as it is an interim body put in place until the elected governing body becomes effective on 31/3/2006. As far as it is able the NMG fulfils its requirements and all members understand their roles and responsibilities. They work well together as a supportive, motivated team of professionals.
53. An effective performance management system is in place for all staff which is beginning to relate to priorities in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

54. Staff have defined areas of responsibility within the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and are fully committed to the school's ethos of placing the health and well-being of the children at the centre of the curriculum.
55. Existing systems of monitoring performance in the teaching and learning are not yet formalised sufficiently to feed into the SIP, facilitate evaluation or aid strategic planning.
56. The strategic use made of existing assessment information to set individual targets for improvement or influence future planning is underdeveloped.
57. Targets set by the school in the SIP are not always sufficiently focused on standards or the quality of education to facilitate future evaluation and strategic planning. Neither do they inform the school of the value added as a result of the many new initiatives recently introduced. The school recognises the need for a period of consolidation.
58. The school takes due account of national priorities. It is aware of the implications of the forthcoming Foundation Phase and is beginning to plan accordingly.
59. The curriculum post-holders (CP) have a good knowledge of provision in their areas of learning and they have started to introduce plans defining the strengths and weaknesses. Performance is assessed on an informal basis throughout the day, during conversations within the school. The school has identified the need to collect accurate information across all areas of learning to evaluate where it is at the present, by formalising its monitoring procedures. As yet, this is not firmly embedded within the culture of the school to affect future planning and develop the strategic role of the senior management.
60. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is produced by the headteacher and staff, in consultation with the MNG, and gives detailed plans for one year, stating staff responsible, timescales, action required and resources. As yet, the long-term view has not been considered.
61. The quality of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) is good with no important shortcomings. It highlights many of the issues raised by the inspection team as requiring further development. It also recognises the need to plan for and set individual achievable targets for improvement based on the extensive screening of children in their first term in the school.
62. The school is well-staffed. The headteacher, senior teacher and part-time teacher are experienced and knowledgeable Early Years practitioners. They are supported by four, well-qualified nursery assistants who ably complement the team. Teaching and support staff are deployed and managed effectively to benefit children's learning as is the organisation of the headteacher's time between two settings.
63. Teachers and support staff work together effectively, preparing, discussing and evaluating activities, and assessing aspects of the children's development. This

is a strength of the school. The school administration is efficient and the building is clean and well maintained. The outdoor accommodation provides a safe, secure area for energetic play, for exploration and investigation, and for quiet contemplation.

64. The school is well provided for in terms of resources and this is an outstanding feature. Most of the frequently-used learning resources are easily accessed by the children themselves and they exercise independence when choosing them. These are in very good condition, well maintained and tidily stored.
65. The headteacher and the MNG have suitable regard for the principles of best value and they carefully monitor the impact of spending decisions.

## **Recommendations**

In order to improve standards further, it is recommended that the school should:

- R1 set robust targets within the SIP to move the school forward at pace;
- R2 formalise the existing system of monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning to feed back into established evaluation procedures;
- R3 make better use of existing assessment information to inform planning and set individual targets for improvement;
- R4 to develop the strategic role of the senior management.

A number of these issues have already been identified by the school, in its documentation, as requiring further action,

The new governing body will be responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

## Standards

### Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

66. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
67. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

#### Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
8 How well do learners achieve?	2
9 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
10 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	2
11 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
12 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
13 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	3
14 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

#### Subjects and/or Areas of Learning For Under-fives

Language, literacy and communication	2
Personal and social development	1
Mathematical development	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	1
Creative development	2
Physical development	2

#### Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	
Under 5s	2 Overall

68. Standards of achievement in lessons observed are good, being above the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) all-Wales target for 2007 for at least 65% of

lessons to be grade 1 or grade 2. The school has made good progress in raising standards since the last inspection.

69. According to teacher assessment, there has been a trend of rising standards over the past three years, but firm comparative data over a period of time is not available at the time of the inspection. The school is beginning to evaluate trends in achievement for example, by comparing the results of boys and girls. The school states that many children enter the nursery with a low level of achievement, particularly in social and communication skills, but make good progress.
70. Overall, children, including those with SEN, make good progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge. All children are beginning to develop their own ideas and increase their understanding of the learning process. Some children apply these skills confidently to other areas of learning. The Senior Management Team is beginning to consider a robust system of tracking children's progress throughout the school and introducing a method of setting individual learning targets for improvement.
71. Overall, children reach a good standard in the key skills of reading, listening, ICT and numeracy with no important shortcomings. The children apply their numerical skills to many areas of structured play, for example, as they buy things from the shop in the Imagination Corner. They enthusiastically use the computer at every opportunity to extend their developing ICT skills; they apply these throughout the other areas of learning with growing confidence and in an age-appropriate manner.
72. In the key skills of speaking, writing and bi-lingual competence, there are good features which outweigh shortcomings. From a low base line, the children are gradually developing confidence in their own ability to use speech effectively. Overall, due attention is given to the age-appropriate promotion of bi-lingual competence. Oral responses in Welsh are sometimes limited by lack of confidence in speaking.
73. Creative skills throughout the school have good features with no important shortcomings. Children work independently and with concentration for extended periods, for example, when producing individual pieces of art work based on the paintings of Picasso. Problem solving is good throughout the school as children take part in the Forest School Project. They also enforce these skills as they explore and help maintain the environment within the school grounds. Children are beginning to appreciate the process involved in acquiring skills, as well as valuing the end product.
74. A strength of the school is that, regardless of their social, ethnic, or linguistic background, children succeed. No groups of children are disadvantaged. All achieve well and attain a good standard with no important shortcomings. With help, some children are beginning to evaluate and review their own work. These children are able to change their end product as they learn to assess their personal strengths and weaknesses. The school is aware that girls make

greater progress than boys in the more formal aspects of the curriculum and have adapted their planning accordingly.

75. Lessons are planned progressively and staff know the children very well. Overall, staff give good guidance to the children. Some children are beginning to be aware of their potential as they are introduced to new skills that prepare them for the next stage of their learning. Work is discussed with the children and a way forward is suggested during assessment.
76. The children's behaviour is good with no significant shortcomings. Teachers are excellent role models and children are polite, friendly and respectful to staff and each other. They greet visitors confidently and with a smile, eager for them to join in their activities. Any misdemeanours are handled very well by staff, and children understand the consequences of improper behaviour. The "golden rules" of classroom behaviour are on display throughout the nursery. The close relationships between staff and children have a direct impact on the rate of progress. Observation during the inspection indicated a total absence of bullying.
77. Attendance is steadily improving since the previous inspection, but despite the school's best endeavours is still an area of concern to them and highlighted in the School Self Evaluation Report. The average figure for the previous three terms prior to the inspection is 82.56%. Children self register using a photo/card index system establishing independence from an early age. Information is transferred to manual and electronic registers, which comply with statutory requirements. Punctuality is generally good but there are a few persistent latecomers. Absenteeism is due largely to illness and occasional holidays that are taken in term time. Parents state that they are constantly reminded of the importance of regular attendance. There have been no exclusions in the past 12 months.
78. The children are developing very positive attitudes towards their learning. At the start of each session, the great majority of them enter the classroom confidently and eagerly settle down to a selected activity. The children concentrate particularly well on their play, change activities calmly with the minimum of fuss, and respond readily to the adults who lead and direct them. The youngest children are adapting well to being at school.
79. The children respond well to the many opportunities they have to make their own choices and develop independence. During play with big blocks or when in the garden, for example, children persevere to solve problems and discuss possible explanations for the objects they find. They are encouraged to develop positive attitudes and good habits towards their learning, thus providing them with a sound foundation when they move on to the next stage on their learning continuum. A small number of children are just beginning to understand how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve their performance.
80. The children progress particularly well in their personal, social, moral and wider development. This is a strength of the school. They play alongside each other

harmoniously and are tolerant of others. At snack time and carpet time, they are encouraged to show respect, care and concern towards each other; these sessions are directed carefully to promote social skills and an awareness of moral issues.

81. An ethos which values creativity and imagination pervades the school and this contributes to nurturing children's personal and social development.
82. All of the children appreciate equal opportunity issues, within the context of the school setting. They are developing an awareness of different cultures and traditions by, for example, sharing suitable stories, and celebrating St David's Day and the Chinese New Year. There is total acceptance and respect for cultural differences, evident in their interest in visitors to the school from other cultures.
83. Very good use is made of the locality as a learning resource through the children's involvement in their Forest School; this also helps the children to identify with their local community. The participation of a community artist and parents in the lantern-making project, and the subsequent parade in the streets, adds to the children's sense of belonging to their community.

### **Shortcomings**

84. The level of attendance remains low despite all efforts made by the school.
85. A small number of more able children are insufficiently challenged in their learning.

## The quality of education and training

### Key question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

86. The quality of teaching was judged as follows in the 25 lessons and part lessons observed:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
24%	52%	24%	0%	0%

87. The inspection team also viewed teachers' planning and records and looked at children's work.
88. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
89. The standard of teaching in lessons observed is good with 76% per cent grade 2 or above. This exceeds the WAG target of 72 per cent of lessons to be grade 2 or above and shows a good improvement since the last inspection.
90. Teaching is at its best where staff use a range of multi-sensory strategies and resources to help the children to work independently and make choices. Where lessons are judged to have good features that outweigh shortcomings, there is a lack of clarity in the learning outcomes for the lesson and the pace of the lesson is slow. Where lessons were judged to have outstanding features, staff provide very good quality, first-hand learning experiences which foster independent learning. The majority of lessons have balance, structure, move at a good pace and incorporate "Class Moves", at an age-appropriate level.
91. Most staff offer effective support and use effective questioning to guide the children through their activities. Resources are well used, often independently by the children. With help, some children are beginning to evaluate their own work at an age-appropriate level.
92. Staff promote equality of opportunity in all areas of learning and treat all children equally. This is a strength of the school. They are mindful of gender issues and those relating to the lack of basic social skills. All children, regardless of age, gender, ability or ethnicity, make good progress due to the high quality provision. Staff have a good regard for children with SEN and plan according to their needs as stated in the Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). The school's arrangements for reviewing, recording and reporting the progress of children with SEN are in line with the Code of Practice. Staff work closely with outside agencies to support a range of identified needs.

93. Staff have very good relationships with the children and each other. They have a good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching strategies and resources to stimulate and motivate the children. Their knowledge of how children learn is a strength of the school. They address the requirements of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning (DLOs), have due regard for local and national initiatives and have incorporated some principles of early years education from international sources.
94. Support staff are developed well and work as part of a strong team with teachers, to plan and deliver the DLOs. They are aware of their roles and responsibilities in each lesson and provide excellent pastoral support.
95. Teachers ensure that lessons build on previous knowledge and skills and continually reinforce past learning. They have high expectations for the children's behaviour and create a stimulating, purposeful environment in which the children develop a solid foundation for future learning. They offer a broad and stimulating curriculum. The dedication of the staff to the pastoral care of the children is a strength of the school.
96. Overall, good features outweigh shortcomings in the quality of teachers' planning. Schemes of work provide the teachers with opportunities to ensure continuity and progression across the age range. Lessons are planned effectively to an age-appropriate level but the lack of a whole school system of setting individual targets for improvement limits the effectiveness of short term plans. Overall, lessons are stimulating and move at pace. An element of flexibility is apparent in the planning system to accommodate child-initiated activities day to day.
97. Teachers continually and accurately assess children's progress. They are diligent in their collection of vast quantities of evidence of achievement over the six areas of learning. Staff are considering a whole school tracking system to facilitate overall assessment and calculate value added.
98. The outside classroom is used effectively to extend opportunities for children's learning and maintain their interest. It provides a rich and stimulating learning experience for every child. For example a topic on magnets was extended to the outdoors, by the children independently of staff planning, and a child initiated investigation developed.
99. Growing attention is paid to bi-lingual competence and the children develop well, to an age-appropriate level.
100. Children are assessed on entry using the criteria from the "Teaching Talking" scheme and any legal requirements are met. The school ensures the children's achievements are accurately recorded and reported in the annual report to parents and carers. There are suitable opportunities for parents and carers to comment and discuss their child's work at regular parents evenings held by the school. A particular strength of the school is the flow of information between school and the parents of children with SEN.

## **Shortcomings**

101. Assessment information is not always used purposefully to inform day to day planning for individual improvement.
102. The learning outcomes, in a small number of lessons, are not sufficiently focussed.

**Key question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?**

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

103. The overall findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
104. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
105. All children have equal access to the planned experiences and opportunities provided through the curriculum. This provision meets statutory requirements and the learning experiences provided clearly reflect the school's aims.
106. The stimulating environments, both indoors and outside, are used purposefully to provide a wide range of first-hand experiences which motivate children to learn and promote their all-round development effectively.
107. Children experience a broad, rich curriculum which is planned from the Areas of Learning, and takes account of the future introduction of the Foundation Phase.
108. At present, the school is focussing on incorporating many of the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach into the delivery of the curriculum. As a result, there is a degree of flexibility in planning in order to respond to children's interests, such as their current enthusiasm for dinosaurs. This initiative is at an early stage of development and its full impact on the overall balance of the curriculum and the standards children achieve have not yet been evaluated.
109. The curriculum is planned and organised through a range of activities which focus on developing particular skills, such as in numeracy, or which emphasise the inter-related nature of the learning experiences. These activities are carefully evaluated and the follow-on steps noted to promote continuity and progression.
110. Good attention is given to developing children's basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The school holds the Early Years Basic Skills Quality Award. In order to continue improving children's speaking and listening skills, the school has recently introduced the "One Step at a Time" and "Teaching Talking" screening programmes. The school states that the implementation of these schemes, over time, will enable them to plan suitable strategies to further children's speaking skills in particular. Key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT feature consistently in curriculum activities.
111. Children's learning experiences are greatly enhanced by their visits to the Forest School. Not only do they acquire first-hand knowledge and understanding about their environment but they also learn about the importance of respect and care

for the natural world. The visits actively promote children's personal and social development, for instance, by teaching them how to be safe and work together.

112. Personal and social development is given a high profile in the life of the school and learning experiences effectively promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a strength of the school.
113. Investigations in the garden result in children expressing awe and wonder at their findings and, when with their Key Workers, there is time for shared reflection. Children are acquiring values and attitudes which enable them to show good levels of self-control and relate positively to others. They are developing an awareness of aspects of Welsh culture, and of lifestyles and traditions in Africa and China, for example, by sharing books, videos and celebrations.
114. Children are making good progress in acquiring vocabulary, and understanding and responding to simple phrases and greetings in Welsh. They participate in the teaching session with interest and enthusiasm. They understand the importance of Saint David, the emblems of Wales and some recognise the Welsh flag. All the children can sing traditional rhymes and songs of Wales.
115. The partnership with parents and the community is good and a notable strength of the school. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the life of the school and many help both in the classroom with creative work and outside with the Forest School. They also have opportunities to attend organised activities to help children with their learning, such as Language and Play courses and Stay and Play Days. The school website and regular newsletters provide valuable sources of information. Parents receive a home/school agreement to sign and a well presented informative parents' handbook which complies with statutory requirements.
116. Community links are well established and the school benefits greatly from its association with local businesses. The Bettws Women's Forum fund many school initiatives, for example, the purchase of protective clothing and footwear for the Forest School. The school is extremely appreciative of this support. Charitable organisations such as the National Children's Home benefit from the school's generosity.
117. The school welcomes community visitors such as entertainers, the librarian, the local clergy and a community art worker who helps the children and parents to make decorations for the community "Christmas Lantern Parade."
118. Links with other schools are good. Staff from the local nursery and partner primary schools regularly visit and share information, thus facilitating the transition to the next stage of the children's education. The school does not have a partnership with local colleges but welcomes students from a local training company during their CACHE training. Students from Bettws High School enjoy work experience placements; an arrangement that benefits both the school and students.

119. The school's ethos successfully and sensitively promotes its inclusive nature through which all children, regardless of their background or circumstance, are encouraged to reach their potential. The school ensures that no-one is disadvantaged. Children say they like coming to school and enjoy the variety of activities available each day. All children have full access to the curriculum.
120. Children's understanding of sustainable development is good and the school is working towards gaining the Eco Award. Children know the importance of keeping their environment free from litter and actively recycle all paper products. Their involvement in the Forest School heightens their awareness of the locality. Children enjoy working in the school garden with a member of staff from the Countryside Council for Wales and plant trees and hedges to enhance the school grounds.
121. They are beginning to understand the concept of global citizenship when they talk about people of different cultures and how their lives and needs differ, for example ,when raising money for the Tsunami disaster.
122. The school provides opportunities through the curriculum and circle time for children to understand the importance of working co-operatively in pairs and small groups as well as independently.

### **Shortcomings**

123. The arrangements to plan for and monitor key and basic skills progressively across the areas of learning are underdeveloped.

#### **Key question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?**

##### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

124. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in the self-evaluation report. The overall quality of care, pastoral guidance and support provided for children, as reflected in the school's inclusive ethos, has a number of outstanding features. Children are responding very well to the emphasis given to their personal and social development.
125. The school provides a supportive, safe and caring environment for the children. This is a major strength of the school. There are appropriate policies established relating to the health, safety and well-being of the children and in practice, care arrangements are managed very well. Consequently, the school is a happy, caring community where children feel secure and valued.
126. The school's Mission Statement, *'Nurturing children in a happy environment where they thrive, learn and enjoy'* is exemplified clearly through all the children's experiences.
127. There is good liaison between the school and a number of specialist and support services. This ready co-operation effectively strengthens the quality and provision of support and guidance made available to children and their families. There are also helpful links with the adjoining Social Services Day Nursery.
128. The school works hard to promote and nurture effective working partnerships with parents and carers; it has established good procedures to further the partnership which include choosing library books with their child in the class room and regular, informal contact with a teacher at the beginning and end of each session.
129. From information gathered during the inspection process, parents and carers clearly value the support and guidance they and their children receive from the school.
130. Families are provided with detailed information about the school's care practices in the Parent Handbook, and the Home/School Agreement sets out shared expectations and responsibilities. There are good arrangements in place to provide and exchange information about the children's progress.
131. Effective procedures are established to help children settle comfortably into the daily routines when they first attend school. These include home visits, pre-entry visits to the school and admitting children on the basis of a staggered entry. Such procedures also contribute significantly to establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with the children's families.
132. During the inspection, it was evident that the youngest children, who started school only recently, had settled in very well; this indicates clearly the success of the careful attention given to children's well-being when they first enter school.

133. There are good links with the schools to which the children transfer and the planned programme of contact before children leave the nursery enables them to join reception classes confidently.
134. The school gives very high priority to children's personal and social development, and their emotional well-being. This is an outstanding feature of the school. This emphasis is appropriate and is reinforced consistently through the daily routines with the result that children make significant progress in this area of their development.
135. A great deal of information is gathered and recorded about children's development and progress. The school is in the process of considering using this information formally to provide more focused educational guidance for each child.
136. Children's personal and social skills are promoted through all the curricular experiences provided for them. They are responding very positively to the provision that encourages appropriate attitudes towards others, and acknowledges and values the individuality of each child. The progress children make in acquiring and developing their personal and social skills contributes greatly to their ability to engage in learning successfully.
137. The overall provision for children with additional needs is good with no important shortcomings. Seven children have been identified as having SEN including one child with a statement. There is good provision for this child. There is a comprehensive policy for SEN which complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice. It gives clear guidance to all who are involved with SEN procedures and practices. The school has a very positive attitude to inclusion and supports all children to fully access the curriculum.
138. The headteacher is the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) and successfully implements and reviews policy and practice. She effectively monitors progress with the help of dedicated staff and various outside agencies such as Speech Therapy who work with the school to carry out individual learning programmes.
139. All children on various stages of the Code of Practice have a Individual Educational Plan (IEP). These are formulated by the SENCo and the class teacher and implemented by all staff. IEPs include realistic targets that are reviewed at suitable intervals with all those concerned with the child. Parents and carers are kept regularly informed of their child's progress. The children make good progress against these targets. There is a good level of academic, social or behavioural support for all children requiring SEN. This is a strength of the school.
140. There are good systems in place for the early identification and assessment of children who are experiencing difficulties with their learning. This is an outstanding feature of the school. Appropriate records are kept of the children's progress.

141. There is good liaison between the various support agencies involved with the SEN child, for example, the Health Authority and the Behavioural Support Unit. A strong working relationship exists within the cluster of schools, who support common issues and ensure continuity of provision as the children move to the next stage of their education.
142. On entry, assessment reveals that a number of children enter the school with a low standard of achievement in their communication and social skills. They make good progress throughout the year as they take part in specifically designed packages such as "Teaching Talking" and "One Step at a Time". All children with SEN make good progress within the class situation.
143. There are no children in the school, at the present, who speak a language other than English or who are disabled, but strategies are in place for them to receive support should the need arise.
144. Attendance, punctuality and performance are carefully monitored by all staff. Statistics are available from the school's electronic system and analysed by the headteacher. New ideas are constantly sought to improve attendance figures. Any unexplained absences are followed up by the headteacher and her persistence is paying dividends. Home visits highlight to parents how regular attendance impacts on children's achievements.
145. Behaviour is monitored throughout the day and positive behaviour management strategies and circle time activities are used effectively by all staff. When necessary, the expertise of outside agencies is sought to work in partnership with individual parents, carers and the school. The respectful way in which children are treated by staff and peers ensures that all children work productively together without harassment.
146. Day-to-day arrangements for the wellbeing of all in the school are given a very high priority and are an outstanding features. Staff know the children and their needs very well and provide excellent pastoral care. Children learn the importance of healthy eating and enjoy a daily snack of fruit. They are working towards the Healthy Schools Initiative and take part in "Class Moves" activities each day. Good planning ensures they all have the freedom to run freely in the school grounds on a daily basis Procedures to ensure that children with specific needs or those who become unwell or injure themselves during the day are of a high quality. Incidents are logged and first aid qualifications and resources are regularly updated. Risk assessments are thorough and well documented.
147. The school acknowledges that the safety of the children is of paramount importance and ensures that the school building and grounds are extremely secure at all times. Children are only handed over to named adults and parents who appreciate the school's strict adherence to this practice. There is a nominated and trained Child Protection Officer and all staff are familiar with protocols outlined in the Child Protection Policy and procedures.

148. The school is a friendly and welcoming community that offers a vast range of opportunities for all. It conforms to statutory documentation for equal opportunities and racial equality and takes into account children's different backgrounds, gender and educational requirements. Both boys and girls enjoy taking part in concerts and performing to an audience. Parents comment that all pupils are made to feel equal and no one is treated differently.
149. There is little ethnic or cultural diversity amongst the school's population at present, but the school heightens children's awareness of these issues via its multi-cultural activities including the Chinese New Year, videos, books and role play. Boys and girls enjoy these experiences without harassment or discrimination.
150. Through age-appropriate activities the children are beginning to learn the importance of respecting personal and public property and appreciate the differing opinions of others.

### **Shortcomings**

151. There are no significant shortcomings.

## Leadership and management

### **Key question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

152. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
153. The school has specific aims, and values that promote a sense of purpose. These are reflected in all aspects of school life and every day practise. All staff and the Nursery Management Group (NMG) are involved in formulating and reviewing these aims.
154. The headteacher has a clear, inspired vision for the future of Don Close. She provides good leadership across the school and encourages a strong team spirit amongst all staff. She has high expectations for the staff and children and is well regarded within the community. Parents state that all staff are approachable and supportive if concerns are raised. Structures, policies and procedures are established which promote a climate of inclusion, an understanding of diversity and equality of opportunity for all. These include a policy on promoting sex education.
155. An effective performance management system is in place for all staff which is beginning to relate to priorities in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Continuing professional development needs are adequately met and good use is made of staff expertise to affect standards and progress throughout, especially in the creative arts. Good practice is shared with the neighbouring schools, the LEA and its other partners in supplying its training needs and raising standards. For example, the involvement of the Welsh Department of the LEA and the Forestry Commission.
156. Schemes of work are in place that focus on the six areas of learning and facilitate continuity and progression across the age range, whilst taking into consideration the need to be flexible when accommodating child initiated-topics.
157. Staff work well together and all have defined areas of responsibility within the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. They are fully committed to the school ethos of placing the health and well-being of the children at the centre of the curriculum. The management of SEN is good and complies with statutory regulations.
158. The school takes due account of national priorities. It is aware of the implications of the forthcoming Foundation Phase and is beginning to plan accordingly. It has achieved the Basic Skills Agency Early Years Quality Mark Award and is about to complete the ECO Award and the Healthy Schools Award.

159. The NMG has a general overview of progress in the areas of learning. This is an interim body put in place until the elected governing body becomes effective on 31/3/2006. As far as it is able the NMG fulfils its requirements and all members understand their roles and responsibilities. They work well together as a supportive, motivated team of professionals.

### **Shortcomings**

160. The strategic use of existing assessment information to set individual targets for improvement is not yet fully developed.

## **Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?**

### **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

161. The findings of the inspection team do not match the judgement of grade 2 made by the school in its self evaluation report. The team judged this key question a grade 3. Leaders and managers do not always set measurable targets by which they can evaluate quality and standards and their strategic planning role is in its developmental stage.
162. The curriculum post-holders (CP) have a good knowledge of provision in their areas of learning and they have started to introduce plans defining the strengths and weaknesses. Performance and provision are assessed on an informal basis throughout the day, during conversations within the school. The school has identified the need to collect more accurate information to evaluate where it is at the present, by formalising its monitoring procedures. The school also identifies the need for a period of consolidation to assess and implement recent initiatives.
163. The Nursery Management Group (NMG) monitors progress through the SIP and keeps the school informed as to how well they are performing compared to other schools. This information is used to identify trends and take appropriate action, for example, with a falling roll situation within the local area.
164. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is produced by the headteacher and staff, in consultation with the MNG, and gives detailed plans for one year, stating staff responsible, timescales, action required and resources. The school evaluates the major priorities.
165. The quality of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) is good with no important shortcomings. It highlights many of the issues raised by the inspection team as requiring further development. It makes reference to sources of evidence, strengths, weaknesses and any necessary action points. The school in the process of consulting a wider range of interested parties in the audit process. This is the schools first full SER and it recognises that its self evaluation procedures are a developing feature that must affect strategic planning for improvement.
166. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection, both in raising standards and in the quality of teaching and learning. Four of the key issues have been addressed and the major part of the remaining two are in the progress of completion. The school has already begun to produce a speech action plan based on the criteria from the "Teaching Talking" and "One Step At a Time" schemes.

### **Shortcomings**

167. The SIP targets are insufficiently robust, to allow senior management to evaluate standards and move the school forward at pace.

168. The strategic planning role of the senior management is underdeveloped.
169. Existing systems of monitoring the teaching and learning are not sufficiently formalised to rigorously inform self evaluation or planning for improvement.

**Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

170. The findings of the inspection team do not match those made by the school in its self evaluation report of a grade 2. The team judged this key question a grade 1 as they observed some outstanding features relating to the excellent resources available and the quality of the adult support; both of which have a strong impact on the teaching and learning.
171. The high quality support from adults who work with the children, together with the range, quality and appropriateness of the learning resources, are all used effectively to promote the children's development. These are outstanding features which impact positively on the standards of the children's learning.
172. The school is well-staffed. The headteacher, senior teacher and part-time teacher are experienced, knowledgeable Early Years practitioners. They are supported by four well-qualified nursery assistants who ably complement the team. All of them contribute their expertise to teaching the curriculum and to helping children learn effectively.
173. The arrangements for the part-time teacher to teach Welsh as part of the planning and preparation time agreement are proving extremely beneficial in helping the school to raise standards in this aspect of the curriculum.
174. All staff participate in relevant continuing professional development courses. Teachers and support staff readily share their particular skills and expertise, a good example of this is the in-house training organised to extend the use of ICT skills among staff.
175. The school's commitment to developing the Reggio Emilia approach and Forest School initiative reflects the initial training undertaken by staff. The current SIP notes a priority to continuing staff development in these areas.
176. Teachers and support staff work together effectively, preparing, discussing and evaluating activities, and assessing aspects of the children's development. This is an outstanding feature of the school. They each take equal responsibility as Key Worker with a designated group of children throughout the year. These daily small-group sessions strengthen the quality of relationships, provide consistency and continuity, and help focus on individual children's developmental needs.
177. The school makes effective arrangements to support a student during her training placement.
178. The part-time clerk provides efficient administrative support and the school is diligently maintained in good order by the caretaker/cleaner.

179. The school budget and additional sources of funding are used effectively to provide a very good level of learning resources for all areas of the curriculum. This is an outstanding feature of the school. These are used purposefully, both indoors and outside, to stimulate and enhance the quality of children's experiences in the different areas of learning. On occasions, the services of the mobile toy library are used to support particular learning needs and resources may be shared between the two schools managed by the headteacher.
180. Most of the frequently-used learning resources are easily accessed by the children themselves and they exercise independence when choosing them.
181. The comfortable area for browsing through books is well used and the stock of books on display is regularly refreshed. The children enjoy using a range of suitable programs available on the computers.
182. Visitors to the school, such as a community artist and 'Mrs Tufty', the Road Safety Officer, enhance the children's learning experiences. The programme of visits to their Forest School is a valuable teaching and learning resource.
183. The school is purpose-built for nursery children; it provides adequate accommodation for the number of children on roll and the curriculum provided.
184. Indoors, the space is organised well to maximise the potential of the building and serve the needs of the children and the curriculum flexibly. For example, at each session, arrangements are made which allow each Key Worker group to withdraw into its own 'private' space at snack time; these routines effectively establish a calm, reflective, yet sociable atmosphere.
185. The colourful displays of children's work and photographic records of some of their activities acknowledge the range of their experiences and contribute to the warm, welcoming ethos for children, parents and visitors. In addition, the creative artwork in progress, displays of natural objects, and sensory equipment such as the pyramid mirror, all contribute to the stimulating indoor environment.
186. The outdoor accommodation provides a safe, secure area for energetic play, for exploration and investigation, and for quiet contemplation. Its development takes imaginative account of natural features and provides opportunities to use a good variety of apparatus and equipment. Children wear suitable wet weather clothing and enjoy a wide range of outdoor experiences which promote areas of learning effectively
187. It is planned to continue developing this area, as noted in the current SIP.
188. The provision of learning resources is audited regularly and best value is sought when purchasing new items. Budgeted expenditure is managed effectively and efficiently with support from the LEA Finance Officer and the Nursery Management Group.
189. Spending decisions related to the priorities in the SIP are determined in consultation with the Finance Officer and considered by the NMG.

190. Teaching and support staff are deployed and managed effectively to benefit children's learning as is the organisation of the headteacher's time between two sites.
191. Taken overall, effective and efficient use is made of all the resources available so that the school provides good value for money.
192. The school makes very good use of staff planning and preparation time to extend the expertise available to deliver a broad and stimulating curriculum.

### **Shortcomings**

193. There are no significant shortcomings.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### Under 5s

#### Language, literacy and communication skills

##### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

##### Good features

194. The children's listening skills are developing very well and this contributes significantly to their ability to learn effectively. Whether in a whole class group or in smaller groups, individuals listen attentively to the adults leading them; this is particularly evident at story time.
195. Children listen well to instructions and questions which help them achieve what they are trying to do, for instance, when using the computers or taking part in various craft activities. They show their understanding of what they hear by willingly carrying out directions or suggestions from the adults. They are encouraged to listen to contributions made by other children and when interacting together; children structure their talk in response to what they hear and so sustain the play.
196. Taken overall, children make steady progress in developing their speaking skills, in line with their ages, stages of development and earlier experiences. With growing confidence, children express themselves clearly and speak distinctly.
197. Children talk about what they are doing with increasing confidence. Many are keen to talk with visitors and answer their questions simply. They are helped to acquire and use key words in small group discussions and to extend their vocabulary in the context of activities, such as learning to name flowers, birds and animals in the forest. The children join in familiar songs and rhymes with gusto, recalling the words confidently.
198. The children's listening and speaking skills are further promoted hand-in-hand with the development of their reading skills - an area where children make good progress.
199. Children follow stories shared with them with interest and enjoyment. They comment on what they see and hear and answer questions which show how well they understand the story. In one session observed, the use of puppets captivated the children and produced feelings of delight, awe and wonder.
200. Many children choose to browse through favourite picture books independently, with evident pleasure. Individual children confidently retell familiar Big Book stories aloud, using suitably expressive voices to denote characters and commenting on the pictures. The children begin to understand the words 'author' and 'illustrator' and on occasions, they use the listening centre. They enjoy the

selection of Welsh story books available and independently use ICT to extend their early reading, writing and listening skills.

201. Children confidently engage in mark-making and have a good foundation for the development of their writing skills. They show good control of a variety of marking implements and produce work on different scales, both individually and in groups.
202. Children who choose to write letters, messages and invitations to communicate to family and friends clearly understand some of the purposes of writing. Some children make good efforts to write their names independently and others can recognise letter shapes which occur in their names.

### **Shortcomings**

203. During the inspection a very small number of more confident children were reluctant to further develop their appropriate emergent writing skills.

### **Personal and social development**

#### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

##### **Outstanding features**

204. The progress children make in acquiring appropriate personal and social skills and the consistency with which they demonstrate high standards in using them are outstanding features.

##### **Good features**

205. Children are comfortable, happy and confident in the school environment. They respond positively to the warm affection extended to them by the known adults and as a result, the quality of relationships between them is very good.
206. Children relate well to each other; they hold hands contentedly for greetings or a ring game, collaborate to build an obstacle course outside and work harmoniously alongside each other. Some of them initiate and develop ideas together, for instance, in role play or imaginative play with small toys as they re-enact the story of "Goldilocks" with the small world equipment.
207. They are developing their learning skills well as they take part in the daily routines which combine opportunities for making independent choices and co-operating in small and large groups.
208. Children listen well to the adults leading them and are eager to take part in activities. They are keen to explore and experiment, for example, with magnifying lenses outdoors or indoors with magnets and torches, with artwork, or creating shadows. Most of them remember to help tidy things away responsibly.

209. In general, the children manage their personal hygiene with growing independence and the minimum of fuss. They make very good efforts to manage their coats by themselves.
210. Children exercise very good self-control and this contributes greatly to their ability to progress with their learning. They understand and respect the expectations set for acceptable behaviour and, at snack time, for example, they take turns, learn to show good manners and behave appropriately when singing a prayer. They concentrate well on activities and tasks, such as playing in the home corner or searching for objects in the Forest.
211. The positive ethos of the school supports children in developing attitudes of care, respect and concern for others. Through their involvement in the Forest School, children are able to extend these responsible attitudes to the environment and the natural world.
212. Children respond very positively to the new experience of learning Welsh and to the opportunities they have to learn about different cultures.

### **Shortcomings**

213. There are no major shortcomings.

### **Mathematical development**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

214. The children use appropriate mathematical language effectively and confidently in a range of structured and free activities. They respond to the variety of opportunities provided, to practice and reinforce appropriate concepts and vocabulary. They apply these independently in play-based situations across the curriculum, for example, as they explore the contents of a mystery parcel or investigate the patterns of autumn fruits and leaves.
215. All enjoy counting activities and know a range of number rhymes and songs such as "Ten in the bed." Many children can count to five and beyond, and some to 20. Some are beginning to recognise the written number and understand conservation of
216. numbers to five. The more able children can complete more complex number patterns, count back from 10 to zero and solve simple addition problems.
217. The children sort objects correctly by colour, size and shape and can successfully identify and follow simple patterns as they thread beads and use peg boards. They have a good basic knowledge of the concepts associated with weight and capacity, such as heavy and light/ full and empty, as they take part in planned activities in the sand and water, or during cooking sessions when they make buns and pancakes.

218. Most children can name simple two dimensional shapes as they experiment with the light table and use computer packages. Some children can understand the concept of three dimensional shapes through play activities. They extend their good knowledge of length as they use the large construction apparatus and investigate varying lengths of rope.
219. Some children are beginning to understand the concept and purpose of money as they purchase things from the Pet Shop in the role play area, at an age appropriate level. This area also provides opportunities for children to extend their established skills used to identify size and comparative vocabulary, such as smaller than /larger than; more than /less than.

### **Shortcomings**

220. The understanding of the use of money is underdeveloped in some children.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world:**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

#### **Outstanding features**

221. The children follow the investigative process independently choosing the correct scientific equipment and using appropriate vocabulary to an age-appropriate level. The level of knowledge the children possess about their environment and the plants and animals that live in the garden and the Forest School is outstanding. The children's ability to independently use the environment throughout all areas of learning and to extend investigations into the outdoor classroom, is also outstanding.

#### **Good features**

222. The children respond well to daily routines to make confident choices about activities in which they take part. This involvement in classroom routines helps them to develop a good sense of passing time. They recognise the difference between day and night and some children confidently order the days of the week.
223. They talk easily about changes that occur as they grow from babies and gain a sense of times past as they study the history of the school and listen to a retired citizen who regularly help out in the classroom. They develop an increasing knowledge of the work people do as they talk to visiting workmen, the refuse collectors and the local postman.
224. During well-planned play activities the children begin to make informed decisions and solve problems as they occur, for example, as they build dens in the school garden. They also make good progress in problem-solving and decision-making skills when they visit the nearby Forest School. This project has an immense

impact on the children's learning as it enables the children to develop a deeper understanding of the wider world as they investigate wild animals and their habitats in great depth, explore their local environment in detail and apply their decision making skills with confidence. They are beginning to clearly articulate their thoughts and actions using appropriate vocabulary.

225. The children work confidently with the computer and develop basic mouse handling skills with enthusiasm, when selecting and using various shape programs and art packages. Some independently use the listening centre to enjoy stories.
226. They confidently talk about similarities and differences as they study festivals from other cultures for example, the Chinese New Year.
227. The children discuss their favourite foods and likes and dislikes with conviction. They can name familiar fruit and some vegetables. They are beginning to acquire the concept of healthy eating and clearly understand the need to follow a healthy diet.
228. They talk about their families and where they live in an informed manner. Many discuss their type of dwelling with confidence. They can identify shops and other features in the immediate vicinity. They handle a variety of construction kits effectively, to design models and then use them in creative play.
229. Through their topic on the weather they confidently compare and contrast the seasons. Outdoor activities throughout the year enable children to readily note the different clothes to be worn in each season and talk knowledgeably about the changes that occur to plants and animals.
230. They further develop their scientific skills as they take part in a topic on ice, when they freeze water to make Christmas decorations. Through this experience they learn to predict and follow instructions carefully in sequence. Many independently use appropriate scientific equipment to investigate objects of personal interest and instigate scientific investigations, particularly as they play in the out door classroom. During a child-initiated investigation on a seed found in the garden the children were able to independently select the correct equipment, decide on a plan of action and make predictions. This is an outstanding feature of the school.
231. The children are beginning to recognise that information can be found in various resources such as story books, picture books and videos.
232. The children regularly display a sense of awe and wonder as they take part in outdoor activities or make popcorn in small groups.

### **Shortcomings**

233. There are no significant shortcomings:

## **Physical development**

### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

234. Children take advantage of the range of opportunities available which helps develop their fine motor skills.
235. Children handle small-world toys and building kits, and glue small objects onto their model dinosaur, with good control and precision. They show good hand/eye co-ordination and control when pouring sand into funnels and containers, for example, and when doing jigsaws and controlling objects on the computer screen with the mouse.
236. Children handle a wide variety of mark-making tools confidently and show appropriate, increasing dexterity in using scissors. Their manipulative skills develop progressively as they enjoy pulling, pushing and shaping malleable materials, and helping with cooking activities.
237. Outside, in the stimulating play area, children are enabled to develop a further range of physical skills. They manoeuvre the wheeled toys skilfully, showing good awareness of the limited space available. They run confidently down the grassy slope, and balance carefully on a low obstacle course, generally controlling their body movements well. Some aim and receive a ball quite accurately whilst others dig with a long-handled spade and carefully carry soil to the wheelbarrow.
238. During a musical action song in the classroom, children enthusiastically demonstrate their understanding of a range of different movements such as, rolling, scampering, creeping, jumping, and balancing on one leg.
239. Children are gaining awareness of the concepts of health, hygiene and safety. They understand that their hearts thump after energetic movements, so then they sit and rest, and they know that eating fruit and drinking milk at snack time are 'good' for them. Children appreciate that it is too dangerous to use the climbing frame on a wet day and carefully observe this rule. After playing outside, and after touching objects in the forest, children know they need to wash their hands.

#### **Shortcomings**

240. There are no major shortcomings in the children's development but there is no space large enough to enable gross physical movement skills to be improved and refined with the class as a whole.

## **Creative Development**

### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

241. The children recall songs and sing enthusiastically. They respond well to rhyme, rhythm and musical activities. They use simple percussion instruments to maintain a steady beat and create their own musical interpretation of familiar tunes for example "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". They know the difference between loud and soft sounds and some can name instruments heard on a recording. They respond well to music in "Class Move" sessions and listen carefully to instructions.
242. The children are beginning to develop their creative language skills through planned role play in the "Imagination Corner" where they are starting to discuss, imitate and talk together effectively.
243. The children successfully print and produce patterns and pictures using the outdoor classroom as stimuli. For example they make imaginative leaf prints and study the pattern of blackberries on the branches. They carefully create collages from every day materials such as keys, buttons and old CD's. They increasingly explore varying textures, with great interest, through their work on a sensory floor and in their topic on materials. Using increasing skill, they make and paint models of dinosaurs or items of their own choice. They use a variety of materials and media to make choices and create individual pieces of art work and design technology. They confidently use playdough to create models and shapes using cutters and tools skilfully, with care.
244. The children enthusiastically take part in large scale projects based on their topic work. They produce a huge cockerel as part of a weaving project and a collage covered dinosaur that extends their skills in using papier mache. Every child contributes on an individual basis and works co-operatively with peers to produce pieces of art work of which they are all justly proud.
245. The children explore colour using paint, chalk, charcoal, crayon and felt pens skilfully. Some combine and mix colour, with imagination, for a particular purpose such as when painting pictures of their family members.
246. Older children are beginning to use pencil and crayon to draw pictures of themselves and their families with recognisable heads and bodies. Their observational drawings of spring flowers and fruit and vegetables are very effective and detailed. The final product is enhanced by the use of water colour paint applied with a fine brush.
247. All children handle equipment confidently and enjoy cutting, gluing and sequencing pictures. They can discuss the process they use to arrive at their finished piece of work and are beginning to appreciate the work of others. Many are aware of and talk enthusiastically about the work of artists such as Picasso and Ton Shulten at an age appropriate level.

248. The artistic aspect of Creative Development is a great strength of the school. All children take advantage of the outstanding variety of opportunities available to express their creative talents in an individual manner. They select the relevant resources and means of expression independently and with confidence.

### **Shortcomings**

249. Some children do not develop age-appropriate skills in creative dance or drama.

## **School's response to the inspection**

The Headteacher, staff and Management Group of Don Close Nursery School welcome the Estyn report following the inspection undertaken in March 2006.

It is pleasing that the inspection team support 5 of the school's Self Evaluation judgements and awarded a higher grade (1) to key question 7 – recognising continuing school improvement.

We are particularly pleased that our high emphasis on nurturing the emotional wellbeing of the children has been recognised as outstanding. Knowledge and Understanding of the World and the artistic and aesthetic elements of Creative Development are also outstanding.

The focus on these is integral to the ethos of our school and the inspection team have recognised that these elements make the school what it is.

Community involvement has also been acknowledged as an important aspect of our school life.

The Headteacher, staff and Management Group will address the inspection recommendations by putting action plans in place.

Implementation of the recommendations to develop the strategic role of the senior management will begin by the end of this school year when a governing body will be formed.

The recommendations will form part of the 2006/2007 School Improvement Plan. Inspectors have acknowledged that a number of these issues have already been identified by the school as requiring further action.

A copy of the school's Action Plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be sent to all parents.

This was a very thorough and constructive inspection which supports our aims of continuous improvement and will enable the school to move further forward.

## Appendix A

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Don Close Nursery
School type	Nursery
Age-range of pupils	3-4 years
Address of school	Monnow Way, Bettws, Newport,
Postcode	NP20 7RU
Telephone number	01633 855282

Headteacher	Mrs Helen Day
Date of appointment	September 2001
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Nursery Management Group
Registered inspector	Mrs Jean Hannam
Dates of inspection	7-9 March 2006

## Appendix B

### School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	2	0.1	2.1

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	n/a
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	10:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	n/a
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	n/a
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of School
Spring 2005	82.5	-	-
Summer 2005	78.9	-	-
Autumn 2005	86.30	-	-

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	0
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

## Appendix C

**National Curriculum Assessment Results: Not Applicable**

## Appendix D

### Evidence base of the inspection

1. Three inspectors spent a total of seven inspector-days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.
2. The headteacher was the nominee and played a supporting role throughout the inspection. The process was supported by a lay inspector.
3. These inspectors visited:
  - 25 lessons and part lessons;
  - All groups.
4. Members of the inspection team had meetings with:
  - Staff, the Management Committee and parents before and after the inspection;
  - Senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff and groups of children during the inspection.
5. The team also considered:
  - The school's Self Evaluation Report;
  - 16 responses to parents' questionnaires;
  - Comprehensive documentation supplied by the school before and during the Inspection; and
  - A wide range of children's past and current work.
6. The inspection team also:
  - Shared the early reading process with the children;
  - Talked with children about their work;
  - Observed children throughout the sessions.

## Appendix E

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Jean Hannam	SEN, Mathematical Development, Creative Development, Knowledge and Understanding, Key Questions 1 2 5 and 6.
Rhiannon Steeds	Language, Literacy and Communication, Personal and Social Development, Physical Development, Key Questions 3 4 and 7.
Susan Sperring	Supporting Key Questions 1 3 4 5
Helen Day	School Nominee

**Contractor:** Atlantes Educational Services  
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### Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the Nursery Management Group, headteacher, staff and children for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.