



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

A report on

**Ysgol Mair Playgroup
Chapel Buildings
St Margaret's Drive
Rhyl
LL18 2HY**

Date of inspection: January 2016

by

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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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Publication date: 30/03/2016

Context

Ysgol Mair Playgroup is located in the grounds of Ysgol Mair Primary School in a residential area of Rhyl in North Wales. It opened in September 2009 and opens both morning and afternoon. Sessions take place during school term time. The accommodation is also used by a breakfast and an after school group.

The setting is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 24 children. There were five children in receipt of early years funding at the time of the inspection. None had any additional learning needs.

Children come from the immediate locality and are all English speaking.

The playgroup was inspected by CSSIW in 2015 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is adequate because:

- There are insufficient opportunities for children to regularly extend their thinking skills
- practitioners do not always use strategies to let children become independent learners
- the setting provides good quality care, support and guidance for all children and
- the organisation of the learning environment does not fully meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- leadership is good
- there are effective partnerships to benefit the children
- the setting has made good progress since the previous inspection; and
- leaders pay effective attention to local and national priorities

Recommendations

R1 To ensure that children have opportunities to develop thinking skills through learning experiences

R2 To empower the children to become independent learners

R3 To organise the learning environment to fully address the requirements of the Foundation Phase

R4 To visit other settings to share best practice

The setting will draw up an action plan which 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?

Not applicable

Standards: Not applicable

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing: Not applicable

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

Although practitioners plan a range of activities, and most children make satisfactory progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes, this covers a three weekly period and outcomes are not always identified for weeks two and three. As a result planning is not clear and outcomes are not always well matched to their learning experiences. Overall, experiences indoor and outdoor present insufficient opportunities for children to regularly extend their thinking skills and become confident and independent learners.

The curriculum builds appropriately on children's existing knowledge and understanding. Activities and experiences effectively encourage children to form relationships with each other and with adults around them and to show respect for all cultural backgrounds.

Learning experiences enable children to develop physical and creative skills. Provision for developing children's literacy and numeracy skills is good and they learn effectively about number through counting, rhymes, songs and games. Practitioners develop children's literacy skills by sharing books, including those written in Welsh, and through story telling. There are good opportunities to develop children's early mark making skills and for them to recognise their names. Children have opportunities to learn about caring for living things by finding mini beasts in the school grounds. Learning experiences including using tablets provide good opportunities to develop Information Communication Technology skills.

Visitors and visits in the local area to develop and enrich the children's experiences in the setting are too few.

All practitioners use Welsh appropriately and as a result children answer simple questions and respond well. Children have good opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions through learning Welsh songs and celebrating festivals, such as St David's Day. Children learn successfully to show respect for all cultural backgrounds and traditions and festivals are celebrated, for example Chinese New Year.

Teaching: Adequate

Practitioners have an appropriate knowledge of child development. The supervisor is newly appointed and as a result is starting to understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Although they are good language models, the practitioners do not always use questioning appropriately to extend children's knowledge and understanding and develop their learning.

Practitioners start the session with valuable time spent explaining to the children what is going to happen during the morning. Children have a count down to the end of an activity so that they can prepare successfully to finish what they are doing. Practitioners use a range of techniques to maintain children's interest however a few resources they use are too advanced for the children such as the topic cards. There are high expectations of the children but then on occasion practitioners do too much for them. As a result children have limited choice and opportunities to experiment and try things for themselves, such as pouring their own drinks or for example when making greeting cards. By putting aprons on for them means that children are not encouraged to become independent learners.

The practitioners work well as a team. They have an appropriate understanding of what is required of them. As a result, there is consistency of approach in using positive strategies for managing such things as children's behaviour.

Practitioners make regular meaningful observations of the children which are displayed on the Tree of Knowledge. Progress is regularly reviewed and links appropriately to individual children's next steps. The setting provides parents with a good level of information about their child's progress through sharing assessment records, visits to the setting on the completion of topic work and daily feedback.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has a range of policies and procedures to support the children and successfully promote their health and wellbeing including their moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is promoted through opportunities for simple prayer and reflection. There are effective transition arrangements including good communication with school that help the children to settle well both in playgroup and in the school.

The setting promotes children's health successfully by introducing them to a range of healthy foods and daily outdoor sessions which encourage children to be active and enable them to use physical apparatus with increasing control.

The setting fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect. Children learn appropriately about simple rules such as sharing and taking turns through the day to day activities and are effectively helped to distinguish right from wrong and to develop an understanding of living and sharing with others. Children are starting to be involved in caring for their environment by switching off lights when they go outside to save energy and help the polar bears.

Practitioners know the children well and they effectively provide consistency of care. Although there are no children with any additional learning need, there are good arrangements to support them if necessary including links with a suitable range of external agencies.

There are appropriate policies and procedures in respect of safeguarding and the practitioners have undertaken training. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting's ethos creates a welcoming atmosphere for the children. It is an inclusive community where every child is valued and receives equal access to all learning experiences. There is a clear emphasis on respecting equality and diversity of background and an effective range of policies and procedures that actively support the children, and promote their health and wellbeing including equal opportunities and complaints.

There are valued practitioners with relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children who can develop children's learning appropriately.

Although resources are easily accessible for children, the learning environment is shared and this means that areas were organised insufficiently well to fully meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Learning areas were so overflowing with resources that the room was overwhelming and as a result children were not able to make good use of their learning environment or develop their play experiences effectively.

The building and the school grounds offer suitable facilities and are secure. Although the local environment is used insufficiently well to enhance the facilities at the setting and enrich the experiences of the children, there are good opportunities for safe outdoor play, which successfully bring another dimension to the children's learning.

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

The leaders understand their roles and are effectively informed about the performance of the setting by regular meetings. There is a sense of purpose and a desire to improve and as a result there is a positive ethos and high expectations.

Practitioners understand well their roles and responsibilities and good leadership contributes positively to the wellbeing, progress and achievement of the children.

Children are valued and there are well established links with parents that effectively support the learning of the children and ensure they are fully aware of their progress and achievement.

Practitioners work well together to ensure that they fulfil the aims of the setting and that any changes impact positively on provision and standards. They are enthusiastic and take appropriate account of local and national priorities such as literacy and numeracy, healthy eating and taking care of children's teeth.

There are appropriate processes in place to appraise performance and as a result practitioners are aware of what they need to do to improve. Leaders use these processes well to identify training needs and they respond to these needs appropriately for example they support practitioners in developing their knowledge of the Foundation Phase and improving their skills in delivering it.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has successfully addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection.

The setting has developed a successful self-evaluation system that identifies its strengths and areas for development well. The setting is an integral part of the school. They share resources effectively and provide continuity of care for the children. The supervisor, new to post, has good links with the school and although already having made changes in the setting to benefit the children, has plans to continue to improve the provision. Although the information from the self-evaluation process results in positive gains for the children, such as the re-organisation of the areas of provision, the current system does not always link sufficiently well to improvements in standards and outcomes for the children.

Practitioners engage in professional development and attend courses that support the provision and impact appropriately on the wellbeing of the children.

Partnership working: Good

A successful range of partnership working effectively enhances and supports the learning and achievements of the children, for example a good relationship with the school facilitates good transition arrangements that benefit the children and enable them to settle quickly when they leave the setting.

Partnerships with parents are good. Parents have information about the setting and the Foundation Phase displayed in the entrance and there is good communication between parents and the setting and they are involved in decision making about their children and their learning. The setting works in partnership successfully and as a result one of the ways parents are actively informed of their child's progress is by attending a coffee morning at the end of each topic to see what the children have been learning.

There is trust and clear communication and because the setting encourages parental feedback it identifies any issues or concerns and can deal with them promptly and effectively.

The setting has an appropriate partnership with the local authority advisory teacher who visits the setting to provide guidance and support and suggests learning experiences. They work together to deliver appropriate quality learning experiences. Successful partnership working with other professionals ensures active support if needed for any children with an additional learning need.

Resource management: Adequate

There are sufficient experienced practitioners to meet the needs of the children and they work together well to ensure appropriate support to create a safe learning environment both indoors and out. Practitioners are well prepared before the start of the session and as a result move around the areas of learning successfully to support the children in their play.

There is a plentiful supply of good quality resources however these are not always used effectively to motivate the children to learn, a few providing too greater challenge for the children. The outdoors is used appropriately, for example to develop the physical skills of the children but they have insufficient opportunities for discovery and experimentation whilst outside.

Although there are suitable arrangements for practitioners to access additional training, they have too few opportunities to learn from others by visits to different settings to share good practice and try various ways of working to develop the provision. As the supervisor is new to post the impact of training on children's achievement and wellbeing is not yet sufficiently well evaluated.

Accounts are audited and leaders have an appropriate understanding of budget matters. They take into account the developing needs of the children and this means that planning for future resources is effective. Spending is prioritised to develop the provision and improve outcomes for the children and overall the setting provides appropriate 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

Mrs Anne Elizabeth Manning	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.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 child minders 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.