



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

**Meifod Playgroup
Meifod Village Hall
Powys
SY22 6AU**

Date of inspection: September 2013

by

**Wil Williams
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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Context

Meifod Playgroup is a registered playgroup, which was established for over twenty-five years ago to provide pre-school education for the children of Meifod village and the surrounding rural area. Children of all ability and background are admitted to the setting. Very few children have additional learning needs and there is no child from minority ethnic groups or who use English as an additional language. English is the main language spoken at home by all the children.

The setting runs three morning sessions per week during school terms for three – year-old children, each providing a maximum of 12 places. Currently, there are 7 three-year-old children attending the setting, all of whom receive funding from the local authority.

The setting meets in the Village Hall, which adjoins Meifod Primary School. The Playgroup also uses the school gardens, playground and field and the community playground nearby.

A qualified leader and practitioner support children's learning. The leader was appointed in September 2012.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in April 2013 and by Estyn during October 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

Current performance is good because:

- standards achieved in literacy and numeracy skills are good;
- nearly all children work at full capacity and persevere with tasks;
- all children develop a secure understanding of how to become healthy;
- standards of behaviour are exemplary with children co-operating amenablely and demonstrating increasing levels of independence;
- interesting and stimulating activities engage the interest of all children;
- the quality of teaching and assessment is consistently good; and the
- fostering of values such as honesty and respect for truth helps children to distinguish between right and wrong.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the setting is well-led, expectations are high and children and practitioners are challenged to do their best;
- robust procedures have been established for maintaining good practice and implementing change in areas that require improvement;
- the setting is developing well as a strong learning community;
- a good range of partnership activities makes a positive contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing; and
- the setting provides good value for money.

Recommendations

1. Encourage children to make more use of spoken Welsh.
2. Provide more opportunities for role-play.
3. Increase the range of children's ICT skills.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Bearing in mind their age and their starting point, nearly all children achieve good standards and make realistic progress in all areas of learning. All recall previous learning well, develop good thinking and problem-solving skills and acquire new knowledge and skills with increasing confidence. Nearly all children work at full capacity and make a sustained effort to concentrate and persevere with tasks for extended periods. During free choice activities, nearly all children experiment and explore confidently, take risks and make good progress towards becoming independent learners.

Standards achieved in communication and literacy skills are good. Nearly all children have well developed speaking and listening skills. Most express their ideas lucidly, for example, when discussing photographs of themselves when they were young, and listen thoughtfully to the contributions of other children in the group. All children show a keen interest in books and enjoy their content, with or without an adult, handling them as a reader. Most enjoy experimenting with mark making and are beginning to understand some of the functions of writing, such as for taking orders or making lists.

Nearly all children use their numeracy skills confidently in day-to-day activities and in their play. All join in enthusiastically in rote counting of numbers from 1 to 10 with most counting up to five objects reliably. Most record numbers by making marks or drawing pictures and understand the concept of 'one more'. In their play, nearly all children develop an appropriate awareness of the purpose of money.

Nearly all children are confident users of information communications technology (ICT), especially when playing with remote control toys. However, the lack of suitable equipment, such as computers, hinders children from acquiring a broader range of ICT skills.

Most children have a positive attitude towards learning Welsh. Most respond positively to basic instructions and understand more words than they can speak. During whole group activities, these children repeat some familiar words and phrases and join in Welsh action songs and rhymes enthusiastically. However, very few children have enough confidence to use the language in informal situations.

Wellbeing: Good

All children show a good level of interest and motivation towards learning and say that they enjoy their time in the setting. Children's participation in various initiatives such as the Healthy School's Initiative and taking part in rigorous physical activities enable them to develop a secure understanding of how to become healthy. Children have a close relationship with practitioners and trust their guidance. Every individual feels safe in the setting and free from physical and verbal abuse.

Standards of behaviour are exemplary. Both in and around the setting, all children are considerate and courteous towards each other and adults. During their engagement in specific activities or in tasks of their own choice, all children co-operate amenablely, demonstrating increasing levels of independence. All children very willingly undertake responsibilities such as putting equipment away at the end of sessions or counting the number present during registration. As they mature, most learn to make more informed decisions about their learning and are beginning to think more critically about learning experiences.

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

Practitioners plan flexible and responsive activities that enable all children to make good progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes. Interesting and stimulating activities engage the interest of all children enabling them to make good progress according to their age and ability. Careful planning ensures that the curriculum builds systematically on existing knowledge, understanding and skills and provides progression and continuity in learning. Children are encouraged to form positive relationships with others in the setting and to become confident explorers of their environment both indoors and outdoors, and to develop as independent learners.

Planning for developing children's communication, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills is good. During sessions, children are encouraged to communicate their feelings and ideas as individuals and in groups, to listen attentively to others and to take part in imaginative play. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to develop their language and learning skills through role-play. Practitioners introduce the children to a range of reading and information books and encourage them to share a book with other children or adults. Recent developments have provided children with better opportunities for experimenting with mark making and for beginning to understand the different functions of writing.

Although the leader encourages children to use the Welsh language as much as possible during the 'together time' at the start of each day, there are not enough opportunities during sessions for children to hear spoken Welsh. This affects both their confidence and the standards achieved.

There are appropriate opportunities for promoting children's awareness of the traditions and celebrations of the cultures of Wales. Collecting for good causes and supporting charities promote children's understanding of their place in the wider world appropriately.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and have high expectations for children's learning. The stimulating, challenging and

exciting environment created both indoor and outdoor, encourages children's engagement and enjoyment. Through their role as key workers, practitioners ensure that learning experiences are skilfully adapted to meet the needs of all children, including the more able and talented and those with additional learning needs. Practitioners know when it is appropriate to intervene in children's learning. They do so sensitively and skilfully to encourage children to challenge themselves as they learn. A good balance between child-initiated and practitioner led activities is maintained. Imaginative use is made of a variety of resources to appeal to children's interests and improve learning. There is a clear focus to adult support, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.

Practitioners assess and track children's progress and learning very thoroughly across all areas of learning and use the information purposefully to plan the next step in learning. Parents are encouraged to become active partners in their children's learning and receive regular information about their child's achievements, wellbeing and development.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing effectively and has appropriate policies and practices, which ensure that these aspects are firmly rooted in its daily routines. All children are encouraged to eat healthily during snack times and to partake in daily physical exercise. Practitioners ensure that children are actively involved in the setting's aim to act sustainably through minimising waste, saving energy and recycling paper.

Effective induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly into the setting. Practitioners help children to manage their feelings, develop self-awareness and self-respect. The fostering of values such as honesty and respect for truth helps children to distinguish between right and wrong. Practitioners encourage children to show initiative, to understand simple rules of behaviour and to take some responsibility for their own actions.

When the need arises, practitioners know how to access professional support and advice from the Foundation Phase teacher, from the local authority, the social services, and from educational psychologists. There are effective arrangements for the early identification of children who may have additional learning needs. Practitioners conduct regular reviews of children's progress and ensure that the setting offers children with additional learning needs full access to all areas of learning.

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

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community, where all children have equal access to all the areas of learning and activities provided for them. There is a strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and ensuring that children and staff are free from harassment. There are enough practitioners, who have sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating environment in which every child is able to take full advantage of learning experiences and to develop positive values and attitudes.

With the exception of ICT, there is an ample supply of good quality resources for all areas of learning. Resources in the locality such as the nearby adventure playground are well used and members of the community make a valuable contribution to children's learning.

The accommodation is well maintained and secure. Practitioners make valuable use of attractive displays to reinforce children's learning. Creative use is made of the school's outdoor area to provide a wide range of stimulating and interesting experiences across the curriculum. For example, observing wildlife and studying the habitats of insects such as woodlice, strengthen children's appreciation and knowledge of the natural world.

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

The leader has a clear vision for the setting's development. She conveys high expectations and supports and challenges everyone to do their best. The positive ethos, which permeates through the setting, ensures that children and staff feel appreciated. Clear aims and policies have been established which concentrate on children's needs and are implemented conscientiously by all staff.

The leader has skilfully implemented and managed several changes in the setting's practice. For example, she has changed the way aspects of the curriculum are planned and delivered and has forged closer link with parents. Staff co-operate very closely as a team. They have shared values about learning, behaviour and relationships and ensure the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase. Their willingness to act upon local authority advice and to undertake national priorities and new ventures, such as assessment for learning, is a strength.

The positive relationship with children, parents and the primary school staff contributes substantially towards creating a sense of community.

There is an appropriate performance management system which helps staff to evaluate and improve their practice and to identify their professional needs.

Improving quality: Good

The leader knows the setting well and through purposeful management is continuously self-evaluating and exploring ways to raise standards and improve provision. She has established robust procedures for maintaining good practice and

implementing change in areas that require improvement. Self-evaluation takes careful account of the views of children, parents and the management committee with the setting benefitting substantially from the advice of the local authority support teacher.

Purposeful use is made of information gathered through self-evaluation to prioritise aspects which the setting needs to improve. The steps taken to improve standards and provision and to address the recommendations of the previous inspection report have led to positive outcomes.

The well-established culture of collaboration, together with practitioners' willingness to undertake responsibilities, is enabling the setting to develop as a strong learning community. The leader's willingness to try out different ways of working and to share her experience of observing good practice in other settings, contributes well to the setting's development.

Partnership working: Good

A good range of partnership activities makes a positive contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing. There is an extremely productive partnership with the adjoining primary school with the setting benefitting substantially from the school's willingness to share its resources and expertise. A noteworthy feature is the active involvement of the school's headteacher in the setting's development. The close relationship between the setting and the school's Foundation Phase class ensure that children transfer seamlessly to full time education.

Parents receive regular information about all aspects of the setting's work with the leader taking advantage of every opportunity to include them in their children's learning. Practitioners work very well together, share information about children and know whom to contact and when, if additional support is required for children. There are many useful links with a number of organisations in the local community, such as the county library service. Regular visits, reports and professional advice by the local authority support teacher have a very positive impact on the setting's development.

Resource management: Good

The setting has an appropriate number of staff to teach all aspects of the curriculum. Effective staff deployment enables the setting to make the best possible use of their time, expertise and experience. Resources are managed well.

The leader and the management committee have a thorough understanding of the setting's financial resources and prioritise spending in line with the setting's developmental needs. Financial decisions are carefully evaluated by the leader and the management committee to make sure that they have a positive effect on standards and children's progress and wellbeing.

In view of the fact that children's outcomes are good and that there are many strengths in provision and leadership, the setting 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 Wil Williams

Reporting Inspector

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 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.