



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

**Happy Days Playgroup
The Celtic
Garth Welfare Park
Bridgend Road
Maesteg
Bridgend
CF35 0NE**

Date of inspection: February 2012

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

Happy Days Playgroup is an English-medium setting which meets in the Pavilion in Garth Welfare Park in Maesteg. There has been a playgroup in this setting for many years and the current owner took over in 2009. The accommodation comprises a good sized classroom with the use of a small kitchen area and direct access to a small outdoor paved and fenced area.

The setting serves the community of Maesteg and the surrounding area and the children who attend are from a wide range of backgrounds. Many are socially disadvantaged and have assisted places from the Child Care Team from the Local Authority. All children have English as their home language and none have parents who speak Welsh. The setting welcomes all children and makes good provision for those with additional learning needs. One three year old has been identified as having additional learning needs.

The setting is registered to take up to 24 children and is open for three hours from Monday to Friday from 9.15am. The setting also runs a Mother and Toddler group one afternoon a week. At the time of the inspection there were 31 children on roll of whom six were three-year-olds. Four of these were in receipt of funded educational provision. Only three of the three-year-olds were observed during the inspection.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in May 2010 and by Estyn in March 2006.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting is judged to be good because:

- All children are happy and enjoy their time in the playgroup
- There is a strong ethos of care and concern for the needs of the children in the setting
- Practitioners provide a good variety of interesting activities which stimulate children to learn; and
- All children behave well and understand the rules of the group

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Self-evaluation is very much part of the setting and all stakeholders are consulted as part of the process
- All practitioners are committed to providing the best possible learning environment for the children
- Practitioners work well together; and
- The owner and manager have a good understanding of what is needed to bring about improvement

Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1 Establish a manageable system of recording and storing unplanned observations of children's achievements to facilitate their use in supporting the Learning Journey assessment document

R2 Ensure the use of the recently acquired electronic equipment is embedded into daily provision to support and extend children's knowledge and understanding of ICT; and

R3 Ensure parents have access to information about the activities planned for their children. Consider ways in which this information could be displayed in the waiting area.

What happens next?

The setting needs to draw up an action plan to show 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

The playgroup provides children with a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities. Planning is collated by the manager following discussion with the rest of the team and consideration of outcomes from the previous week's focus tasks. Children's ideas are beginning to be considered. Planning is flexible and provides for continuity in children's learning. A particularly good feature is the extent to which individual needs are identified in the planning. There is good provision to develop children's communication and numeracy skills and information technology skills are being addressed. The curriculum meets the Foundation Phase learning outcomes. Good use is made of the available outdoor area to extend the children's learning experiences.

Welsh is well used through the sessions by all practitioners and particularly during carpet time. Children count in Welsh regularly when prompted and join in with Welsh songs and rhymes with great enthusiasm. All children celebrate and learn about Welsh culture and traditions when they celebrate St David's Day. They visit places outside the setting regularly, particularly around the village, and learn from visitors to the setting.

All children are beginning to learn about sustainability and global citizenship as they discuss how they recycle at home. They also help to save scraps from their snacks for the African land snails. There are many opportunities for children to learn about other cultures and communities through celebration of a wide range of festivals.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners demonstrate an understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and support the children well in their learning using questioning skills. There is an appropriate balance of child-selected and adult-led activities and adult support is well directed at developing children's thinking skills and at developing their language. Resources are well used to support the teaching and learning. Practitioners are very concerned about the welfare of the children and provide a warm and caring environment which enables children to thrive and to make good all round progress.

Practitioners make useful and evaluative observations of children's learning during focused activities. However, there is no system in place for the efficient recording and storage of informal observations of children's achievements. Progress. The setting is using the Local Authority's 'Learning Journey' record which will aid transition to mainstream school. Parents and carers receive a written report of their child's progress in the summer term and this includes information on the child's next steps in learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has good arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing and arrangements for the support of children with additional learning needs. The manager demonstrates a good understanding of her responsibilities and has worked with outside agencies to support individuals. Good procedures are in place to ensure that children settle quickly when they start at the playgroup. Many children have already attended the weekly Mother and Toddler session which takes place in the setting and this facilitates induction into the playgroup. The setting provides a warm and welcoming environment for the children.

The setting has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding. All practitioners have received up to date training and understand their roles and responsibilities. Other policies are appropriately detailed and relevant. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Learning environment: Good

Happy Days Playgroup is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of the setting's provision. A particularly strong feature of the setting is the very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. Behaviour is good and few examples of inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection. Most children share well and take an interest in each other. The physical environment is appropriate for physical disabilities and would enable full participation in all activities.

The setting employs sufficient appropriately qualified practitioners to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners work together as a strong team to create a stimulating learning environment and make effective use of the good range of available resources. They guide and support the children in their chosen activities and use questioning well to develop children's language. The resources available support the teaching and learning and are readily accessible to the children. The accommodation is in reasonable decorative order with recent examples of children's work on display and interesting activities both indoors and outside encourage children's involvement.

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

The setting manager knows her setting well and motivates her staff positively. All staff are warm and friendly and this creates a caring environment where children are enabled to thrive. A clear sense of purpose and a desire for improvement is shared by the whole staff team. All are keen to receive and act on advice and suggestions in order to raise standards in the playgroup. The setting owner works in the setting for one session a week which helps him to have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase.

The setting has clear policies and aims which are understood and implemented by all practitioners. There is a well established appraisal system in place to support and improve staff. Practitioners respond appropriately to national and local priorities and are fully involved in training and developments connected with the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has had working development plans in place since the current owner took over. There is, however, a positive culture of informal reflection on practice. The recently produced self-evaluation document is a useful one which identifies many of the setting's strengths and appropriate targets for improvement. All staff and parents have an input into self-evaluation through annual questionnaires which are reflected in the action taken. Evaluation of improvements in terms of children's progress is still at an early stage of development. The manager has links with other registered providers in the area and has taken part in several working parties to produce effective documentation for the non-maintained sector in the Local Authority.

Partnership working: Good

Relationships with the parents of the children who attend the playgroup are positive. Results from the parents' questionnaires show that parents are very satisfied with the care and the learning experiences provided for their children. Parents are provided with a copy of the weekly plans for the setting but these are rather complex and not accessed by many individuals.

Good links exist between the setting and two of the primary schools which the children move on to. These links are beneficial and also ease the transfer of children to the next stage of their education.

The setting is a member of the Wales Pre-school Providers Association. It enjoys a very positive relationship with the Early Years link teachers from the local authority who provide support and advice. There is clear evidence that this advice has been acted on to improve provision for the children.

Resource management: Good

The setting has an appropriate range of up-to resources which contribute effectively to children's learning. Good use has been made of the available space outdoors to provide a range of interesting learning experiences for the children. The manager deploys staff on a daily basis appropriately and makes positive use of their individual strengths.

The setting owner controls the finances and makes all spending decisions in consultation with the manager. His weekly session working with the children alongside the staff ensures that he has the appropriate experience to enable him to make considered decisions. Overall, the setting gives value for money.

Appendix 1

Due to the very small number of questionnaires received and children observed during the inspection, there is no report on either the responses from parents and carers or the discussions with children.

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.