



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

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

Date of inspection: November 2016

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

Smarties, is an English medium setting situated in Mount Street Infant School in Brecon, in Powys local authority. It provides nursery education for children who begin in the term after their third birthday. It delivers pre-school provision in two sessions a day, five mornings and five afternoons a week, for a maximum of 16 children per session. Currently there are 22 children on roll, 13 of whom attend in the morning and nine in the afternoon. The local authority funds all children.

A few children speak English as an additional language; however, none speaks Welsh at home. The setting identifies a few children as having additional learning needs.

The setting employs two full time staff, one of whom is the setting's leader. The registered person in charge is the acting-headteacher of the infant school. The management committee is the governing body of the school.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in May 2014. Estyn last inspected the setting in January 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- During their time at the setting, most children make worthwhile progress in developing their skills and achieve well in relation to their starting points
- Most children listen well and are happy to speak to adults in the setting
- Most children are developing effective early reading skills and enjoy listening to stories
- Many children are beginning to handle a range of mark making equipment suitably, such as chalk and felt pens
- Many children are beginning to develop useful number skills and use appropriate mathematical vocabulary when playing
- Nearly all children have effective relationships with adults at the setting
- Most show consideration for others well, for example when sharing resources in the role-play area, and they are keen to learn and demonstrate a positive attitude towards their learning activities
- The setting provides children with a worthwhile range of motivating learning experiences across all of the Foundation Phase areas of learning

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Leaders manage the setting well
- There are strong links between the school and the setting, and this allows the registered person in charge person to have a beneficial understanding of the setting's needs
- Leaders have clear aims that focus strongly on providing an effective education
- There are satisfactory processes in place to manage the performance of practitioners
- Leaders understand the importance of local and national priorities and ensure that the setting focuses on developing these beneficially
- The setting has an effective range of partnerships that benefit children well
- Leaders make beneficial use of the support offered by the local authority advisory teacher

Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R2 Ensure that adult-led and independent learning activities challenge all children, particularly the more able, more effectively
- R3 Ensure that there are consistent opportunities for children to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all areas of the curriculum
- R4 Develop more systematic and comprehensive processes for evaluating the work of the setting and improve the rigour with which improvement priorities are addressed

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

During their time at the setting, most children make worthwhile progress in developing their skills and achieve well in relation to their differing starting points.

Most children listen well and are happy to speak to adults in the setting. During whole class sessions, most listen attentively and respond appropriately. They are happy to express simple opinions and talk about their learning activities, explaining what they are doing using appropriate vocabulary. A few more able children are beginning to use humour in their everyday talk, such as joking with practitioners that they have lost their voice. Most children join in with class songs enthusiastically, in both English and Welsh.

Most children enjoy listening to stories, including those told to them on screen. They understand that books have words that tell a story and look at the pictures in books with sustained interest. Many children are beginning to handle a range of mark making equipment suitably, such as chalk and felt pens. They are starting to make marks for a suitable range of purposes. However, a minority do not do so confidently.

Many children are beginning to develop useful number skills. They are confident to touch count up to ten objects during their play activities and in whole-class sessions. For example, when counting the number of children who are at the setting each day. Many use appropriate mathematical vocabulary when playing, such as the names of simple shapes and comparative language terms, for example bigger and smaller. They are able to reproduce a sequence correctly using different criteria, such as size and colour.

Many children's are beginning to develop a satisfactory understanding of ICT skills. A few are beginning use screen controls to turn applications on and off well. They use a camera suitably to take photographs of objects during their play activities. However, a minority do not handle or use a wide enough range of ICT equipment competently enough.

Many children are developing an effective understanding of the Welsh language. They understand and respond well to a few basic instructions given by practitioners in Welsh. They are able to use vocabulary associated with colours, numbers and the weather suitably. They join in with songs in Welsh confidently and understand that they can use the language to pass on information. For example, they can say what drink they would like and answer that they are present, effectively.

Most children have worthwhile physical skills. They demonstrate these well throughout the session, such as when banging drums, shaking bells and building using construction toys effectively. Many children are beginning to develop effective thinking and problem solving skills. For example, they are able to identify and copy patterns using the colours and sizes of different objects skilfully.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children have effective relationships with adults at the setting. They enter the setting happily and confidently, and are eager to chat to practitioners. Most show consideration for others well, for example when sharing resources in the role-play area. However, a very few, call out when others are speaking. The standard of behaviour of most children is good.

Most children are keen to learn and demonstrate a positive attitude towards their learning activities. They respond to adults well and make choices confidently, such as when deciding on their learning activities. Many children keep suitable focus on tasks for appropriate periods of time, for example, when copying sequences of bears during a mathematical development activity.

Many children have an appropriate understanding of keeping healthy, for example by eating healthy food and drinking milk and water instead of fizzy drinks. However, a few need constant reminders to wash their hands at appropriate times. During group sessions, such as snack time, nearly all children sit sensibly and interact politely with each other.

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

The setting provides children with a worthwhile range of motivating learning experiences across all of the Foundation Phase areas of learning. Practitioners add to these effectively by sharing some resources with the infant school. For example, well-planned use of the forest school area allows the children to develop their independent learning skills in an interesting learning environment. All staff ensure that there is a suitable emphasis on learning through play, such as preparing for a trip to the moon. As a result, children engage with the planned curriculum well. However, practitioners do not always take into account children's ideas or individual interests consistently well. Practitioners plan a suitable range of independent activities in which children may engage. However, both adult directed and independent learning activities do not always challenge the more able children well enough.

The setting is beginning to provide children with more frequent opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across other areas of learning, for example by encouraging children to develop their oracy skills by asking questions of visitors. However, practitioners do not plan for these learning opportunities consistently and comprehensively enough, particularly when planning for these skills in children's independent learning activities. As a result, learning activities do not consistently challenge children to improve and practise these important skills frequently enough. The setting provides satisfactory opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills, for example when taking photographs of their work or each other. However, practitioners do not plan well enough for children to develop a broad enough range of ICT skills across all areas of learning.

All practitioners use instructions and commands in Welsh throughout the day well and ensure that there are regular opportunities for children to participate in singing Welsh songs. They introduce elements of the Welsh language into day-to-day learning activities suitably, for example when asking children to name the colours of teddy bears in a sequencing activity. As a result, many children are beginning to develop an effective Welsh vocabulary. Practitioners plan an appropriate range of opportunities for children to learn about Welsh culture through activities such as baking and celebrations on St David's Day.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners at the setting work well as a team. They have an effective understanding of the Foundation Phase and use this effectively to plan stimulating learning activities. They know the children well and are sensitive to their individual needs. As a result, children are happy in the setting and confident to engage in new activities. Practitioners generally have high expectations of many of the children and engage with them skilfully during activities to extend their learning. They encourage and question children successfully and this helps to develop the children's oracy and thinking skills well. There is generally an effective balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning activities. This allows children appropriate choice in their learning and is helping to develop their independent skills successfully

Practitioners undertake a suitable range of observations of children's learning. This helps them to plan learning activities that are appropriate for many children. However, their observations do not consistently focus well enough on the progress that children are making in their skills development. As a result, they do not consistently plan learning activities that challenge all children, particularly those that are more able.

Practitioners inform parents beneficially about their child's progress through informal discussions. When the children move on to the next stage in their education, practitioners provide parents with an informative written report about their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing successfully. Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to plant, grow and eat a range of healthy foods. They ensure that children have effective opportunities for physical development activities, such as 'music and play' sessions. Practitioners make good use of the indoor and outdoor environment for children to develop their physical skills and independence. For example, they plan opportunities for children to be active and to use their thinking skills purposefully in the forest school area. As a result, most children are developing a strong understanding of ways to be healthy.

The setting develops children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, through interesting visits and visitors. For example, members from the local Ghurkha community introduce children to their culture through engaging presentations, such as demonstrating a kukri dance. Practitioners encourage children to treat each other with respect and to share toys and equipment. They lead by example and act as

consistently good role models for children to follow. Children have effective opportunities to learn about the importance of caring for animals and the environment through planting and looking after vegetables and caring for the setting's rabbits.

There are beneficial arrangements to support those children with additional learning needs. Practitioners involve expert staff from the infant school in helping to identify children that need additional support and liaise with a wide range of specialist services to ensure that they support children well. They ensure that parents are involved closely in these practices and, as a result, many children who need help receive beneficial support.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has an inclusive, welcoming ethos. Practitioners ensure that all children have equal access to all activities and place a strong emphasis on celebrating the diverse nature of children's backgrounds. For example, children greet each other in a range of languages. Practitioners welcome visitors from community members, such as the Nepali community, to cook and share Nepalese food with the children. As a result, children learn to respect others successfully.

The setting's accommodation is secure and well maintained. It has sufficient qualified practitioners to meet the needs of the Foundation Phase. Both the indoor and outdoor areas have stimulating learning areas in which children are happy to learn and play. The setting has ample learning resources, most of which are accessible to children. Practitioners make effective use of the infant school grounds and resources to ensure that they provide beneficial learning experiences. For example, the use of the school hall for 'music and play' sessions enables children to mix with older children from the school beneficially and develops their musical and physical skills successfully.

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

Leaders manage the setting well. On a day-to-day basis, the setting leader oversees the running of sessions efficiently, while the acting headteacher of the infant school provides valuable strategic direction for the setting. There are strong links between the school and the setting, enabling her to have a beneficial understanding of the setting's needs. Together they have clear aims that focus strongly on improving provision and providing a seamless and effective education for children from pre-school through to formal education.

All staff work together as a successful team. The acting headteacher has a suitably high expectation of the setting's staff and is beginning to provide them with appropriate challenge. However, a few strategic priorities, such as the formalisation of improvement practices, have not always been successful enough. There are satisfactory processes in place to manage the performance of practitioners. Leaders

use these suitably to identify areas for practitioner development. As a result, they are able to support staff appropriately in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding of early education. Leaders understand the importance of local and national priorities suitably and ensure that the setting focuses on developing these beneficially. For example, practitioners are starting to consider how to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of learning more consistently.

Improving quality: Adequate

Leaders ensure that they create a useful self-evaluation report on an annual basis. This identifies adequately a few priorities for improvement. However, there are not systematic processes in place for evaluating the work of the setting effectively enough. For example, while practitioners make useful notes on what children can do, there are not rigorous systems for measuring and analysing children's progress. There is no formal scrutiny of the quality of teaching or of the setting's planning. As a result, although practitioners are committed to improving the quality of the setting, they do not always have a strong enough understanding of which areas to improve.

The setting's planning for improvement is generally suitable. However, it does not focus sharply enough on identifying improvement in terms of children's standards and progress. Although practitioners are suitably aware of improvement priorities, there are not formal enough processes for monitoring the actions in the plan throughout the year. As a result, leaders do not always have a strong enough idea of how improvement actions are progressing or of their impact. In a minority of cases, this means that actions are not always successful enough.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has an effective range of partnerships that benefit children well. The school's partnerships with the local infant school is particularly strong. This allows the setting to use the school's grounds and resources, and utilise their expertise well. For example, children have worthwhile opportunities to develop their independent learning skills in the outdoor environment using the school's community garden. These partnerships also promote a smooth transition for children from the setting to the next stage of their education.

The setting has a useful partnership with parents. Practitioners ensure that parents are kept well informed through newsletters and informal daily discussions. The setting is beginning to develop the use of a mobile phone application, currently used by the school, to share activities and news from the setting in real time. Practitioners share information about the children's progress with a useful end-of-setting report. As a result, parents feel well informed about their child's activities while at the setting.

Practitioners make beneficial use of the support offered by the local authority advisory teacher. This provides a helpful perspective on the setting's strengths and areas for development, which practitioners use to identify a few improvement priorities suitably. This link also provides valuable access to training, information about new local initiatives and new learning resources. This helps to keep practitioners up-to-date and develop beneficial Foundation Phase practices.

Resource management: Good

Leaders make beneficial use of staff and resources to support children's learning well. They use staff expertise effectively to help support children's learning, for example in deploying staff to develop children's skills through 'music and play' sessions. They ensure that there is a broad variety of learning resources that practitioners can use to support the curriculum successfully. Leaders ensure that practitioners access a broad range of training and, as a result, their understanding of Foundation Phase practice is strong.

The setting's leader and the acting-headteacher of the school are developing suitable processes for overseeing the budget. As a result, the setting's leader has a clear understanding of the setting's financial position and available resources. Between them, they allocate funds appropriately to maintain effective staffing and worthwhile resources, and target the setting's improvement priorities. As a result, the setting develops children's learning effectively and provides good value for money.

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

Mr Andrew Thorne	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	<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	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.
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.