



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

**Stepping Stones Pre-School
Magor CIW Primary School
Sycamore Terrace
Magor
Caldicot
Monmouthshire
NP26 3EG
United Kingdom**

Date of inspection: October 2014

by

**Mary Dyas
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

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About the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School opened in 1972 as Magor Playgroup and has operated from a number of different premises. It is now based in a room in Magor Church in Wales Primary School. Children attending the setting come from Magor and the surrounding rural area and all speak English as their home language.

Children are able to attend the setting from the age of two and a half years and most move on to the nursery class in the school in the September following their third birthday. At the time of the inspection there were four three year olds, two of whom were in receipt of funded educational provision. The setting provides wrap around care for children attending the school nursery and runs a lunch club. It also provides good support for the very few children with additional learning needs.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales last inspected the setting in July 2014. Estyn last inspected the setting in February 2009.

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:

- all children are happy and enjoy their time in the setting;
- most children make good progress in their learning from their starting points;
- nearly all children behave well
- practitioners plan a good range of activities to interest and engage the children in their learning;
- the setting is well managed; and
- practitioners work well together with a shared vision to do their best for the children in their care.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- practitioners respond positively to advice and guidance;
- the process of self-evaluation is well established;
- the present self-evaluation document accurately reflects the current practice in the setting; and
- the current targets for improvement are realistic and there is good evidence that the setting is working towards meeting them.

Recommendations

R1. Embed the recently established process of planning and evaluation.

R2. Develop the consistent use of incidental Welsh by all staff members throughout the sessions.

R3. Fully establish the process of assessing the impact of training on teaching and learning.

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?

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

Learning experiences: Good

Practitioners plan together a good range of interesting and stimulating learning activities. They have recently taken on a new system of recording their planning. It takes good account of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and builds on evaluations of children's progress to identify the next steps in learning. Practitioners pay good attention to the development of literacy and numeracy skills in planning activities. Practitioners ensure that the learning experiences they provide are fun and interesting and that they build on children's previous learning. Planned activities engage the children's interest and curiosity both indoors and outdoors and support them in developing their communication and ICT skills. Practitioners consult the children at the beginning of a topic to see what they know and what they would like to learn about. The outdoor area is included in planning and provides a good extension to the indoor activities.

Practitioners promote the Welsh language well during group times and support the children with counting in Welsh and using simple question and answer patterns. However, there is little use of incidental Welsh during the free play sessions. Good use is made of St David's Day to promote children's understanding of the customs and traditions of Welsh.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and good first-hand experience and knowledge of child development. The planned activities are interesting and attract the children to become purposefully involved. Adults work well together as a team and interact positively with the children. They know when to intervene and when to stand back and enable children to investigate and explore for themselves. Practitioners ensure that all children have access to the full range of activities and make a point of encouraging them to try new experiences.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Good arrangements are in place to ensure children's health and wellbeing. The setting provides the children with healthy snacks and encourages the children make use of the recycling containers as part of the whole school policy for sustainability. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral and social development.

There are good arrangements to support children when they start at the playgroup and induction carefully tailors the settling in process to the individual needs of the child and their family. Good links with the school nursery ensure an easy transfer to the next stage in their education.

The daily routines in the setting help to develop values such as honesty, fairness and respect. Most children are aware of the difference between right and wrong and adults help them to behave accordingly. Practitioners communicate with parents daily and share information about the children's progress and wellbeing. Children are encouraged to take responsibility by washing their hands after using the toilet and before eating their snack and by putting on their own coats before going outside.

Practitioners understand the importance of early identification of children with additional learning needs and have worked with outside agencies to provide appropriate support. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no reason for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community and children are encouraged to treat one another fairly. There is a warm and caring ethos where all children are valued members of the group. Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities and help to create a bright and welcoming environment. The outdoor area provides a learning environment that enables children to explore a wide range of interesting experiences. Children have free access to this area easily from the main room.

A good ratio of well-qualified and highly experienced practitioners with a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase meets the needs of all children. They are committed both to their continued professional development and to providing the best possible learning environment for the children in their care. Resources are of good quality and practitioners use them well to support the planned activities.

Good use is made of the local area and visitors from the community have enhanced the children's understanding of the world around them.

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

The setting is strongly led and the joint managers work closely together sharing areas of responsibility effectively to make the best use of their interests and abilities. Practitioners meet together weekly to discuss planning and communicate daily to evaluate and assess the planned activities and children's progress. All staff meet together during every school holiday to discuss future plans. A robust process of annual appraisal is in place. Half-termly informal one-to one discussions enable the review of progress towards targets for improvement. Practitioners have responded positively to national and local initiatives and share training experiences to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. They have effectively implemented the Foundation Phase and in particular have worked hard to develop the outdoor area to ensure that all areas of learning are available to the children.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement. They know the setting well and have discussed the strengths and areas of relative weakness across the setting. There are good procedures in place to consult parents, staff and children for their views. The subsequent self-evaluation document is honest and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Managers have recently introduced a system to assess the impact of training on teaching and learning which needs to be more fully established to be effective.

The setting has addressed all the recommendations from the last inspection report. Of particular note is the development of the outdoor provision that is well used and enjoyed by the children. Practitioners are very conscientious in setting out the full range of provision even if only for a very few children.

Partnership working: Good

A range of effective partnership working contributes to the progress and wellbeing of the children; for example, the teacher representative from the school's governing body who provides an effective point of contact with the school.

The practitioners have a good relationship with parents and there are informal opportunities for verbal feedback when parents collect or drop off their children in the playgroup. Informative newsletters and an information board outside ensure that parents and carers are aware of the activities provided for their children.

Partnership with the local authority link teacher is purposeful and beneficial and has had a positive impact. Practitioners in the setting value the support they receive and the link teacher reports that the playgroup responds positively to training and to any advice and guidance.

Resource management: Good

The setting has sufficient qualified and experienced practitioners. Managers deploy them appropriately to make the best use of their experience and expertise. Good use is made of the available space indoors and outdoors to provide a wide range of interesting activities to encourage children to investigate and develop their skills. Practitioners work well together to ensure that they oversee the areas of learning both indoors and outdoors effectively, to support children's learning. An ample supply of good quality resources supports the planned activities.

One manager oversees the limited budget carefully. Both managers consider together any requests for new equipment to ensure that new resources will support the children's learning and wellbeing.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Mary Elspeth 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)

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 partnerships 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>

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 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.