



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

A report on

**Chirk Playgroup
Parish Hall
Holyhead Road
Chirk
Wrexham
LL14 5NA**

Date of inspection: June 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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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Context

Chirk Pre-school Playgroup is an English medium setting in Wrexham local authority. It is based in the Parish Hall in Chirk and is registered to provide sessional care for a maximum of 26 children aged from two-and-a-half to four years old. The hall is used regularly by other community groups so it is necessary for equipment to be set out and put away for every session both indoors and outdoors.

There were 33 children on the register during the inspection. Twenty-five of these are three-year-olds of whom 16 receive early years funding from the local authority. Three members of staff work regularly at the setting. All have appropriate early years qualifications. The supervisor has been in post since 2015.

Most children attending the setting come from the local area. All have English as their home language and none come from homes where Welsh is spoken. The setting has identified that there are a very few children with additional learning needs attending currently.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in November 2014 and by Estyn in March 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Most children make consistent progress across all areas of learning
- Nearly all children are eager to learn
- Nearly all children show good levels of concentration and engagement in their chosen activities
- Most children are developing their thinking skills well
- Nearly all children behave well and most take turns willingly
- The setting benefits from strong relationships where adults and children share mutual trust and respect
- Practitioners work closely together to provide a well-balanced and interesting curriculum that engages most children

Prospects for improvement

- The setting's supervisor provides clear vision and direction
- The management committee supports the setting effectively
- Practitioners work closely together to ensure the self-evaluation process is effective and identifies the needs of the setting successfully
- Practitioners work together constructively to bring about worthwhile improvements
- The setting benefits from the support and advice of the local authority
- The setting has strong links with parents and with the local community

Recommendations

R1 Improve children's use of Welsh

R2 Provide more opportunities for children to make decisions about their learning

R3 Provide parents with more information about the progress their child is making

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 make good progress from their different starting points during their time in the setting. They arrive full of excitement for the session ahead and involve themselves fully in their chosen activities.

When listening to a story, nearly all children sit quietly and attentively, showing interest in what is happening. For example, they exclaim joyously every time Handa loses another piece of fruit from her hat and proudly identify the different fruits. Many children access books independently in the course of their play. They handle them carefully and turn pages correctly.

Most children are making worthwhile progress with their early writing skills. They enjoy making marks in different ways using a range of instruments, such as rakes in the sand, rollers in playdough or with their fingers in trays of flour. Most show their understanding of the purpose of writing when they make marks to sign their name on a card for St Dwynwen's Day.

Most children use mathematical language correctly, for example when talking about different containers being 'heavy' or 'light' as they fill them with sand or water. Nearly all use correct terminology for simple shapes when they discuss the carpet tiles they sit on for group times or recognise and order numbers to five with confidence.

Many children develop their physical skills well, such as when they use large tongs to help themselves to fruit at snack time with increasing skill. They steer bikes and scooters carefully in the outdoor area, avoiding equipment and other children successfully.

Many children use a range of technology capably. They use a tablet computer to take photographs and videos of activities in the session and press buttons confidently on equipment in the play kitchen to make meals and drinks for one another and their teachers.

Most children are developing good problem solving skills, such as when they try to rescue Ticw the teddy who is stuck at the top of Jack's beanstalk. They consider the issue carefully and make sensible and practical suggestions, for example to chop the beanstalk down or to throw objects to dislodge Ticw.

Nearly all children respond to and join in singing familiar Welsh songs enthusiastically. They count together by rote in Welsh to ten and respond to daily routines such as 'amser tacluso' and 'golchi dwylo'. However, children do not use Welsh words spontaneously during free play.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enjoy their time in the setting. They engage fully with their learning and show high levels of motivation and focus. For example when playing together in the jungle hideout, children organise themselves taking on different roles as they hunt for jungle animals.

Nearly all children are developing good independent skills, such as when putting on aprons to paint or play with the water, or when helping themselves to fruit using tongs at snack time. They are keen to try new experiences and many show their confidence in using equipment to organise their own activities when they take dough to the play kitchen to use as pretend food.

Relationships in the setting are strong. Children are polite and respectful to adults and know that they should share and take turns with one another. They understand the rules of the setting and behave well.

Nearly all children have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy. They know that it is important to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet to make sure they wash off the germs or they may become ill. They brush their teeth enthusiastically at the beginning of each session and enjoy their fruit at snack time.

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

Practitioners work closely together to plan learning experiences for the children. They discuss themes and activities, which they match closely to the children's learning needs and to the requirements of the Foundation Phase. The majority of children's learning takes place outdoors whenever possible. This is a strong feature of the setting. Practitioners provide a wide range of equipment and experiences that offer high quality learning opportunities for the children. These are stimulating and relevant to the children and engage them in learning very successfully. As a result, children not only learn but they gain valuable self-confidence and independence. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to make suggestions about what they would like to do.

Planned activities challenge children successfully to investigate and learn. They cover the full range of areas of learning with a positive focus on children's literacy and numeracy skills. Planning also enables children to develop their thinking and problem solving skills well. For example, practitioners enhance children's recognition of numbers by challenging them to pour water into a choice of funnels and guess which numbered bucket it will fill. Specific planning for children's skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is developing effectively.

An interesting range of visits and visitors contributes well to children's learning experiences. For example, a recent visit to Chirk Castle, a visit to the local fire station and visits from a beekeeper and a guitarist all add interest and variety to the curriculum. The celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Eid contributes beneficially to children's understanding of the world around them and promotes tolerance and understanding.

Practitioners introduce children to simple Welsh vocabulary and phrases. They encourage children to count and to sing a range of familiar songs in Welsh. However, they do not reinforce this consistently throughout the sessions. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions through their activities on St David's Day.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are fully involved with the children during the sessions. Group sessions are well paced and well managed. The practitioners' thorough knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase principles ensure that they provide support where needed but also know when to stand back and enable children to explore and investigate for themselves. As a result, children follow their own interests and make choices confidently. All practitioners use open-ended questions skilfully to promote children's thinking. All practitioners oversee children's behaviour well as they encourage children to follow the setting's simple rules and provide a range of stimulating experiences to ensure that children are fully involved in their chosen activities.

The setting has worthwhile procedures to assess and track children's progress. Practitioners make useful observations of the children, from which they identify any further needs or next steps in learning. They use this information purposefully to inform future planning. In this way, practitioners are able to provide both support for those children who need further reinforcement and opportunities for the more able children to move forward. While the playgroup has appropriate procedures to inform parents of the progress their child has made when they leave the setting, there are no arrangements for them to know how well their child is doing during their time in the setting or how they can help them to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting is a warm and caring community where practitioners give high priority to children's wellbeing. All practitioners treat the children with respect and encourage their individuality. Well-established procedures encourage children to understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. During snack time, children enjoy a varied selection of healthy snacks with a choice of milk or water to drink. Children brush their teeth in the setting every morning and there are useful opportunities for them to take physical exercise both indoors and outdoors. The setting recycles milk cartons and children save leftover food to add to their compost bins in the garden and to feed to the wormery. Practitioners ensure that children understand that the worms help to turn the food into soil that they can use for their planting. In this way, children are gaining first hand understanding of sustainability and the part they can play in this.

Practitioners develop children's moral, social, cultural and spiritual development successfully. They encourage children to share, to take turns and to be kind to one another consistently and support their spiritual development appropriately by promoting a quiet moment before snack when they say a prayer of thanks.

The setting has established effective support for children with additional learning needs. When needed, children have individual play plans with personal targets.

Practitioners share these with parents and review progress regularly. Beneficial links with external agencies provide useful additional support and advice. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is a safe and caring community where all children are valued and treated with respect. Practitioners know the children well as individuals and ensure that all have equal access to all learning experiences.

The hall used by the setting is light and spacious. Despite having to pack everything away daily, practitioners ensure that there are good quality resources in all areas of learning that meet the children's needs effectively. Children access the outdoor area daily. All areas of learning are set out with engaging activities for the children interspersed with areas planted by the children with flowers, fruits and vegetables. Resources are freely available and the children access them independently during their play.

The hall does not allow displays of children's work. However, practitioners have created a moveable board where they display photographs of children's recent work and activities. This keeps parents well informed about the activities that their children enjoy at the setting.

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

The supervisor has a strong vision to provide the best standard of care and education for the children in the setting and provides clear direction for her team. She involves other staff members effectively in planning and decision-making. Practitioners know that their ideas and suggestions are valued and, as a result, they work hard and are strongly motivated and committed to providing high quality experiences for the children. All practitioners have up to date job descriptions that ensure that they know their roles and share responsibilities effectively. Regular staff meetings focus well on planning and assessing children's progress. Practitioners work closely together to bring about improvements. As a result, sessions run smoothly and children make good progress.

The management committee meets regularly and provides positive support for the setting. Annual performance management reviews are beginning to develop appropriately. The recent reviews identify practitioners' strengths and individual training needs suitably and lead to shared targets linked to the setting's action plan.

Practitioners pay good attention to local and national priorities. They have worked hard to develop the stimulating outdoor learning environment and they focus consistently on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know their setting well. They meet regularly to discuss the children's progress and aspects of the provision leading to beneficial changes, which have a positive impact on the children's learning. For example, practitioners have recently reorganised their procedures for recording observations of children's progress. As a result, they identify children's next steps in learning more effectively.

The setting has established a clear and effective process of self-evaluation. Practitioners carry out an annual review following guidelines from the local authority. Their regular daily conversations further ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of how they would like to improve. From this, they identify a manageable number of relevant and meaningful targets for improvement. They identify who will be responsible, specific timescales and success criteria. Practitioners have made good progress toward meeting these targets, for example in developing children's ICT skills.

The setting consults parents annually through a questionnaire. Leaders have responded appropriately to parents' suggestions including improving information sharing by establishing a social media page. More recently, practitioners have set up a 'walking bus' service to take children to an afternoon setting based in the local school. This enables parents to access wrap around care for their children.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has established a valuable range of worthwhile partnerships to enhance its provision and benefit the children. Practitioners have built up a beneficial relationship with the local authority advisory teacher who provides useful support and guidance. For example, as a result of helpful advice, practitioners have reviewed their assessment process and implemented effective procedures that enable them to track children's progress effectively.

The setting has a strong partnership with parents, who speak highly of the provision. Practitioners keep parents and carers well informed about what the children are doing. Parents welcome the information they receive through daily chats, social media, via the daily noticeboard and the regular photographs on display of the children going about their activities.

Most of the children in the setting move on to the nursery class in the nearby primary school. The setting has recently worked with the school to draw up a transition policy detailing arrangements to support children as they move on to the next step in their learning. For example, the school held a coffee evening for parents to meet the class teacher and gain information about what their child will be learning in their new setting. The visiting advisory teacher is a member of staff at the school, which is an added benefit to the transition process as the children have come to know her well through her regular visits.

The setting is very much part of the local community and this supports children's learning well. For example, practitioners arranged a visit to the fire station as part of their theme about 'People Who Help Us'. Local organisations have recently contributed funds and equipment such as wood for the raised flower and vegetable beds and android tablets to enhance the children's understanding of technology at first hand.

Resource management: Good

The setting has a sufficient number of qualified, experienced practitioners to ensure good quality teaching for the children. Practitioners attend relevant training from the local authority regularly. They share ideas with one another informally as part of their everyday interactions.

The setting has a plentiful supply of good quality resources that practitioners use well to support children's learning. Practitioners deploy themselves effectively during sessions to provide good quality guidance and direction for the children and make effective use of their personal expertise.

Practitioners have worked diligently to develop their outdoor area and the local authority has recognised the positive impact this has had on the children's learning experiences. As a result, practitioners have welcomed visitors from several settings to share their good practice.

The treasurer of the management committee oversees the budget successfully. Practitioners consider all spending carefully to ensure efficient use of funds and the impact on children's learning.

In view of the good outcomes achieved by most children, and the quality of the provision, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	16	14 88%	2 12%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		79%	20%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	16	14 88%	2 12%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		84%	16%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	16	15 94%	1 6%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	14%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	16	11 69%	5 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		71%	28%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	16	16 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		80%	19%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	16	16 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		83%	16%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		76%	24%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	16	16 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		84%	15%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	16	13 81%	2 12%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		72%	27%	1%	0%		
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	16	7 44%	8 50%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		63%	31%	5%	1%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	16	14 88%	2 12%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		80%	19%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	16	11 69%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		65%	32%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		73%	26%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	16	16 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		63%	32%	4%	1%		
The setting is well run.	16	16 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		82%	18%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Mary Dyas

Reporting Inspector

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 that 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 that 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 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