



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

A report on

**Marford Playgroup
Marford Community Centre
Pant Lane
Marford
Wrexham
LL12 8SH**

Date of inspection: June 2018

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

Marford Playgroup is an English-medium setting, situated in Marford, in Wrexham local authority. It is registered for 26 children from the ages of two to four years. The setting offers early years education sessions from 8.55am to 11.25am during school term time for four days each week between January and July.

At the time of the inspection there were a few children identified as having additional learning needs. There are a very few children from ethnic minority backgrounds who have English as an additional language. Most children speak English.

There are four members of staff including the setting manager. The manager took up her post in 2007.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in 2017 and Estyn last inspected it in 2012.

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 steady progress across all areas of learning and achieve good standards overall
- Practitioners have very good relationships with children and ensure that learning is fun
- The setting provides a wide range of stimulating activities that engage children's interest successfully
- Practitioners have high expectations of what children can achieve and a sound understanding of the foundation phase
- The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing effectively
- The learning environment is well resourced and organised

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Leaders manage and organise the setting well, and provide effective leadership
- Practitioners work well together as a team
- Leaders have high expectations and communicate a strong sense of purpose in developing the setting
- The setting has well-established partnerships with parents, local schools and community organisations that enhance children's learning effectively
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning has a positive impact on the quality of provision
- The current targets identified by the setting provide a clear basis for further improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Develop planning to identify the learning intention for activities in all areas of learning more clearly
- R2 Use the information from assessments to plan the next steps in children's learning effectively
- R3 Monitor and evaluate the impact of action plans systematically

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan to show 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

Most children make steady progress from the time they start in the setting. In line with their age and stage of development, they develop skills across the areas of learning effectively and achieve good standards overall.

Most children develop good speaking and listening skills and communicate confidently. They engage in conversation spontaneously as they play and contribute confidently to discussions, such as when speaking about their 'news' during 'together time.' They ask sensible questions and use appropriate vocabulary, for example when describing the weather. Most children develop their early reading skills successfully. Many show interest in the content of books and respond appropriately. They concentrate well as they listen to the story and show increasing awareness that the print has meaning. They retell and sequence familiar stories confidently. Many create marks purposefully, such as by 'writing' orders in the cafe during role-play.

Most children develop a range of numeracy skills well. They join in counting aloud to 10 and many count to 20. A few count back from 10 and order numerals successfully. A majority of children recognise numbers to five and a few understand one more and one less, such as when counting groups of toys. Many are aware of different sizes, shapes and patterns around them. For example, when comparing objects by size they use terms such as bigger and smaller accurately.

Many children develop appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills naturally in everyday play. For example, they use a variety of equipment such as mobile phones and toy appliances in role-play confidently, showing that they understand their purpose. A minority uses a tablet computer with increasing competence. A few touch the screen to move through a simulation, such as when matching pairs of shoes, confidently. However, most children's ability to use ICT devices independently is at an early stage of development.

Many children make appropriate progress from their starting point in developing their Welsh speaking and listening skills. For example, they join in with action songs and rhymes in Welsh confidently. A majority name colours, join in counting aloud to 10, and listen and respond to phrases appropriately, such as when they choose 'llaeth neu dŵr' at snack time.

Most children make good progress in creative and physical development. For example, many use simple tools, such as cutters, in craft activities skillfully, and in energetic play, they develop a range of movement, balance and ball skills well.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children have positive attitudes and enjoy learning. They show high levels of self-esteem and develop appropriate self-help skills steadily. Most children enjoy what they are doing and choose between different activities confidently. They sustain interest and concentration well, such as when searching for toy mini-beasts hidden in spaghetti. Most are well motivated, happy and at ease in the setting.

Nearly all children have very good relationships with practitioners and with each other. A few show consideration and courtesy, such as at snack time. Standards of behaviour are good, although a very few become unsettled occasionally. Most respond well to daily routines and participate enthusiastically in activities with practitioners. Many express their preferences confidently, such as by saying which activities they like best confidently.

Most children help tidy resources readily at the end of sessions and all take turns to undertake simple responsibilities as Helpwr Heddiw.

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

The setting provides a wide range of learning activities, both indoors and outdoors, that engage children's interest successfully. Practitioners plan for all areas of learning appropriately. They provide well-organised and resourced activities that offer good opportunities for children to learn through play successfully.

The setting is developing its planning appropriately to ensure that it provides imaginative learning opportunities in a range of different contexts. Practitioners implement weekly plans flexibly to take account of children's interests. Main activities link to broad themes, such as 'mini-beasts', and practitioners adapt them to match children's needs skilfully. For example, there are worthwhile opportunities for children to practise numeracy, speaking, listening and pre-writing skills through activities with toy animals and through role-play.

Practitioners are beginning to plan more systematically with a clearer focus on developing specific skills. As a result, there are more opportunities for children to consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills effectively. However, overall, practitioners do not identify the skills that they want children to develop during adult led, enhanced and free choice activities clearly enough. This means that their planning is not always fully effective in supporting children to move forward progressively.

The setting provides a worthwhile range of ICT resources for children to use. These include role play equipment and a tablet computer. However, purposeful planning to develop children's ICT skills systematically is at an early stage of development.

Learning activities promote independence and creativity suitably, and most children choose tools and materials with confidence, for example when painting. The setting uses the outdoor classroom imaginatively to develop children's respect for the environment. For example, they explore changes across the seasons.

Provision for the development of children's Welsh language skills is sound. Practitioners model simple Welsh phrases and use Welsh vocabulary increasingly well around the setting. They encourage children to count in Welsh and to join in with songs and rhymes during group sessions. Practitioners promote children's awareness of Welsh history and culture appropriately, for example when celebrating St David's Day and reading Welsh stories.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners manage learning well and use a range of teaching strategies successfully. Their approach is purposeful and they ensure learning activities are fun. The quality of practitioners' interaction with children is very good. They have high expectations and a sound knowledge of the foundation phase. The lead practitioner acts as a positive language role model in both English and Welsh. This develops children's speaking skills and extends their vocabulary successfully.

Practitioners engage children's interest successfully, such as when reading stories or supporting an activity. They give children plenty of time to complete tasks, and use questioning and praise well to encourage children to persevere. Practitioners make the most of spontaneous opportunities to extend children's learning. For example, they encourage children to use appropriate vocabulary when comparing shapes. Practitioners reflect on their work regularly and consider how to improve activities and plans thoughtfully.

The setting has appropriate procedures for assessing children's progress. Practitioners record children's individual achievements regularly and these observations provide a good starting point for identifying the next steps in children's learning. However, in general, the setting is at a very early stage of planning to meet individual children's needs effectively.

Practitioners inform parents about their children's achievements, wellbeing and development effectively through daily informal contact and more formal meetings to discuss their progress before they move on to school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides good quality, care, support and guidance and has successful arrangements to develop children's understanding of keeping healthy. For example, practitioners promote energetic outdoor play regularly.

Practitioners encourage children's sense of curiosity about the world effectively. They foster positive values, including respect for others, honesty and fairness and promote good behaviour successfully. As a result, most children show consideration for others, share resources, and take turns readily. Practitioners involve children in a range of cultural activities enthusiastically. For example, the setting celebrates festivals from other countries, such as Chinese New Year.

The setting fosters children's spiritual development well. Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities for them to marvel at a wide range of plants and animals. For example, children explore the changing seasons when they visit a nearby park at different times of year. These experiences enhance their sense of awe and wonder meaningfully. The setting provides purposeful opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, such as by composting snack waste and using the water butt to water their vegetable plants.

The setting has well-established procedures to support children with additional needs and liaise effectively with a network of contacts to provide extra support and advice when needed.

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

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a friendly and welcoming ethos. It is inclusive and all children have equal access to the curriculum. Practitioners take good account of children's individual needs, which helps to ensure that children feel safe and free from undue anxiety. Practitioners implement positive strategies to manage behaviour, and encourage understanding and tolerance towards others sensitively. The setting places appropriate emphasis on valuing and respecting diversity. For example, practitioners read stories from other cultures regularly.

Leaders ensure the learning environment is organised well, and that there are sufficient resources to deliver the foundation phase successfully. For example, they add wooden ice lolly sticks to the dough area to encourage children to experiment with them, such as to add legs to 'mini-beasts'. The outdoor area is equipped well and provides a good range of interesting and engaging activities that children access daily. The well-maintained accommodation provides a safe and secure learning environment.

The setting uses expertise in the community and visits to places of interest to enrich children's experiences regularly. For example, children develop their personal and social skills through visits to a nearby church, care home and supermarket.

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

The manager provides effective leadership and organises the setting well. Practitioners are enthusiastic and work effectively as a team. In particular, leaders provide clear direction and a strong sense of purpose in developing the setting's provision. Leaders have high expectations for children's learning and communicate this successfully with practitioners and parents. They have established effective procedures to manage the setting, but longer term planning to improve the educational provision is not always clear enough to ensure sustained progress.

Practitioners have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities within the setting. An appropriate range of policies is in place and practitioners implement these consistently well. Leaders monitor the day-to-day work of the setting informally and support practitioners' professional development positively through regular training opportunities. The committee ensures suitable arrangements are in place for practitioners' performance management.

The committee oversees the setting's development informally and provides strong support, such as with fundraising.

The setting takes forward national and local priorities well. For example, it places good emphasis on developing its provision for outdoor learning.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting has recently begun to implement appropriate procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Practitioners are beginning to use the local authority's framework for self-evaluation effectively. As a result, leaders are

developing a culture of self-improvement successfully. Practitioners actively seek the views of parents and stakeholders, and reflect on these appropriately, such as when they carry out an annual review of the quality of care it provides.

The setting's evaluation report identifies strengths and areas in need of improvement accurately. Leaders prioritise the key areas for development appropriately in a suitable action plan. However, the plan does not include important details, such as what resources the setting will need, and how they will monitor progress.

Practitioners work closely with the local authority to improve provision. This has led to considerable improvements, such as in how well practitioners organise learning and the use they make of resources.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has established partnerships with parents, schools and community organisations that enhance children's wellbeing and learning effectively. Practitioners encourage parents to be involved in their child's education, such as through regular open days and fundraising events. Parents receive a good range of information through notices, newsletters and day-to-day contact with practitioners. This helps parents to feel comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns and keeps them informed about daily activities successfully.

There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to school. Practitioners share relevant information about children's progress effectively, enabling them to settle in quickly. The setting has beneficial links with a range of community organisations, including the library, that support children's learning well.

Practitioners regularly share good practice with other settings through training events. For example, they learn about strategies to involve children in learning through play. The setting works well with the local authority advisory teacher. For example, practitioners benefit from guidance in the use of strategies to lead and support learning and to encourage outdoor play successfully.

Resource management: Good

The setting has enough qualified practitioners for the number of children attending. Leaders deploy practitioners to make the best use of their time and expertise with increasing success. They regularly attend professional development courses and meetings, to share good practice with other settings. Practitioners reflect on the good practice shared and implement strategies to improve provision in the setting thoughtfully. In particular, they have reorganised the provision following training and this has improved the quality of activities and the setting's use of resources across the areas of learning. For example, practitioners plan more opportunities to develop children's ICT skills and use lively music to support children's physical development effectively.

The committee review the impact of resources informally. The treasurer monitors income and expenditure systematically and ensures that accounts are audited independently. However, planning for future resource needs and training is not always formal enough.

The setting uses all available funding and learning resources efficiently and resourcefully. This has a positive impact on children's outcomes. In view of the good standards and the quality of teaching and leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

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
CIW	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 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	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven 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)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

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