



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

**Hope Playgroup
Ysgol Estyn
Hawarden Road
Hope
Flintshire
LL12 9NL**

Date of inspection: February 2013

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

Hope Playgroup is an English medium setting which meets in a demountable classroom in the grounds of Ysgol Estyn in the village of Hope in Flintshire. The classroom is used in the morning by the school's nursery class and on four afternoons a week by the playgroup who share the nursery furniture and some resources, while also having resources of their own which need to be set out and put away daily. The classroom is bright and airy with a small kitchen area and access to a safely fenced dedicated outdoor area adjacent to the building.

The setting serves the local area and children are considered to come mainly from homes that are neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. All children speak English as their home language. The setting welcomes all children and makes appropriate provision for those with additional learning needs.

The setting is registered to take up to 24 children on the register with no more than 16 in any one session. It is open from Monday to Thursday from 12.30pm to 3.00pm in the spring and summer terms and for two to three afternoons in a week during the autumn term depending on numbers. At the time of the inspection there were 18 children on roll. Eight of these were three year-olds, seven of whom were in receipt of funded educational provision from the Local Authority.

Hope Playgroup was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in February 2012 and by Estyn in March 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting is good because:

- All children enjoy their time at the setting and make good progress across all areas of the curriculum;
- The playgroup provides a good range of stimulating activities which engage the children and support their learning;
- There is a good balance between child selected and adult led activities; and
- Children are polite and well behaved. They play co-operatively together and form good relationships with their peers and with the adults in the setting.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- Practitioners are very committed to the playgroup and are keen to provide good quality education for the children in their care; and
- The self-evaluation process is firmly established and good progress is being made toward meeting the setting's current targets.

Recommendations

R1 Continue to develop the use of the Welsh language incidentally throughout the sessions to encourage children to use the words and phrases they have learned.

R2 Continue the good start that has been made using recently developed planning to identify learning intentions both indoors and outdoors and to record spontaneous and planned child initiated activities.

R3 Consider opportunities to share with parents their children's progress and their next steps in learning.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

All children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their age and stage of development. They demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding across the areas of learning and are eager to try new and varied activities. Most children are very articulate and express themselves well. They are able to talk about things they have done at home and particularly enjoy telling the group about the things they bring to put into the 'Treasure Bag' to talk about at circle time. Most children speak confidently about what they bring and also listen attentively to their peers. All children show interest in the stories that are read to them and join in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes. They handle books correctly and know that words and pictures carry meaning. All children experiment with mark making using a variety of instruments. Many are beginning to write letters, most can recognise their written name at snack time and a minority write their names independently.

Most children refer to numbers and use mathematical language correctly during the course of their play. Many are beginning to recognise written numbers and a minority are able to do so up to ten. All children are developing their understanding and use of ICT as they play confidently with a range of electronic toys and use a camera to record interesting moments in their day which they then share at circle time on a digital photo frame.

Most children show increasing understanding of familiar Welsh words and phrases, count to ten and name basic colours. They understand simple instructions and use of individual words in Welsh but do not yet use them spontaneously themselves.

Wellbeing: Good

All children are happy in the playgroup and enjoy their experiences. The warm relationships they have with their practitioners make them feel safe, happy and confident. All have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and that good food and exercise are important to make them healthy. All children know that they need to clean their hands after using the toilet and also before their meals because they don't want to catch germs. All children develop a positive attitude towards learning which they demonstrate by taking an active and enthusiastic part in their learning experiences. All children behave well and are polite and show consideration for others when taking turns and sharing equipment.

Most children make friendships in the setting and show care and concern for one another. Children play in self selecting groups, in pairs and independently depending on the activity in which they are involved.

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

Practitioners plan together a wide range of exciting and interesting activities for the children. Planning is based on the Foundation Phase principles and addresses all areas of learning. There is a good balance of child-led and adult-led experiences, both indoors and outdoors. The setting makes very good use of the outside area to encourage involvement and enjoyment and extends children's experiences through visits and visitors. A strength of the setting is the detailed and reflective evaluations of planned activities which clearly indicate any changes that might be made and which also identify the next steps to learning.

The Welsh language is positively promoted through songs, rhymes and the use of simple words and phrases throughout the session. St David's day is positively used to introduce the children to Welsh traditions and customs such as food and songs.

All children help to recycle paper and card and know that the container they fill is taken with the others from the school to be 'mushed up' and made back into paper. Good experiences are provided for children to learn about the wider world; for example when they discuss celebrating Chinese New Year and the sort of food that children in China might eat.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and have appropriate expectations for every child, including those of both higher and lower ability. All staff interact very positively with the children and give them sufficient time to complete a task or develop an idea and they intervene appropriately and sensitively when needed. There is a good mix between intervention and allowing children to follow their own ideas. Good use of questioning helps to develop children's thinking skills and also enables practitioners to assess children's knowledge and understanding. While activities are not specifically differentiated for different abilities, practitioners know their children well and adapt their interactions and level of challenge appropriately to the ability of each individual.

Practitioners assess progress regularly. Observations are evaluative and form a useful reference for completing the Local Authority's 'This is Me' record of progress. Observations are carefully monitored to ensure that all areas of learning are addressed and this is a strength of the setting. These comments used effectively to evaluate individual progress and to plan for children's next steps in learning. Practitioners meet together to discuss children's progress and record observations and assessments. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. There are currently no arrangements to provide information on the next steps in children's learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are good arrangements in place to ensure children's health and well being and these contribute positively to children's general development. Induction arrangements ensure children settle quickly into the setting. The playgroup provides a safe, caring and happy environment for children to enjoy learning. Policies and procedures are in place to promote healthy living and well-being. Arrangements to ensure children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are good. They promote a sense of curiosity about the world, foster values such as honesty and fairness, encourage good behaviour and provide opportunities for children to engage with a range of community and cultural activities.

Although no children have currently been identified with additional learning needs, policies and procedures ensure that all will have full access to all activities. Supervisors liaise with outside agencies and the Local Authority to plan for children's individual needs whenever necessary. Practitioners are aware of the need to support more able children.

Procedures to ensure the setting is safe and secure are good. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no reason for concern. Both supervisors are listed as designated persons and all practitioners are aware of their responsibilities. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are robust and adhered to and there are good procedures for managing children's arrival at and leaving the setting. Good use is made of the local community and visitors to the setting to enhance the children's experiences of the world around them.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community, where all children have equal access to all the areas of learning and activities provided for them. Practitioners have created a warm and friendly ethos where staff know the children well and value them as individuals. All children have equal access to all activities and are encouraged to try new experiences and to taste new foods. Practitioners place emphasis on meeting children's interests and respond quickly to any requests or suggestions.

The setting has enough practitioners, who have sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating environment in which every child is able to take full advantage of learning experiences and to develop positive values and attitudes. Good quality resources for all areas of learning are well matched to support the planned activities. The outdoor area is fully used to enhance the children's educational experiences.

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

The supervisors have created a setting with a very positive ethos where children are welcomed and are very much at the centre of planning and organisation. The playgroup has clear policies and aims which are understood and implemented well by all practitioners. There is a strong culture of self-improvement amongst practitioners which helps to develop and maintain the good work of the setting. Supervisors respond well to advice and support, ensuring that changes impact positively upon children's standards and the quality of provision.

A Management Committee comprising parents of children attending the setting provides practical support including fund raising, banking money, shopping for snack items, washing tea towels and managing the rota for parents to come and help. They also issue an annual questionnaire to parents to seek their opinions on the quality of the playgroup and manage the annual appraisal process to support and improve staff.

Both supervisors have a good understanding of their role and work together effectively to successfully deliver the Foundation Phase. They respond well to local and national priorities and are involved in training and developments connected with the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation is very much part of the work of the setting and clearly identifies strengths and areas for development. Progress towards targets is regularly reviewed and practitioners have a good understanding of the need to assess improvement against the impact on teaching and learning. The professional advice received from the Local Authority's Early Entitlement support teacher provides high quality support for the setting and there is good evidence that her advice has been acted upon to effect improvements that have impacted positively on the learning experiences provided for the children.

Supervisors are very open to advice and to new ideas. They share information and good practice with each other and are willing to try out different ways of working to benefit the children. They have made good use of Foundation Phase training provided by the Local Authority to improve the quality of provision of the setting.

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners have very good relationships with parents and carers. Newsletters and daily comments on the notice board keep them well informed and parents who come to help in the setting on a rota have the opportunity to see their child's progress at first hand and to speak to the staff about their child. Parents speak highly of the work of the setting. They appreciate the opportunity to be able to spend time in the setting and say their children enjoy attending and that they have seen them make good progress.

The playgroup has good relationships with the school and both the headteacher and nursery teacher visit the group from time to time. Almost all children move on to the nursery class, which takes place in the same room in the mornings, and in the summer term the nursery teacher visits to tell stories and get to know the children. The Early Entitlement teacher works effectively in the setting and practitioners value the support they receive and are keen to respond to advice and guidance.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup has sufficient qualified and experienced practitioners and ensures that they are deployed appropriately to make the best use of their experience and expertise. The available space indoors and outdoors is well used to provide a wide range of interesting activities to encourage children to investigate and develop their skills. The Management Committee and supervisors have elected to employ a financially qualified treasurer to manage the budget. Appropriate arrangements are in place to enable the supervisors to buy day to day items and any larger spending is considered by the committee. The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10).

Responses to discussions with children

Children say they enjoy coming to the playgroup. They particularly enjoy stories about 'Ticw' the Welsh speaking bear and bringing items from home for the 'Treasure Bag'.

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.

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnership's conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh.</p>

National Childminding Association (NCMA)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National (NDNA)	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.