



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: October 2017

by

**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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Context

Montgomery Pre-school is an English medium setting, first opened in 2004. It serves the historic town of Montgomery and surrounding rural communities in Powys local authority. It is situated close to the border with Shropshire. The setting meets in the Activity Centre, a community facility, next to Montgomery Church in Wales Primary School.

The setting provides care and education for children aged between two-and-a-half and four years old. It provides morning sessions on weekdays during school terms and is registered to take up to 18 children. At the time of the inspection, nine children were receiving early education funded by the local authority at the setting.

All children speak English at home and there were no children with identified additional learning needs attending the setting.

The governing body of the nearby primary school oversees the setting. A new management committee was formed and the Responsible Individual was appointed in September 2017. Two suitably qualified and experienced practitioners work full-time at the setting, including the setting leader who took up her post in September 2010.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales last inspected the setting in September 2014 and Estyn in May 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- Most children make steady progress and achieve good standards across all areas of learning
- Practitioners have very good relationships with children and ensure that learning is fun
- A wide range of interesting activities engage children's interest successfully
- Practitioners have high expectations of what children can achieve and a good understanding of foundation phase requirements
- The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing effectively
- The setting has a friendly and inclusive family ethos
- The learning environment is well resourced and organised

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting is very well led and practitioners work well together as a team
- Leaders are enthusiastic and provide clear vision and direction for the setting
- The setting has well-established partnerships with parents, the school and community organisations, that enhance children's learning effectively
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning has a positive impact on the quality of provision
- The current targets identified by the setting provide a clear basis for further improvement
- Resources are very well organised and used well to support children's learning

Recommendations

- R1 Use information from observations to plan the next steps in learning for all children effectively
- R2 Develop the role of the management committee in supporting continuous improvement and implement staff development and appraisal procedures consistently
- R3 Strengthen planning for prioritising spending and allocating resources, and embed systems to account for all income and expenditure effectively

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Most children have skills at or above the level expected for their age and stage of development when they first attend the setting. This is particularly evident in many aspects of their personal and social development and in their communication skills. During their time in the setting most make steady progress and achieve good standards across all areas of learning.

With few exceptions, children develop their speaking and listening skills well and communicate clearly. They talk spontaneously as they play, such as when they pretend to make breakfast and contribute to discussions confidently. Many ask sensible questions and use appropriate vocabulary, for example when following a recipe and mixing ingredients in role-play. A few initiate simple conversations confidently, such as when discussing a storybook with an adult. A majority recognise their own name and most enjoy listening to stories. They recite a good repertoire of songs and rhymes enthusiastically. Many handle books as readers and understand that the pictures and text convey meaning. For example, they follow the pictures avidly, show excitement when opening the flaps in a pop-up book and retell the story confidently. Many children begin to write for a purpose effectively and a few form one or two letters successfully when they sign their name on a whiteboard at registration.

Most children develop their numeracy skills well during regular activities. For example, they develop their counting skills effectively when they count the number of cups at snack time. A majority recognise the numbers 1 to 10 successfully. A few children order numbers one to five accurately and match the correct number of objects, such as toy animals, to a numeral. They use words including 'heavier' and 'lighter' with understanding and many recognise that money is used to buy an item. A minority of children know the names of shapes and sort and match autumn leaves according to their colour and size.

Many children develop appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, they control the mouse skilfully to drag and drop icons accurately on the desktop computer and operate the touch screen features on a tablet computer confidently.

Progress from their starting point in learning Welsh is good for most children. Many are beginning to use familiar Welsh words and phrases naturally during structured sessions, such as, naming Autumn colours and describing the weather. Most join in singing familiar songs and rhymes enthusiastically.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enter the setting confidently and quickly settle to play; they have very good working relationships with practitioners and greet them happily at the beginning of sessions. Most are confident to play with their friends and show a good understanding of the setting's rules. They are well motivated, play independently and co-operate well with each other.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. For example, most children choose where to play and move sensibly between indoor and outdoor activities. They play contentedly with others for sustained periods, such as when painting Dewi the Dragon with water on the wall outdoors. Many understand that it is important to share and they are beginning to do this appropriately such as when they share equipment in the home corner to make cups of tea. A few show consideration for others and concentrate well, such as when sharing a book.

With few exceptions, children respond very positively to the daily routines. For example, they develop self-help skills well during snack time. Most children take part in energetic play enthusiastically. They develop an appropriate understanding that exercise and healthy foods help their bodies stay fit through enjoyable activities such as dancing.

With support from practitioners, children talk confidently about what they know about a topic, what they want to find out and which activities they want to keep or change in the setting. They learn to take turns well such as when they talk about the weather and discuss how to open a pumpkin during 'bore da' time at the start of the session.

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

The setting provides a wide range of interesting learning experiences that meet the needs of most children effectively. Planning is thorough and practitioners adapt it skilfully to match children's changing interests. They plan imaginative activities across the areas of learning successfully. As a result, learning experiences meet the requirements of the foundation phase curriculum well.

Practitioners adapt their weekly plans flexibly to allow children to build on their existing knowledge and skills successfully. They plan worthwhile opportunities for children to practise and develop their numeracy, oracy and writing skills in a variety of different contexts, including through role-play in the kitchen, when they sign in to the setting and at snack time. Focused activities are structured carefully. The setting leader uses the new planning format well to identify the skills children will learn, including new vocabulary linked to the activities. These plans build on children's existing knowledge and skills effectively and meet the needs of all children successfully.

The setting plans carefully to provide a good balance between activities led by practitioners and tasks that children choose for themselves both indoors and outdoors. Provision to promote children's ICT skills is appropriate and increasingly forms a natural part of everyday learning. The setting promotes children's independence and creativity well by providing regular opportunities for them to choose tools and resources to work with, for example when they make models using junk materials. Practitioners use the setting's outdoor area and the nearby churchyard imaginatively to develop children's respect for the environment well. For example, they teach children about autumn colours and fruits by taking them on a nature walk.

The provision to develop children's Welsh language skills is good. Practitioners use Welsh songs, model simple Welsh phrases, ask questions and use Welsh vocabulary around the setting regularly. Practitioners promote children's awareness of Welsh history and culture appropriately. For example, they read Welsh stories to the children regularly and provide opportunities to taste traditional food, such as Welsh cakes.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have high expectations for what children can achieve. They have up-to-date knowledge of the foundation phase approach and use resources well to provide interesting experiences across all areas of learning.

Practitioners lead and support indoor and outdoor learning skilfully. They use their expertise imaginatively to make the most of learning opportunities. For example, when children make pretend cakes, they ask them to find out which are the best tools to use to cut and shape the play dough. Practitioners have a good understanding of when to intervene in activities and when to let children work independently. They manage learning and behaviour successfully through positive praise and sensitive encouragement. They are good language role models and use a range of teaching strategies effectively. For example, they use questioning skilfully to assess children's understanding, to extend their learning and help them develop their thinking and problem-solving skills, such as when they talk about how to open a pumpkin and what might be inside it.

There are strong procedures in place to assess children's progress. Practitioners complete focused assessments and record day-to-day observations regularly. They use this information well to compile individual learning records. Practitioners are beginning to plan carefully to meet different children's individual needs. However, this is at an early stage of development and has not yet had time to become an established feature of the setting's work. Practitioners keep parents well informed about their child's achievements, wellbeing and development through daily informal contacts and a written report provided at the end of a child's time in the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides high quality, care, support and guidance and has successful arrangements to develop children's understanding of keeping healthy. For example, practitioners promote energetic outdoor play regularly and the children enjoy lively singing and dance sessions.

Practitioners encourage children's curiosity about the world and foster positive values, including honesty and fairness, effectively. They promote good behaviour consistently. As a result children have a strong sense of identity within the setting and develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem. Practitioners support children well in their personal and social development by acting as positive role models.

The setting supports children's spiritual development well by encouraging them to reflect on their experiences and think of others. They use the natural environment successfully to encourage a sense of awe and wonder, through observing the development of frogs spawn and taking nature walks to explore the different seasons.

Provision for moral and social development is effective. Practitioners encourage children to distinguish between right and wrong and begin to treat others with respect, such as by taking turns when playing with resources. The setting helps children learn about different cultures and traditions when they celebrate festivals such as Harvest and Chinese New Year.

There are suitable opportunities for children to learn about sustainability. For example, they take the setting's recycling to the bins for collection each week.

The setting has well-established procedures to support children who need extra help. They make good use of a suitable network of contacts to provide extra support and advice when the need arises.

Practitioners implement appropriate procedures to ensure that the setting is safe and carry out risk assessments regularly. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a welcoming and inclusive family ethos. Practitioners create a friendly and purposeful atmosphere that contributes significantly to children's sense of wellbeing. They implement relevant policies consistently and, as a result, children have equal access to all activities and resources.

Practitioners take good account of children's backgrounds and individual needs. They encourage understanding and tolerance towards others sensitively and appropriately. For example, practitioners help children to value individual differences effectively.

The setting has sufficient well-qualified and experienced practitioners for the number of children that attend the setting. There is a good range of age appropriate resources that meet children's needs well across most areas of learning. This includes a wide range of books, and interesting role-play and creative resources. Practitioners set out and pack away the areas of learning daily. The setting manages this well and makes sure that children can access all areas independently and easily. This allows children to make regular choices as they move freely between the indoor and outdoor activities.

The setting uses expertise in the community and visits regularly to enrich children's experiences. For example, the children develop their interest in books through their weekly visit to the nearby library. The setting's accommodation is safe and maintained well, and it provides a secure and stimulating learning environment for the children.

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

Leadership: Good

The setting leader has a very clear vision to provide effective early years education for young children, which she communicates successfully. She manages the setting very well and has established a highly professional and collaborative ethos successfully. Practitioners work well together as a team and share a strong sense of purpose to provide for each child's individual needs effectively.

Practitioners are conscientious, and communicate with parents effectively. They have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work together with enthusiasm to improve provision. For example, they have recently improved opportunities for children to develop their Welsh language skills. Through regular meetings practitioners discuss developments together and ensure that they implement policies and procedures consistently.

The school's governing body supports the setting well. The setting's leader keeps governors well informed about the setting's progress. A new committee is in place and it is beginning to develop its role and responsibilities in managing the setting effectively.

Following recent changes, such as the appointment of a new Responsible Individual, the governing body is beginning to put in place helpful plans to support continuous improvement in the setting. This includes taking part in regular monitoring visits. However, this initiative is at a very early stage of development and has not had time to have any impact in the setting.

Leaders have been slow to establish formal staff development and appraisal procedures in order to identify individual and setting training and development needs clearly. The arrangements that are now in place are still very new and have not had time to become a regular part of the setting's work.

The setting takes forward national and local priorities well. It places strong emphasis on healthy living and wellbeing, and ensures that there is an effective focus on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has well-established procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. A strong culture of reflection and review ensures all practitioners are involved in the process. Leaders take good account of the views of parents, carers and children. For example, the setting has increased the length of sessions and changed the opening time to coincide with the school in response to the suggestions of parents.

The most recent self-evaluation report and setting improvement plan prioritise key goals that are relevant to the setting's needs. They focus effectively on improving children's Welsh skills, developing planning and improving communication with the school. This has a worthwhile impact on the setting's provision and children's standards. However, although the setting improvement plan identifies resource and training needs, it does not show clearly how the setting will fund initiatives.

Leaders and practitioners review the impact of changes and initiatives regularly to make sure that these are effective. For example, they monitor the effectiveness of longer sessions and the provision for three year olds, both formally and informally. Practitioners reflect conscientiously on what is working well and discuss how to make any necessary changes. In general, there is a good track record of improvement since the last inspection. The setting responds well to advice and support from the local authority advisory teacher in order to improve standards and provision. This includes improving opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh skills.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has well-established partnerships with parents, the school and community organisations, such as the church and library, that enhance children's learning effectively. Practitioners encourage the involvement of parents in their child's education well. For example, at the end of each session practitioners explain what the children have been doing and celebrate special achievements.

Parents receive a good range of information when their child joins the setting. They receive regular newsletters and their day-to-day contacts with practitioners are both friendly and effective. This helps parents to feel comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns and keeps them informed about daily activities successfully.

There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to the school. Practitioners share relevant information about children's progress with teachers and the children join in school activities such as playtimes and watching school productions, where appropriate. This enables them to become more confident about moving on to the next stage in their education.

The setting has positive links with a range of community organisations. They receive occasional visitors, including the local vicar and a vet, and arrange visits to the post office, a café and hotel that enrich children's learning experiences significantly.

Practitioners share good practice regularly with other settings through training events and visits to other settings. As a result, practitioners have implemented new ideas, such as introducing a days of the week song and promoting numeracy skills in the daily routine.

The setting has a constructive partnership with the local authority advisory teacher, which has led to regular improvements in the provision. For example, practitioners have benefited from guidance in providing opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills across all areas of learning.

Resource management: Good

The setting deploys practitioners effectively. Leaders make best use of their expertise, such as when they make the most of practitioners' musical abilities to lead singing, percussion activities and dance. All practitioners collaborate well. They consider strategies to improve provision thoughtfully and reflect on their impact on children's learning purposefully.

The setting ensures that children benefit from enough appropriate learning resources. The governing body and recently formed management committee discuss the setting budget regularly and allocate funding appropriately. The setting uses additional funding well to benefit the children. For example, they bought a tablet computer and software recently with money raised from face painting at a local street fair. This has helped improve children's ICT skills.

The school has begun to oversee the setting's income and expenditure very recently, sharing valuable expertise and providing beneficial stability and continuity. However, arrangements to ensure accountability to stakeholders for the allocation of all the

setting's income and expenditure, including income from fundraising and fees, are not clear enough to be fully effective. The setting's planning for future spending on training and resource needs is not formal enough to be fully effective.

In view of the strong standards and effective provision and leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

The reporting inspector

Michael Thomas Ridout	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.wales)

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 partnerships 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 three to seven 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 that 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
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation 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