



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

**Little Learners Playgroup / Moosehall Playgroup
Park Crescent
Llanelli
SA15 3AE
United Kingdom**

Date of inspection: March 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

Little Learners' playgroup is situated in Llanelli Leisure Centre in the Carmarthenshire local authority.

The playgroup is registered to take up to 20 children per session and children are admitted from the age of two years. There are currently 22 children on roll, ranging in age from two to three years and eight months. There are currently eight three year olds receiving funded early years education in the setting, although not all were present during the inspection.

Most children have English as their home language. No child is from a Welsh speaking home. There are very few children with additional learning needs.

There are four permanent members of staff, including the two playgroup leaders. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children. The playgroup leaders have been in post since September 1996.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in September 2013 and by Estyn in November 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

Little Learners' playgroup is a good setting because:

- children develop literacy and numeracy skills well during their time in the setting;
- children's skills in Welsh second language are very well developed;
- behaviour in the setting is very good;
- the setting provides a wide range of stimulating learning experiences and makes good use of the local environment;
- the quality of teaching is generally good;
- the setting provides good quality care, support and guidance for all children; and
- practitioners make good use of the available space and resources are generally of good quality.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- effective teamwork and a very positive ethos create a happy and purposeful atmosphere for learning;
- practitioners have a good understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement;
- leaders pay good attention to local and national priorities and there is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy and children's Welsh language skills;
- the setting has a good track record of improving standards and provision for children; and
- it has a range of successful partnerships that it uses well to improve outcomes for children.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop children's problem solving and thinking skills
- R2 Formalise on entry assessments to provide a measurable starting point from which practitioners can assess the progress children make
- R3 Provide greater opportunities for children to develop an awareness of education for sustainable development
- R4 Ensure that self-evaluation processes are manageable and clearly identify areas for improvement that feed into the setting's action plan

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

During their time in the setting, most children make good progress in line with their age and stage of development. Almost all children concentrate for sustained periods and are highly engaged and motivated to learn.

Most children talk confidently about their play and explain to a visitor what they are doing and why they are doing it. They include suitable detail and use a well-developed vocabulary, such as when describing a birthday party that they are planning. Nearly all children listen carefully to instructions and respond to them appropriately. They enjoy listening to stories and maintain interest in their content for a sustained period of time. Many children recall stories that they have listened to and know what is coming next in a familiar story. They respond enthusiastically to questions related to the content and provide sensible and sometimes detailed answers. Nearly all children handle books carefully. They hold the book the right way and turn the pages correctly. All children recognise their own name in written form and select this to register each morning. Around half of the children use a range of mark making tools independently. These children understand that writing has a purpose and make notes of important things to remember, such as hair appointments and orders taken in the café.

A majority of children recite and recognise numbers up to 10 and a few count beyond 10. Nearly all children use numbers naturally in daily activities and participate enthusiastically in learning number rhymes and songs. Many children use the correct mathematical language when comparing lengths and identify most and least when comparing amounts.

Most children make suitable use of opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment such as programmable toys, cameras and recording devices. As a result, their skills are developing appropriately.

Many children have well developed physical skills. They roll and catch hoops, jump, hop and skip and dodge each other in a game to catch tails. A few children are beginning to solve problems, such as when planning a birthday party for a friend. However, generally children's thinking and problem solving skills are at an early stage of development.

The Welsh language skills of most children are very good. They respond to commands appropriately, answer to indicate their presence and name common colours in Welsh. When asked questions about the weather they give an answer that describes the weather accurately. A few more able children answer using a full sentence.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enter the setting happily and settle quickly and willingly into well-established routines. They are confident and have positive attitudes to learning. Many persevere for a considerable time on tasks, such as making patterns with pegs and completing jigsaws.

Children's behaviour is very good, both inside the setting and when accessing the local area. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Most children co-operate well with each other and show consideration for each other's feelings, often without adult support. All children help to tidy up when asked; they use equipment carefully and take a pride in their environment.

During snack time most children demonstrate good social skills. They say please and thank you and are aware of the need for good hygiene.

Most children choose play activities confidently and sustain concentration on a task well. When a new theme is introduced they are involved suitably in planning and making choices.

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

The setting provides children with a wide range of beneficial learning experiences based on appropriate themes that are often linked to a favourite story. Practitioners plan stimulating activities across all Foundation Phase areas of learning. They make good use of visits and visitors to enhance children's learning experiences. For example, they visit the local shops to buy the fruit to taste linked to a story and visit the post office to write and send a letter to themselves.

Practitioners make good use of opportunities to develop children's literacy skills. For example, they encourage children to look for and talk about signs of spring when walking to the area that they use for physical activities. Practitioners promote a love of books and stories successfully by providing a comfortable and inviting, well-stocked reading corner. They change books regularly to ensure that children sustain an interest in the reading area and make good use of it. There are suitable opportunities for children to develop early writing skills, such as taking orders in the café and booking appointments at the hairdresser's salon.

The setting develops children's numeracy skills successfully by providing many good opportunities for children to count using rhymes and songs and to recognise numbers through the use of games and jigsaws. Children use real coins in the café and are encouraged to charge for items and to give change. However, opportunities to develop children's thinking and problem solving skills are less well developed.

Practitioners provide very good opportunities for children to develop physical skills through the use of the onsite sports facilities. They use a suitable range of age appropriate equipment and musical activities well to encourage children to be physically active and to develop good co-ordination and control.

Provision for the development of Welsh language is very good. Class routines such as circle time and snack time provide good opportunities for children to hear and respond to the Welsh language. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions through celebrating St David's Day and using Welsh songs in their concerts.

Teaching: Good

Lead practitioners in the setting are experienced and have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. The setting has well-established rules and routines. All practitioners reinforce these well throughout each session. As a result, children feel safe and secure and are enthusiastic to learn. This consistency also ensures that children's behaviour is managed highly effectively.

Sessions proceed with good pace and practitioners use an effective range of different styles and approaches to sustain children's interest. They organise the session effectively so that there is a good balance between activities that children can choose for themselves and those that are led by adults. Practitioners have positive relationships with all children. They know the children very well, are responsive to their needs and know when to intervene and when to step back to allow the children to find out for themselves. Practitioners make good use of questioning to extend children's learning.

The setting uses an appropriate system for assessing children's attainment and wellbeing. Practitioners regularly monitor how well children are doing based on useful observations. The outcomes of these observations inform appropriately the planning of the next steps for learning for each individual child.

Reports to parents provide useful information about children's progress. In addition, practitioners provide parents with regular, valuable feedback about what their child has done during the day.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are good arrangements in place to promote healthy living and very good arrangements to ensure the children take physical exercise through planned activities using the facilities inside and outside the leisure centre.

The setting encourages children to make positive relationships and fosters tolerance and respect successfully. Good induction arrangements help children to settle into a new environment quickly. There is daily contact with parents to feedback any concerns.

Practitioners encourage children to take responsibility for their actions, share equipment and take care of resources effectively. For example, all children are involved in tidying up during the session.

Learning experiences promote children's personal and social development well, including their spiritual, moral and cultural development. For example, the setting successfully creates a sense of awe and wonder about the world around them

through effective use of visits to the local environment. They use the local pond and park effectively to follow seasonal changes and to encourage the children to observe and talk about nature. However, practitioners do not provide enough opportunities for children to understand about sustainable development.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern. There are appropriate systems in place to support children with additional needs. Practitioners access suitable help for children and their families and use this support effectively to support the needs of children in the setting.

Learning environment: Good

The setting creates a friendly and inclusive ethos and ensures that all children have equal access to activities. There is an appropriate emphasis on celebrating diversity and good procedures in place to help children to develop tolerant attitudes. The setting has sufficient suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase.

The accommodation is well maintained and secure. There is a wide range of learning areas supported by good quality resources. Practitioners make good use of the space available both indoors and outdoors. The indoor area is bright and welcoming. There are colourful displays linked to themes and these are labelled bilingually to encourage the children to recognise print in both English and Welsh. Most equipment is accessible and clearly labelled.

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

Leaders manage the setting well. They have a clear vision for the setting and share this with staff and parents effectively. They collaborate well to create a positive ethos and involve all staff in this effectively. They communicate high expectations to all staff and challenge underperformance appropriately.

All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities. These are very clearly defined and practitioners work together effectively with a clear sense of purpose to fulfil the aims of the setting; to provide a high standard of care and education whilst responding to changing needs.

There are appropriate processes in place to manage the performance of practitioners. Leaders use this well to identify training needs and respond to these quickly. Leaders support staff effectively in developing their knowledge of the Foundation Phase and their skills in delivering it.

Leaders pay good attention to local and national priorities and there is a suitable focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and managers know the setting well and have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Practitioners work together effectively to identify areas for development and to plan how to achieve improvements.

Practitioners are open to new ideas and respond positively to advice from the local authority. They are also proactive in looking for ways to improve and have sought outside help with issues, such as improving the Welsh language skills of practitioners. This has had a significant impact on the standards that children achieve.

Leaders and managers consider the opinions of staff, parents and children and respond appropriately. They make good use of the results of annual consultations to address any concerns and to improve standards and provision.

The new self-evaluation report format is over complicated and does not support the setting in clearly identifying its needs. Despite this, leaders know the setting's priorities well and with the exception of sustainable development, have planned for these appropriately.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a good range of effective partnerships. These partnerships impact positively on children's standards and wellbeing and on the quality of provision.

Partnerships with parents are strong. Practitioners keep them well informed about activities and what their children are learning through the setting's noticeboard and daily informal contact. The setting has a useful website where parents can access information about the setting's routines and view some of the activities that children undertake.

The setting feeds a number of primary schools across Llanelli and has well established links with local schools. This promotes smooth transition for children from the playgroup to the next stage in their education. Practitioners make effective use of support from the local authority advisory teacher to seek advice, to access training and to develop new resources.

The setting makes regular visits to the local library to enjoy story telling sessions and to borrow books and this has increased children's interest in books and stories. Practitioners make effective use of their location in the leisure centre to access sports facilities and to provide children with very good opportunities for physical exercise.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support teaching and learning well. Leaders ensure that the setting has enough suitably qualified staff. They deploy practitioners' effectively to make the best use of their experience and expertise.

Practitioners access an effective range of suitable training. There are good systems in place to make sure that practitioners keep up-to-date and continue to build on their skills, for example, in learning Welsh. This has improved outcomes and provision for children.

Leaders have effective processes for keeping spending under review. They allocate funds appropriately to the setting's priorities.

In view of the positive outcomes achieved by children, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received was fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Ms Jane Rees	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Janet Rowlands	Team member

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 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 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.