



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

**Smarties Mt St Infants
Mount Street Infants School
Rhosferig Road
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7NG**

Date of inspection: January 2012

by

**Reporting Inspector
Mr Peter Mathias**

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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Smarties Mount Street is an English medium setting registered in October 2009. It provides nursery education for children who have reached their third birthdays in the term before they enter and who remain until the term before their fourth birthdays. It provides pre-school provision in two sessions for up to 16 of these children, five mornings and five afternoons a week, for two hours per session (9:00-11:05) and (1:25-3:30).

It is situated in an area set aside for it in the Mount Street Infant School, Brecon of which it is part. The responsible individual is the headteacher of the infant school. The management committee is the governing body of this school. Currently there are 18 children on roll, 14 of whom attend in the morning session and four in the afternoon session.

Children attending the setting come from a wide range of backgrounds and economic circumstances. Generally they are from neither advantaged nor disadvantaged backgrounds. The setting serves the local area which includes a British Army Training Base. Five children have English as an additional language (EAL), of who all are at an early stage of acquisition. Their home language is Nepali. The remainder speak English at home and no pupil has Welsh as a first language.

During the inspection the substantive person in charge was absent due to ill-health. Her place was taken by the play assistant and another play assistant was engaged on a temporary basis. The setting was last inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in July 2010. The report did not make any recommendations. The setting has not been previously inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The quality and standards of educational provision are appropriate and successfully promote the Foundation Phase outcomes for children's learning because of the:

- excellent standards achieved in communication in English and Welsh language development;
- good standards in promoting literacy, particularly amongst children who have EAL;
- excellent behaviour, positive attitudes shown to each other and children's enjoyment in learning;
- very positive relationships between all practitioners and children;
- consistently good strategies used by practitioners to encourage children to be independent and resourceful learners;
- positive ethos;
- overall quality of leadership shown by the responsible individual and
- thorough approach to self-evaluation by the professional staff; and
- management of staff and resources including the use of the outdoor environment.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leadership of the setting is very effective;
- there has been an accurate appraisal of strengths and areas for development and effective actions to address them;
- all practitioners are fully engaged in professional development and in working closely with other professionals in the school and further afield; and
- all practitioners are very committed to providing high quality provision for these children and have high expectations of what children can achieve.

Recommendations

Inspectors have agreed with the setting the following recommendations for improvement:

- R1 extend and refine arrangements to assess and record children's attainment on entry to the setting and their progress;
- R2 continue to formalise arrangements for planning the curriculum in the medium and short-term , so that the planning indicates clearly what the learning objectives will be;
- R3 increase the involvement of the governing body in the process of self-evaluation.

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: **Good**

Nearly all children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points. This includes a minority who begin school with EAL and are often new to the area.

They are active and interested learners and acquire new knowledge and understanding at least in line with their overall abilities. They are eager to learn and take part in their activities willingly and enthusiastically. They enjoy the wide range of practical activities arranged for them.

Bearing in mind their different starting points, these young children are developing their communication skills well both in English and in Welsh. They talk coherently and sensibly with adults and with each other. They are developing their knowledge and use of words appropriately, for example recognising that milk comes from cows and that the Welsh word for it is 'llaeth'. They explain that some foods are good for you and others are not.

All children are making very good progress in their Welsh language development, responding appropriately. They are building up knowledge of a wide range of Welsh rhymes, stories and songs which they perform eagerly.

All children are very inquisitive about the world around them. They plant vegetables in the planters and watch them grow. They harvest, cook and then eat them. They notice the changes which take place in their forest and make collages and collections of woodland plants and leaves.

Nearly all use their hands to make large circles and patterns in the foam and sand areas. They recognise that words carry meaning and that story books are read from left to right. They know that their stories have a beginning and an end and the story unfolds in an order which they predict accurately.

Nearly all are beginning to count confidently within 10 in English and Welsh. They recognise small numbers when written as symbols or when shown in array. They are building up shape vocabulary recognising heart shaped biscuits and know that some objects are heavier than others, while some float and others sink.

Within the setting nearly all use simple programmable toys confidently and are beginning to be familiar with how to carry out basic instructions on a computer using the mouse. They know how to point and press a digital camera to record each other, for example when tasting Chinese food.

Nearly all children in the setting are beginning to develop good manipulative skills when making biscuits in their cooking area or when making leaf prints and mixing painting media made from natural resources. They respond very well to different

musical rhythms and take on roles readily in dance and when pretending to be people who help them.

Wellbeing: Good

Although a minority had only been within the setting for a short time, nearly all show high levels of independence for their ages and make choices freely. They share equipment and their snacks willingly and all have kind and caring attitudes to each other. They are beginning to know how to look after their personal needs and the importance of 'washing your hands'.

All enjoy being in the setting and find their learning fun. They discuss sensibly with adults which foods are particularly good to eat and know the names of a good range of different foods, including some from China. They share their ideas and equipment readily. They know already what is expected of them and the rules they should follow. They are developing good eating habits and manners, using cutlery and chopsticks with increasing precision.

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

The setting is attractive and provides well for all children. In addition to a carefully organised indoor environment within the infant school buildings, there is a large outdoor play area and access to nearby woodland. This is also part of the infant school site. The setting very effectively encourages all children to explore for themselves and to be active, independent learners and to make good progress.

The planning is very successful in providing all children with a wide range of carefully thought out and stimulating experiences which address all the areas of learning for the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners work together constructively to plan in the longer and shorter term to ensure that the curriculum is systematically organised and children build successfully on what they already know and can do. Practitioners plan thoroughly to provide experiences to develop children's literacy and communication, numeracy and Welsh language skills. However, the planning in the medium and shorter term does not consistently set out clearly enough what the outcomes of learning should be so that these can be readily understood by practitioners who may be unfamiliar with the setting.

Practitioners make good provision for all children to become independent learners, to develop their creative skills and their understanding of the world. They ensure that there is good provision for children to know the importance of taking care of living things and to use natural resources wisely.

Children are beginning to understand through visits to the supermarket that foods come from around the world and are produced by farmers who may be poor. They know that it is important to take care when planting seeds and to water and feed them carefully so that they grow well.

From a wide range of backgrounds, all children are successfully developing a Welsh identity and an awareness of life and beliefs in different parts of the world.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a good understanding of how to encourage and foster children's interests in learning and to engage them all, including those new to the setting, in a wide range of activities. They are very mindful of children's personalities and how best to encourage them to be independent. They have high expectations of what each child can achieve and help them as individuals to play a full part in the life of the setting.

Practitioners work very well together, co-operating closely to provide individual support to children and to meet the changing needs of the activities. They have a clear commitment to make each child feel an important part of the group and to recognise what they have and can achieve. They extend and reinforce their children's use of incidental Welsh very well. All encourage children to use Welsh and English together in informal conversation.

There are good procedures to observe and record children's achievements and progress. These take place formally and informally at appropriate times during the two terms that children usually remain in the setting. These include records of what children achieve on entry and the progress they make. However, the setting is at an early stage in the process of building up a reliable and more detailed picture of children's starting points.

The setting makes good use of its informal observations to encourage children to recognise when they are succeeding and what they need to do to improve further. Practitioners are informally encouraging children to be actively engaged in discussing their work and becoming more self-critical. However, the results of these activities are not systematically matched to the planning of future individual learning. Reports to parents and carers are sufficiently detailed and accurately reflect the all-round progress being made.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are well-organised and appropriate policies and arrangements for promoting healthy living. These contribute very successfully to children's development. A particular strength is the way in which the setting plans very thoroughly to encourage children to learn more about the lives of other people, for example in learning about Chinese customs, the lives and beliefs of people in and from Nepal and in their own country. They have very good opportunities to learn about the natural world and about their locality.

The setting ensures that children learn about what is right and wrong and how to take on responsibilities and to be aware of the needs and rights of others.

There are good arrangements to provide children with personal and specialist support. Children with additional learning needs are identified and given appropriate help. While there are no children currently in the setting identified with additional learning needs (ALN), the setting has well established policies and practices in this

area. Evidence suggests that in the past professionals and parents have been fully involved and informed. A particular strength currently is the provision of additional support for children with Nepalese backgrounds. This is well used to develop their skills in English and for them to settle well into the life of the school setting and the school in general.

All children feel safe in the setting and come to it and leave happily. They enjoy being part of the setting. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an attractive and inviting environment for children which is well-organised and carefully planned to encourage the development of children's curiosity and investigative skills. There is a very positive atmosphere where all children are equally treated and valued. There are good facilities for children who may come to the setting with some degree of disability.

There is a good ratio of practitioners to children during the morning session. Currently this is very advantageous in the afternoon session, where a very small number of children attend. All practitioners are well qualified and relate to all children effectively. The training needs of practitioners are well met. In both sessions a close family atmosphere prevails where all children are confident and busy.

The accommodation is suitable and used well. Resources are of a good quality and quantity and appropriate for children of this age. They meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Outdoor facilities are outstanding.

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

Leadership: Good

The person responsible, who is the headteacher of the infant school and the person in charge work very closely and effectively together. They jointly ensure that the setting provides well for children and has a very positive atmosphere where all practitioners work in harmony as a cohesive and conscientious team. There is a very strong commitment to the professional development of practitioners and for maintaining high standards of provision.

The governing body of the infant school has overall responsibility for the setting. An individual governor is a regular visitor and works very constructively with practitioners. Through this and because of the close links which exist with the senior management team of the infant school, the governing body is well informed of the progress children make in the setting and about its long-term needs.

The setting meets local and national priorities well. It has been fully involved in training and in putting into effect the requirements of the Foundation Phase. There are very close links with the infant school and with other settings in the area. A particularly outstanding success is the way in which Welsh language development is approached and the impact these are having on standards.

There is a rigorous and well used system for staff to evaluate their own performance and to continue professional development.

Improving quality: Good

The process of self evaluation is well established and well used by practitioners to evaluate what they do well and where there are areas which need to be improved. The views of parents and carers are sought and valued. There are strong and constructive links with the local authority (LA). All practitioners have been properly involved in the self-evaluation process. However, the governing body has not been so fully involved in this process at first hand. The setting development plan is well constructed and properly focused on the setting's priorities for development.

Partnership working: Good

There are very good links with the infant school and with other local settings. These links are closely related to the infant school's role as a centre of outstanding practice within the LA. Transfer arrangements from the setting to the next phase of education are good. The setting's leadership works very closely with the leaders in the infant school to develop consistency in teaching and learning and to ensure continued professional development. A particular strength is the sharing of links which have been established to support Nepalese children.

Resource management: Good

The school has a good range of resources and equipment which contribute well to all children's learning. Particular strengths are the provision of outdoor resources and facilities and the current advantageous practitioner to children ratio. Funds are well used to maintain and improve existing resources.

The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

RESPONSE TO PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Four replies were received to the parents' questionnaire. All parents were satisfied with the setting and agreed that their children liked the setting. All children were helped to settle in well and to make good progress.

All thought that the behaviour of children and the teaching provided were good. Children were treated fairly, encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise. All parents felt the setting was safe and that children's individual needs were well met.

All who replied believed that they were well informed about their children's progress and were happy to approach the setting if necessary. They understood what to do if they had a complaint.

All felt that their children were well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education. They thought that the setting provided a good range of activities and visits and that the setting was well run.

RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION WITH CHILDREN

All children were confident. They spoke clearly and all liked coming to the setting and were sorry when it was time to leave. They were happy to play with their friends and turned naturally to practitioners when they needed support or encouragement.

All knew what was expected of them and took on responsibilities readily. They were also ready to help their teachers and each other. They knew that they were valued and had the affection of all involved with them.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Peter Mathias	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	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.