



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

**Montgomery Pre-School
Montgomery Activity Centre
Church Bank
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6QA**

Date of inspection: May 2012

by

**Michael T. Ridout
Reporting Inspector**

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2012: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 14/06/2012

Context

Montgomery Pre-school is an English medium setting, serving the rural market town of Montgomery and its' surrounding communities. Montgomery is situated on the Welsh/English border. The area is described as neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.

The setting meets in the Activity Centre, which is a community facility, located next to the primary school. The setting provides care and education for children aged between two and a half and four years old. It offers morning sessions on weekdays during school terms. It is registered for 18 children. At the time of the inspection there were 13 children on roll. The local authority (LA) funds places for three year olds up to 10 hours per week. All children attending are English speaking and British born. No families speak Welsh at home. No children have additional learning needs (ALN).

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in January 2011. This is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting is generally good because:

- children make good progress and achieve well;
- healthy development and wellbeing are positively promoted;
- a wide range of learning experiences is being developed;
- teaching is good; and
- the setting leader manages the setting well.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are generally good because:

- a shared sense of purpose and direction is evident;
- practitioners have high expectations;
- self-evaluation identifies relevant areas for improvement; and
- recent improvements in provision impact well on the quality of learning.

Recommendations

R1 further develop provision for Welsh and information and communications technology (ICT);

R2 place greater emphasis on themes for learning in planning and link activities where appropriate to ensure skills are developed in different contexts;

R3 develop plans of action to guide strategies for improvement.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

With few exceptions children come to the setting with well developed skills for their age and stage of development. They generally make good progress as they acquire new knowledge and develop their skills. They eagerly explore their surroundings and try out new experiences. All children confidently apply their skills through a range of structured play activities.

Achievement in early literacy skills is good. Nearly all children have good communication skills. They listen attentively and use a varied vocabulary and simple sentences to express themselves clearly. Most are inquisitive and readily ask questions and initiate simple conversations. A few engage in extended dialogues, for example describing how ice cream and butter are made, when recalling a visit to a farm. Most readily contribute to group discussions and join in familiar rhymes and songs. They enjoy listening to stories, such as 'Going on a bear hunt' and show good awareness that text and pictures convey the story when handling books as readers. Nearly all recognise their name and begin to identify letters and sounds. Most develop early writing skills well, for example when 'writing' in the post office.

Children make steady progress in early mathematical skills. Most count and sequence numbers to at least five and a few beyond. They confidently sort and group objects using simple criteria and a few use comparative language to describe objects. Most show a good awareness of money, for example when 'buying' stamps, and steadily develop their understanding of mathematical concepts through structured activities.

Progress in knowledge and understanding and in the creative and physical aspects of learning is generally good, but children's skills in using ICT are less well developed.

Children's competence in speaking and listening in Welsh is steadily improving. Many show increasing understanding of everyday words and phrases during structured sessions and a few speak some Welsh spontaneously during snack time.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enter the setting confidently and readily engage in the activities provided. For their ages almost all the children show good levels of independence. They are well motivated, have positive attitudes and sustain interest and concentration well. Most readily make choices about how and what they learn within the setting and they are beginning to help plan and develop activities.

In line with their age nearly all children have an appropriate understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise. They know the importance of washing hands before eating and after using the toilet. Nearly all develop good social skills, eat a range of healthy foods that they help prepare and enthusiastically

participate in energetic activities, including simple ball games.

All children demonstrate high levels of confidence and self-esteem. Friendly and supportive relationships successfully nurture a strong sense of wellbeing. The positive role models provided by adults help children to feel safe and secure. Children's behaviour is very good. They develop positive relationships with their peers and learn to play together and share resources. Nearly all show courtesy and appropriate consideration for others. They take turns, look after resources and develop responsibility, for example as Helpwer Heddiw.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
---	-------------

Learning experiences: Adequate

The setting is successfully improving the quality and range of learning experiences. A good range of stimulating learning experiences encourage realistic progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes, but planning offers too little guidance to practitioners in developing knowledge and skills through the chosen activities.

Weekly planning provides basic details of enhanced and continuous activities. The organisation of activities and the clear focus on skills development are good. However, there is too little emphasis on themes to promote imaginative contexts for learning and identify opportunities to link activities, so that skills are promoted in different contexts. Too few details of how and what children may achieve are identified to ensure an appropriate level of challenge is maintained.

Appropriate progression in children's skills is assured through careful reference to the Foundation Phase Child Development Profile and Skills Framework. Practitioners place strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, but the provision for ICT is less well developed.

Choice and free movement between indoor and outdoor activities is successfully encouraged. Practitioners work well together to stimulate learning and engage children's interest. They promote opportunities to solve problems, be independent and experiment with new experiences. They know the children very well and respond to their varying needs spontaneously and appropriately during activities.

Practitioners consistently promote children's Welsh language skills through structured activities, but provision to promote awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales is underdeveloped.

The setting is developing opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, recycling and the impact we have on the world.

Teaching: Good

Teaching sets high expectations and the setting leader provides a good role model. A sound understanding of the Foundation Phase and child development is evident and this is used well to encourage learning and extend children's understanding. Practitioners and regular volunteers are made aware of the planned activities. The adults provide good language models and use a range of approaches to stimulate

play and active learning. Activities are well structured and the children respond well to this. They are given sufficient time to complete tasks and practitioners intervene sensitively and appropriately when needed. On occasions practitioners use open-ended questioning well to challenge children's thinking.

Teaching is most effective when practitioners encourage children to extend their learning and feedback is given to celebrate achievement. This was evident, for example when developing children's numeracy skills. There is an appropriate balance between child selected and practitioner led activities, but links between activities are not always fully developed. Planning clearly identifies skills to be developed, but provides too few details of the expected steps in learning and how these can be achieved.

Arrangements to assess children's learning are well focused and the information gathered provides the basis of detailed individual learning profiles. Informal day-to-day observations identify how well children achieve or when progress is limited. The outcomes are increasingly used to evaluate learning and help plan the next steps. In addition the setting leader implements focused assessments.

Practitioners make time, on an informal basis, to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress before and after sessions. A detailed report of progress is provided when children leave the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides good quality care, support and guidance. It successfully promotes children's health, safety and wellbeing. The overall provision for personal development is good. Moral and social development is very well promoted, but opportunities for spiritual development are not always developed. The provision for cultural development is limited.

Friendly and supportive relationships within the setting have a positive impact on children's personal and social development. Practitioners foster the values of honesty and fairness; they consistently promote good behaviour and sensitively encourage courtesy and consideration towards others.

There are appropriate induction and transition arrangements for children entering or leaving the setting. Liaison procedures with the adjacent school are well established and effective. The setting has appropriate procedures to provide children with personal and specialist support when required. Practitioners are aware of the services provided by agencies including the LA, health and social services. An appropriate policy to support and integrate children with ALN is in place. The effectiveness of educational guidance for more able children is sound.

Established procedures ensure the setting is safe and secure. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented. Practitioners are trained in first aid and all have a valid criminal records bureau disclosure.

The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has an inclusive ethos and provides a safe and secure learning environment. This helps to ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive and children are valued as individuals. Warm relationships permeate the setting and practitioners skilfully foster tolerant attitudes. They value the diversity of children's backgrounds and sensitively encourage understanding towards others. They consistently promote good behaviour and ensure equal opportunities.

There are sufficient practitioners for the number of children. Improvements in the use and organisation of the learning environment successfully enhance opportunities for learning and play. The provision of enhanced and continuous activities is steadily developing. The setting is well resourced for the Foundation Phase curriculum, although provision for ICT is limited. Displays enhance the environment and learning resources are well organised and accessible. Increasingly effective use is made of the school grounds and visits, for example to a café, the post office and a farm, to enrich learning experiences.

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

Leadership: Good

The setting is well led and managed. It has a clear statement of purpose and the setting leader articulates clearly her aspirations to develop the setting. High expectations and a shared sense of purpose and direction are evident. Day-to-day organisation is effective and practitioners have a good understanding of their roles.

Parents are provided with good quality information about the setting, including a summary of the provision offered. Appropriate policies and routines are implemented well. Procedures to promote self-evaluation and planning are established. This helps maintain the setting's positive ethos and further develop the provision offered.

The school's headteacher maintains appropriate oversight of the setting as the Responsible Individual. She liaises closely with the setting leader and is appropriately involved in determining the strategic direction of the setting. Appropriate arrangements for appraisal and to promote practitioners' professional development are established. However, the contribution of the governing body in monitoring the setting's work is limited.

The setting reflects well on professional advice and readily embraces national and local priorities. The provision is steadily developing in line with Foundation Phase principles.

Improving quality: Adequate

Planning to improve the quality of practice is developing well. The leader promotes a reflective culture within the setting and there is strong commitment to take account of the views of parents, carers and children as much as possible. Good use is made of external advice and the impact on the use and organisation of resources is good. However, strategic plans of action to prioritise, guide and resource initiatives over the medium term are not sufficiently formalised.

Self-evaluation is used well to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The setting undertakes an annual audit of provision and implements a setting improvement plan (SIP). This sets relevant goals to improve provision, but strategies to develop pedagogy and embed best practice are not clearly enough defined. This hinders further progress. The self-evaluation report is a comprehensive document. Although the text is often descriptive rather than evaluative there is a good match with the issues raised in the audit and SIP.

Networks of professional practice support practitioners' professional development well and regular meetings involving a cluster of settings promotes the sharing of best practice.

Partnership working: Good

Strong and beneficial partnerships, that have a positive impact on the quality of provision, are maintained with parents and carers, the school and the LA. A shared commitment to further strengthen partnership working in the interests of children is evident.

Parents confirm communication before and after sessions is very good. The setting leader briefs parents about the activities undertaken and this is much appreciated. Parents are provided with an informative welcome pack when children join the setting and information is posted daily on a notice board. They are also provided with regular newsletters that inform them very well about the setting's programme. Friendly, informal relationships with parents and carers successfully promote dialogue. Parents are encouraged to voice their views, but formalised arrangements, such as a questionnaire, are not implemented.

Established links with the adjacent primary school, including weekly joint sessions with the nursery/reception class, help to ensure a smooth transition to school. Appropriate information is exchanged and members of staff from the school visit the setting both formally and informally.

The setting is developing links with some community organisations and there is a strong partnership with the LA. An advisory teacher works closely with the setting to provide professional support.

Resource management: Good

The management and organisation of staff and resources is effective and this impacts well on the quality of provision. Practitioners are well deployed, although some opportunities to guide the work of the recently appointed assistant are insufficiently formalised. Taken overall the setting has sufficient learning resources to match the needs of children. Efficient working routines are established and the indoor and outdoor accommodation is used well to develop a good range of focused and continuous activities across areas of learning. The integration of indoor and outdoor provision is becoming established.

The school maintains appropriate oversight of the settings' finances. The SIP identifies relevant goals for improvement, but the costs of meeting targets are not quantified. This limits the ability of leaders to evaluate the impact of expenditure.

The use of resources, including finance, impacts well on the quality of learning and the good standards achieved. This represents value for money, especially in relation to recent improvements in provision.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. Discussion with parents confirms their appreciation of the good work of the setting and that their children enjoy the playgroup sessions.

Responses to discussions with children

The children settle happily and quickly engage in activities. They have positive relationships with practitioners and their peers. A friendly and supportive ethos ensures children feel safe and secure. This was clearly evident in their confidence to engage in simple conversations. They know practitioners help them and that they must try to be kind and to behave well.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Michael T. Ridout	Reporting Inspector
-------------------	---------------------

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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.