



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

A report on

**Woodland Imps Playgroup
Mynydd Isa Community Centre
Mercia Drive
Mynydd Isa
Flintshire
CH7 3UH**

Date of inspection: July 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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Context

Woodland Imps Playgroup is located on the outskirts of Mold in Flintshire local authority. The playgroup is managed by a voluntary committee and the general day-to-day running is carried out by the leader and qualified practitioners.

The playgroup is based in a room in Mynydd Isa Community Centre. It has its own enclosed outdoor area and entrance. The playgroup is open from 9.15am to 11:45am and 12:15pm to 2:45pm, Monday to Friday during term time, but is closed every Thursday afternoon.

The playgroup is registered for 43 children between the ages of two and a half and four years of age. At the time of the inspection there were 17 children whom receive early years funding from the local authority.

Four practitioners, work in the playgroup, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications and have suitable experience of working with young children. There is also an administrative assistant who works full time. Most children have English as their home language. The setting identified that there are currently no children attending with additional learning needs.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in December 2016 and by Estyn in December 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is adequate because:

- Nearly all children have appropriate speaking and listening skills
- Many children are beginning to develop suitable number skills
- Practitioners are good role models for and positively encourage children to engage in play activities
- Practitioners work together effectively to create a caring, safe and inclusive learning environment
- The learning environment is well-resourced and stimulating, offering a variety of suitable play opportunities for all children
- Nearly all children settle quickly and show enthusiasm and enjoyment

However:

- Nearly all children do not make sufficient progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills
- Provision for the development of children's Welsh language and information and communication technology (ICT) skills is not planned for systematically enough
- Learning experiences do not always interest children well enough
- The setting's arrangements for safeguarding do not meet requirements and give cause for concern

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- Leaders are enthusiastic and passionate, and provide effective direction for the setting
- The leader and practitioners have a suitable picture of the setting's strengths and areas for development
- All staff are well supported and there is a strong sense of team work, coupled with a caring family atmosphere
- The setting has a successful partnership with parents and carers
- All practitioners feel valued and have high expectations of themselves, and create a positive environment for all children

However:

- Leaders do not focus well enough on the quality of teaching and learning and the standards that children achieve
- The setting's current self-evaluation report is detailed and generally accurate,

although it does not focus robustly enough on the standards that children achieve and the quality of teaching

- The setting makes only limited use of the local community to enhance children's learning experiences
- In view of children's standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning, the setting provides adequate value for money

Recommendations

R1 Improve children's Welsh language skills

R2 Ensure that planning develops children's skills systematically and that practitioners challenge children in line with their abilities

R3 Improve opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills

R4 Ensure that policies are effective in informing practice, and that safeguarding procedures are clearly understood and adhered to

R5 Ensure that self-evaluation and action planning focus on outcomes for children

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

During their time at the setting, most children make appropriate progress in developing their skills and understanding in line with their age and ability. Most children choose activities that interest them and persevere well. Most children sit and listen for appropriately. They spontaneously initiate simple conversations with adults, for example when talking about their favourite toy dinosaur. Nearly all children respond suitably to simple instructions, for example, when tidying up and finding their name badges during registration.

Most children enjoy listening to stories, such as a story about starting school. They listen eagerly and ask interesting questions about the pictures. Many children readily join in with action songs, demonstrating enjoyment and enthusiasm. Most children sustain suitable interest when being read to by an adult, although few children look at books independently. Many children hold a range of writing instruments and make a few meaningful marks. However, early writing skills are underdeveloped.

Most children are developing a basic use of Welsh language. They use simple words during morning routines with growing confidence. However, very few children use simple Welsh words during their play and daily routines.

Most children count to ten with increasing confidence and count objects, such as numbered rubber ducks, to five with adult support. However, children's skills in matching, sorting and ordering numbers are limited. Many children develop a suitable awareness of shapes and patterns, although many lack appropriate mathematical vocabulary to make comparisons, such as when filling and emptying containers.

Most children's problem solving and thinking skills are underdeveloped. Most children make independent choices, such as selecting appropriate activities during free play. Children's skills in ICT are limited as there are too few opportunities for them to develop their skills during sessions.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enter the setting happily and settle quickly. They are motivated and kind to each other during play activities. Most children behave well and treat other with respect and tolerance. Many take on responsibilities such as 'helpwr heddiw' willingly and nearly all children help to put toys away in the correct places.

Nearly all children develop valuable social skills. At snack time, they sit together happily and help each other when required. Many develop positive attitudes, and readily taste different fruits at snack time. They play in small groups happily, sharing equipment well, for example, when sharing dough cutters to make shapes. All children choose activities independently and maintain suitable levels of resilience and concentration. Nearly all respond positively to instructions and most play with resources imaginatively.

Most children form good relationships with the adults at the setting and politely ask for help when required. They take part in planned activities enthusiastically, and play with their peers co-operatively.

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

The setting offers a suitable range of worthwhile learning experiences that engage and interest nearly all children appropriately. Practitioners plan a curriculum that focuses on a suitable balance of adult-led and child-led activities, for example printing with fruits and vegetables and planting sunflower seeds. Planned activities enable children to make suitable progress across most Foundation Phase areas of learning. However, provision and planning for the development of children's language and numeracy skills do not support their learning well enough. Planning does not always ensure that activities are sufficiently challenging.

Practitioners provide interesting play activities that encourage children to form positive relationships and to show respect and tolerance towards others successfully. Children benefit from suitable creative and physical activities and study the outdoors regularly to develop a better understanding of the world around them, for example when looking at bugs and leaves through magnifying pots.

Practitioners work well as a together as a team and are sensitive to children's individual needs. Practitioners work with small groups, allowing them to know individual children's needs well. They provide appropriate resources that engage most children effectively, for example when playing with dinosaurs in the outdoor area. However, in general, there is little evidence that the curriculum builds systematically enough on children's prior knowledge.

Provision to develop children's skills in ICT and Welsh is underdeveloped. The regular introduction of new words and phrases, and incidental use of everyday Welsh vocabulary, such as commands and praise, is not well established. Children's understanding of Welsh heritage and culture is at an early stage of development. Provision for the development of children's ICT skills is not planned for systematically enough.

Teaching: Adequate

All practitioners are enthusiastic and committed to provide the best possible support for the children. They are sensitive to children's needs and enable them to settle quickly on arrival, and to feel safe and secure. Practitioners positively encourage children to engage in play activities. They understand the importance of providing opportunities for children to play in a stimulating environment. However, they do not always plan for the development of children's skills systematically enough.

Practitioners are good language models. They demonstrate good practice during outdoor play when using effective questioning and challenging new vocabulary, for example when playing with dinosaurs and talking about how their teeth indicates what they eat. Practitioners attend regular training and have useful guidance materials available. However, their understanding of effective Foundation Phase

practice is at an early stage of development. The absence of clear and progressive planning to support the development of children's skills reduces the impact of teaching in raising children's outcomes. Practitioners are frequently distracted by preparing further activities, rather than spending quality time with the children.

Assessment procedures are developing steadily and practitioners work with specific groups of children to carry out observational assessments. These assessments, combined with a good knowledge of their groups of children, are beginning to enable them to identify specific skills in need of further development. However, these are not sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of individual learners well enough. The setting keeps parents well informed about their child's progress through informal meetings with practitioners.

Care, support and guidance: JudgementUnsatisfactory

The setting is a friendly, caring community where practitioners ensure that children's health and wellbeing have a high priority. For example, through daily routines they encourage children to wash their hands at suitable points and to eat healthy snacks, and provide access to regular physical activities in the outdoor area. As a result, a majority of children are developing a suitable understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

In daily routine, practitioners encourage children take responsibility, for example during the 'helpwr heddiw' time, when sharing resources and tidying up. This helps children to understand the importance of acceptable behaviour. Practitioners read a variety of stories and promote children's spiritual development and sense of awe and wonder suitably, for example when celebrating Christmas, Easter and Mothering Sunday.

However, opportunities for children to learn about different cultures and to develop their understanding of sustainability are underdeveloped.

The setting identifies that it currently has no children with additional learning needs attending. It does however, have clear procedures to support children with additional learning needs and an effective network of support should the need arise.

The setting has an appropriate range of policies that are read and understood by practitioners. Practitioners can explain fully the actions they should take in relation to safeguarding children. However, they do not follow the guidance within the safeguarding policy and do not put the policies into place and act of information well enough. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding do not meet requirements and give cause for concern.

Learning environment: JudgementGood

The setting provides a welcoming, attractive and stimulating environment for the children, where all have equal access to activities. Practitioners are suitably qualified and work closely with the children.

A good feature of the setting is the respectful and polite behaviour of the children when talking with each other and adults. For example, children help each other to find name badges and welcome friends warmly when they arrive.

The setting has a good range of resources that are well matched to children's learning needs and is secure and well maintained. Practitioners make effective use of all available space and succeed in creating a bright and attractive environment for their activities. They organise the area into defined areas of learning effectively. These include construction, sand, water, and role-play areas, which provide interesting working spaces.

The newly established outdoor area has an ample supply of resources and suitable areas for children to explore and develop their physical skills, for example when balancing on tyres, digging in mud, and using slides.

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

The setting is guided by appropriate aims that help create an inclusive, nurturing community. The leader is passionate about providing good quality provision and practitioners work well together to create a friendly, welcoming and supportive ethos. They are enthusiastic about the setting and focus on providing a safe, secure and attractive environment where children are happy and feel well supported.

All practitioners have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Daily routines are well established and the organisation of the playgroup ensures that all practitioners are aware of their daily tasks. Whilst the leader takes the main role for planning, undertaking staff appraisals, and for writing the setting's self-evaluation procedures, all practitioners feel that their contributions are valued. Practitioners have useful annual appraisals whereby training needs are suitably identified.

However, the leader's awareness of national priorities, such as promoting and developing children's literacy, numeracy, Welsh and ICT skills, is limited. Practitioners are beginning to focus more robustly on developing skills within areas of learning, although this is at an early stage.

Overall, the setting has useful processes for supporting practitioners in developing the provision for play activities, although leaders do not focus well enough on the quality of teaching and learning and the standards that children achieve.

Improving quality: Adequate

A culture of self-evaluation is developing suitably within the setting following the recent appointment of a new leader. Since her appointment, she has worked hard to provide a range of interesting resources and play opportunities within the setting. The recent self-evaluation report is a useful document and supports practitioners in identifying the setting's strengths and areas for improvement more clearly. The setting consults parents and discusses issues with practitioners regularly.

The setting has a good track record of improving provision and the learning environment. The changes to the outdoor area and the well-established areas in the indoors improve opportunities for children to be more independent and to engage well in play opportunities.

However, leaders do not prioritise areas identified for improvement to ensure that they focus on improving children's outcomes, well enough. Timescales for the completion of specific actions are not always clear. The setting's current self-evaluation report is detailed and generally accurate. However, it does not focus robustly enough on the standards that children achieve and the quality of teaching.

Partnership working: Adequate

The setting has a limited range of partnerships. There is a meaningful partnership with parents, which makes a valuable contribution to developing children's wellbeing. For example, parents feel that their children are well supported at the setting.

All parents are given an information booklet providing them with essential information about the setting and its main aims and objectives. Practitioners actively encourage parents to help their children settle in during short visit sessions, before they stay for whole sessions.

Practitioners are always on hand to talk with parents about the day's activities as they collect their children. Parents are active in fundraising activities and make a useful contribution to ensuring a good supply of quality resources. The setting has an active 'toddler group', which encourages parents to bring their young children to play at the setting before they join.

Suitable arrangements are in place for the transfer of children to local primary schools. Children are familiar with their new teachers, who visit the setting to read stories with the children before they start at the school. Practitioners ease this transition process by provide as making useful information cards containing the child's name, age and favourite colour. The setting collects and supervises children who attend the local school on a part-time basis and who have previously been at the setting. It also offers the service of a 'walking bus' to escort children safely to and from the school.

However, the setting makes only limited use of the local community to enhance children's learning experiences. Occasional visitors such as the local police and a crossing patrol person help the children to understand who looks after them in the community. Regular visits to the local library increase children's literacy skills and their appreciation of books.

Practitioners are suitably supported by the local authority and receive appropriate training, for example helping to identify correct areas of learning.

Resource management: Adequate

Learning areas are interesting, well organised and stimulating for children. They include a role-play house area and construction corner. However, some aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum are under-developed. For example, beneficial areas to support children's mark making skills are not prominent enough. The setting has an ample supply of learning resources, except for ICT.

Practitioners are suitably qualified and are effectively deployed to promote a range of interesting play activities. Practitioners attend a few training opportunities, although

the identification of practitioner's individual training needs, including support for developing the leader's role, is not effective enough.

Finances are suitably managed and spending priorities evaluated effectively. The budget is kept under regular review and any surplus is spent on improving the provision, for example providing fencing around the outdoor play area.

In view of children's standards and the quality of teaching and learning, the setting provides adequate 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.	19	15 79%	4 21%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		79%	21%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	19	15 79%	4 21%	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.	19	15 79%	4 21%	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.	19	13 68%	4 21%	1 5%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	19	13 68%	4 21%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		71%	28%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	19	11 58%	6 32%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		80%	19%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	19	13 68%	5 26%	0 0%	0 0%	1	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.	18	10 56%	6 33%	0 0%	0 0%	2	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.	19	16 84%	3 16%	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.	19	8 42%	8 42%	1 5%	0 0%	2	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.	19	6 32%	9 47%	3 16%	1 5%	0	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.	19	12 63%	6 32%	1 5%	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.	19	9 47%	7 37%	3 16%	0 0%	0	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.	19	9 47%	7 37%	1 5%	0 0%	2	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.	19	12 63%	6 32%	0 0%	1 5%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		63%	33%	4%	1%		
The setting is well run.	19	12 63%	5 26%	0 0%	1 5%	1	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		81%	18%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Gail Parker

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 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 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 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