



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

**Playmates Playgroup
TAC Cadet's Drill Hall
High Street
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 1BH
United Kingdom**

Date of inspection: February 2014

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

Playmates Playgroup is a long established setting in Mold, Flintshire. It meets in the Drill Hall, close to the town centre, and opens on four days each week. There are four members of staff supported by regular parent volunteers.

The playgroup is registered to take up to 30 children. It admits children from two to three years of age. At the time of the inspection, 20 children attended, of whom 14 are aged three and funded by the local authority. Almost all children speak English as their first language. There are a few children who have additional learning needs.

In recent months there have been a number of changes to staffing. The leader has been in post since January 2013, although she has worked in the setting for several years.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in June 2012 and by Estyn in January 2008.

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:

- most children make good progress in their learning;
- children's standards of wellbeing are high;
- practitioners provide a worthwhile range of learning experiences and activities for children; and
- standards of care support and guidance for children are effective.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement of the setting are good because:

- leaders provide a clear focus on providing the best provision for children;
- procedures for self-evaluation are well established;
- the setting has clear priorities for improvement;
- practitioners monitor the progress of initiatives successfully; and
- the setting has a good track record of improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise the attainment of more able children
- R2 Use the outcomes of assessment to plan how to challenge all children effectively
- R3 Use the outcomes of lesson observations to further develop practitioners' skills and expertise

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
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Standards: Good

On entry, many children have skills that are slightly above those expected of children of similar ages, especially in their language and personal and social development. Their mathematical development is slightly lower than expected. Over time, many make good progress in their learning, although a few more able children make slower progress.

Most children sit and listen well, for example during registration or story time. Many have well-developed speech and talk confidently to other children or adults. They are keen to share their experiences when talking about a recent birthday party, or a visit to the library.

Many children show a love of books and enjoy looking at them alone or with an adult. A few children join in enthusiastically with a familiar story, re-telling the parts they know well. Many children use a range of mark making tools independently. Several children write shopping lists in role play and others use chalk independently to make marks. A majority hold pens and pencils correctly. Many children paint creatively using a range of colours and brushes successfully.

Nearly all children recite numbers up to 10 accurately and a few count beyond 10. Many can count a number of items correctly, for example counting how many candles there are on a birthday cake or knowing how many places to move a token in a mathematical game. Many children show a good use of mathematical language such as big, small, heavy or light.

Children make appropriate use of opportunities to use programmes to control a toy, take photographs, or use a telephone or CD player in their activities. Most have good fine and gross motor skills.

Many pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They are familiar with colours, numbers and the weather. A few use Welsh independently to count or to recognise tokens in a mathematical game.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enter the setting happily and settle quickly into well-established routines. They behave very well and are polite and helpful to other children and adults.

Most children enjoy a wide range of activities and make good use of the opportunities offered to them. Older pupils concentrate and persevere with tasks for a long time such as when playing with dolls in the role play area, or when listening to stories. Many are confident independent learners, choosing what activity to take part in to try

out new games. In groups, they co-operate well and share toys or possessions happily.

Many were keen to share their experience with inspectors.

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

The quality of planning is good overall. Practitioners plan together to provide a broad range of interesting experiences that successfully engage all children. They organise activities effectively around well-planned themes. Planning gives children good access to all areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. Plans identify suitable opportunities for children to develop and practise their information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy skills successfully. There are many chances for children to develop their thinking skills through interesting activities such as mixing paints or experimenting with water and sand.

Practitioners ensure that children are actively involved in their learning and have regular opportunities to make choices about what they would like to do. This develops increasing confidence and independence successfully in most children.

There is effective provision to develop children's knowledge and understanding of Welsh culture and traditions successfully. Practitioners encourage children to speak Welsh and develop their vocabulary, phrases and language patterns well.

The setting makes good use of visits and visitors to enhance children's learning experiences. For example, visits from a local doctor to talk about being healthy and talks from a parent with a puppy add interest to the curriculum. Visits to places of interest in the town and the surrounding area, such as a farm and a local park, enrich children's understanding of the world. Practitioners provide good opportunities for children to recycle paper, plastic, cardboard and food. For example, children give their snack waste to a child's pet chickens and receive eggs in return.

Teaching: Adequate

Practitioners use a range of strategies to encourage and motivate the children to learn successfully. They ensure that there are clear and appropriate objectives for their activities and provide stimulating learning experiences.

Practitioners make good use of the resources available to enhance learning. They have very supportive relationships with nearly all children. They use a good range of teaching strategies to allow children to make choices about their learning and to promote independent learning. Their understanding of when to intervene and when to let the children discover something for themselves is very good.

The setting uses an appropriate system for assessing children's attainment and wellbeing. Practitioners monitor regularly how well children are doing based on useful observations. They do not regularly record children's progress well enough or use the outcomes from assessments to identify what children need to learn next.

This means that they do not always plan activities that meet children's needs effectively, especially the needs of the more able. This slows the progress that these children make.

Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress. In addition to providing relevant feedback on a daily basis, practitioners hold useful, twice-yearly meetings when parents visit the setting to review their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

This is a happy setting where children are made to feel welcome and safe. The quality of support provided is good and adults create a caring and supportive environment successfully. Provision for children's, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriate and enables children to make strong progress in their wellbeing. The setting provides good opportunities for children to be healthy through, for example, a good range of outdoor exercise, teaching children to wash their hands at appropriate times and serving fresh fruit at snack time.

The setting encourages children to distinguish between right and wrong in the context of their lives as well as the importance of truth and honesty. Practitioners lead by example and show children how to respect and help each other. Children are encouraged to take responsibility, to show initiative and to behave well.

The setting identifies children that need additional support successfully. Individual education plans are appropriate and parents are kept well informed. Staff provide good day-to-day support for children who need extra help with their learning. There are well-established arrangements with professional support services to provide children with specialist support when needed.

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

Learning environment: Good

The setting creates an inclusive and friendly ethos where all children are valued. They are happy in each other's company and are very willing to help their peers, adults and visitors. There is an appropriate emphasis on celebrating diversity and all children, irrespective of their backgrounds and ability, have equal access to the curriculum.

Practitioners use the premises well to support teaching and children's learning successfully. The buildings and site are well maintained. There are a wide range of effective learning areas inside the main room and a good supply of quality resources that are well matched to children's needs. Practitioners make good use of limited space to prepare colourful displays of children's work to enrich learning.

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

Leadership: Good

Leaders manage the setting well. They have clear aims that focus strongly on providing the best provision for all children. They share these with all practitioners effectively.

All practitioners have appropriate job descriptions and well-understood roles and responsibilities. They have a clear sense of purpose and a pride in fulfilling their roles to the best of their ability. They work together as a team successfully to support each other to meet the setting's aims effectively.

Leaders have high expectations of practitioners. They make good use of well-established appraisal systems to challenge colleagues and develop their skills. Appraisal targets link suitably to the setting's targets for improvement and to appropriate training. The setting makes effective use of meetings to discuss children's progress to discuss spending plans, and to monitor and evaluate how well the setting is doing.

Leaders keep the management committee well informed about the setting's progress.

Improving quality: Good

Effective self-evaluation is a regular and thorough part of the life of the setting. All practitioners regularly evaluate how well children are achieving and the quality of the setting's provision. They base this largely on first-hand evidence, although practitioners make limited use of opportunities to observe colleagues teach. Overall, leaders have a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and shortcomings. Practitioners are open to new ideas and willing to try out different ways of working.

Leaders use evidence from evaluations effectively to create action plans that prioritise 'next steps' successfully. These plans identify the person responsible for leading the action and the success criteria well. They also contain timescales and cost implications appropriately. Leaders monitor action plans at regular intervals to check that they are having the expected impact. They review the plans annually and detail the outcomes of the plans carefully. They evaluate improvements in provision and the impact on children's knowledge and understanding successfully. This is highly effective practice.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a suitable range of partnerships that improve outcomes for children successfully.

The setting takes active steps to involve parents in its work. It keeps all parents well informed of the work of the setting and of their child's progress. Several parents give helpful support to children as they work in the setting on a voluntary basis under the supervision of practitioners. Many parents assist with fund raising that has helped provide additional resources for children.

Practitioners make effective use of support from the local authority advisory teacher to develop new resources, to provide worthwhile training or to improve self-evaluation procedures further.

The setting has developed a close relationship with the local primary school. This helps children to settle quickly when they start full-time education.

Resource management: Good

The setting has appropriately trained staff and deploys them effectively. For example, practitioners with expertise in the Welsh language provide strong leadership in this area of learning.

Practitioners receive an effective range of training. They share ideas well and make appropriate use of visits to other settings to develop and improve their practice. This has improved provision for children. There are good systems in place to evaluate the impact of these activities.

Managers have good systems for keeping spending under review. They match spending well to the setting's priorities and objectives.

In view of the positive outcomes for children, the setting's effective provision and strong 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 Richard Hawkley	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 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>

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.