



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Busy Bees Playgroup
Ysgol Maes Edwin
Flint Mountain
Flint
CH6 5QR**

Date of inspection: November 2011

by

Mary Dyas

for

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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About the setting

Busy Bees Playgroup is an English medium setting serving the area around the village of Flint Mountain near Flint. Although it was established in 1982 it has occupied three different premises in the last three years and has now settled in a room in Maes Edwin Primary School since January 2011. The setting offers sessions for children aged from 2 ½ years from 9.30 and to 12 noon on Mondays to Fridays during the school terms.

The setting serves a semi-rural area and children attending the setting are considered to come from a mix of social backgrounds. All children have English as their home language and none speak Welsh at home. Although there are currently no children with identified additional learning needs the setting has an equal opportunities policy and welcomes all children.

The playgroup is registered for up to 12 children per session. At the time of the inspection there were seven children on roll of which two were three year olds. No children were in receipt of funded educational provision from the local authority during the autumn term.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in December 2009 when it was in its previous accommodation and by Estyn in December 2005.

Summary

The Setting's current performance	Good
The Setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Children are happy to come to the setting and they enjoy their learning experiences
- Children become absorbed in activities and make good progress
- The setting provides a warm and welcoming environment
- Relationships between children and staff are caring and affectionate
- The setting provides a good range of interesting and stimulating experiences

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- Supervisors have shown that over time they have identified areas for improvement and worked together positively to address them
- Despite two changes in accommodation in the past three years, the setting has continued to provide a good quality learning environment
- Formal self-evaluation, although in its early stages, has accurately identified areas in which the setting needs to improve

Recommendations

The recommendations for improvement are to:

R1 improve standards in, and provision for, Welsh language development

R2 refine assessment procedures to involve parents and carers in their children's assessment

R3 develop the setting's use of the outdoors and planning for outdoor provision

These recommendations have all been identified as areas for improvement in the setting's self evaluation report.

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

Learning experiences are well focused on meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes and the curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Curriculum planning ensures the provision of skills across the seven areas of learning and pays good attention to developing children's literacy. Evaluations of planned activities clearly identify the way forward and inform planning for the following week. All children are enthusiastic about their learning and show a great interest in the world around them. They interact well with one another and show respect and tolerance towards one another.

Practitioners have introduced the children to some simple Welsh words and phrases during group time and a few children are beginning to respond to songs and stories in Welsh but there is little use of incidental Welsh during the session. Children celebrate the Welsh culture as part of their activities around St David's Day.

Children are introduced to the ideas of sustainability through recycling activities, such as the recycling of paper which they take down to the school's recycling centre. Through growing plants outdoors they are increasing their understanding of the world around them and of the need to respect and take care of it.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners demonstrate an understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and support the children well in their learning using good questioning skills. There is an appropriate balance of child-selected and adult-led activities and adult support is well directed at developing children's thinking skills and at developing their language. Resources are well used to support the teaching and learning. Practitioners are very concerned about the welfare of the children and provide a warm and caring environment which enables children to thrive and to make good all round progress.

Practitioners make useful and evaluative observations of children's learning and achievements during the sessions. Children's progress and wellbeing are tracked across all areas of learning and are noted in their 'This is Me' records required by the Local Authority. Parents and carers have had an opportunity to visit the setting in the summer term to discuss their child's progress as recorded in 'This is Me. The setting is planning to extend this to include opportunities earlier in the year to enable parents and carers to contribute to their children's assessment.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners have created a safe and caring atmosphere at the setting where the children receive a warm welcome every day. Each child is seen to be valued and adults show respect and encourage their ideas and interests. Children's awareness of the importance of healthy eating, of how their bodies work and of the need to keep fit by exercising is well developed. All children develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world around them through the opportunities they have to explore the school grounds and the local area. They enjoy their learning experiences and are fully engaged throughout the session. They are developing a good understanding of right and wrong and of the need to be fair, honest and truthful through the good examples set by their practitioners. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Although there are no children with additional learning needs attending the setting at present, practitioners have previously worked together with outside agencies to support individual needs. Induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and easily into the setting

The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. All practitioners have received relevant training and understand their roles and responsibilities. The setting has a good range of up to date policies to ensure children's safety during sessions.

Learning environment: Good

Busy Bees is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of the setting's provision. A particularly strong feature of the setting is the very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. Behaviour is good and few examples of inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection. Most children share well and take an interest in each other. The physical environment is appropriate for physical disabilities and would enable full participation in all activities.

The setting employs sufficient, appropriately qualified practitioners to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners work together as a strong team to create a stimulating learning environment and make effective use of the good range of available resources to support teaching and learning. They guide and support the children in their chosen activities and use questioning well to develop children's language. The accommodation is in good decorative order with recent examples of children's work on display and interesting activities encourage children's involvement. Good use is made of visitors to the setting and walks around the village to enhance the children's experience.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Good

Leadership: Good

The setting supervisors know the setting well and work well together with a clear sense of purpose and a desire for improvement. They create a caring environment where children are enabled to thrive. Practitioners are keen to receive and act on advice and suggestions in order to raise standards in the playgroup. The setting is managed by a management committee which comprises parents and carers of children who attend the playgroup. The committee meets regularly to discuss issues in the setting and to organise fundraising activities. Staff at the playgroup always attend these meetings and minutes are kept. An annual system of staff appraisal is in place when targets are identified and progress discussed.

The setting has clear policies and aims which are understood and implemented by all practitioners. There is a well established appraisal system in place to support and improve staff. Practitioners respond appropriately to national and local priorities and are fully involved in training and developments connected with the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Good

Self evaluation in the setting is developing and practitioners know their setting well. Formal self-evaluation is still in its early stages but there is a positive culture of informal reflection on practice. The recently produced self-evaluation document is a useful one which identifies many of the setting's strengths and appropriate targets for improvement. Evaluation of improvements in terms of children's progress is still at an early stage of development. The supervisors have good links with other registered providers in the area and staff from other settings have visited Busy Bees to see good practice

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners are part of the local community and relationships with the parents of the children in their care are very positive. Results from the parents' questionnaires show that parents are very satisfied with the care and the learning experiences provided for their children. Weekly planning is displayed for parents to see when they are delivering and collecting their children, together with a daily comment describing main activities for the day

Very good links already exist between the setting and the primary school. The school has enabled the playgroup to use the school hall and outdoor facilities and invited them to attend and take part in special events. The setting has achieved Quality Assurance with the Wales Pre-school Providers Association. It enjoys a very positive relationship with the Early Years link teacher from the local authority who provides support and advice. There is clear evidence that this advice has been acted on to improve provision for the children.

Resource management: Good

The setting has a good range of up-to-date resources which contribute effectively to children's learning. Supervisors have identified the need to develop use of the outdoors to support the children's learning. Practitioners work closely together and make use of their personal strengths and interests.

The management committee has an appropriate understanding of the budget and the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Due to the very small number of questionnaires received there is no report on the responses from parents and carers.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mary Dyas	Reporting Inspector
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Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.