



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

**Barker's Lane Playgroup
Little Acton Community Centre
The Green
Burton Drive
Little Acton
Wrexham
LL12 8BH**

Date of inspection: January 2013

by

Mary Dyas

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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Context

Barkers Lane Playgroup has been established for over 20 years. It originally operated within the local school but moved to its present site in January 2004 in a small community centre sited on a grassy green in Wrexham. The playgroup is registered for up to 20 children aged between two and a half and five years. From the playgroup most children move to a nursery class in the local school with which there are strong links. At the time of the inspection there were eight three year olds of whom seven were in receipt of funded educational provision.

The playgroup meets for four mornings a week from 9.15-11.45 am from Monday to Thursday and is open for 39 weeks of the year. They have the use of a reasonably sized room, toilet facilities, a kitchen and a storeroom. The centre is used by other groups which means there are times when equipment needs to be moved out of the way or sometimes put away completely. The playgroup is able to use the walls for display and there are bright eye-catching displays of the children's work together with pictures and information for the children to enjoy. Since their last Estyn inspection the playgroup has been allowed the use of a piece of land for outdoor play which is accessed directly from the classroom and is securely fenced for the children's safety.

The children come from the local area and are from mixed socio-economic homes. There are currently no children from ethnic minority groups and all children speak English as their first language. There are also no children with special needs but they are welcomed and policies and procedures are in place.

The playgroup was successfully inspected by the Care Standards Inspectorate in Wales in May 2010 and by Estyn in March 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the provider is good because:

- All children make good progress
- All children are happy in the playgroup and enjoy their learning
- Teaching is well directed toward Foundation Phase outcomes and effectively meets the needs of the children
- Relationships between adults and children are warm and caring; and
- Staff work well together and resources are well used to support learning.

Prospects for improvement

The provider's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting has a strong history of identifying and achieving targets for improvement
- The setting is well managed and staff share a vision for improvement; and
- All staff were involved in the setting's self evaluation process and are aware of current targets for improvement.

Recommendations

R1 Develop opportunities for listening to children, including seeking their reflections on activities they have taken part in and ideas for planning future activities.

R2 Continue to develop lines of communication with parents to include information on the next steps in their child's learning.

R3 Continue to improve standards in, and provision for, Welsh language development – this has been identified by the setting as an area for improvement.

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan to indicate how it intends to address the recommendations.

Main findings

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| Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? | Good |
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Standards: Good

All children achieve well during their time in the playgroup and make good progress in relation to their starting points across all the Foundation Phase areas of learning. They participate eagerly in the planned activities offered to them and most are confident in approaching a new situation. All children are able to concentrate on a chosen task for appropriate periods of time and become absorbed in what they are doing.

Most children express themselves clearly, can explain what they are doing and are happy to speak to visitors. They follow simple spoken instructions and talk to one another as they play together. Action songs and rhymes are popular and most join in with these eagerly. All are making good progress with mark making and use a range of instruments to make marks in different areas of provision – for example they write menus and shopping lists in the home corner and police reports in the role play fire station. Most children choose to look at books, which many like to share with a friend or an adult. They look at the pictures and print with interest and identify the main features of the story. All sit quietly to listen to group stories and show their interest and understanding through questions and comments.

All children are developing their understanding of mathematical concepts and they use mathematical language appropriately in their play. All three year olds count confidently and independently to five and most of these are also able to count objects accurately. Many are able to count to ten by rote and a minority are beginning to recognise numbers to at least five.

All children make good use of the range of electronic toys in the setting to develop their knowledge and understanding of technology; for example they use an electronic talking dice to identify and match colours and show that they know the main Welsh colour words and all enjoy using the camera to take photographs. Children are making appropriate progress in Welsh. They join in with Welsh songs and rhymes with enthusiasm, respond to the register in Welsh and enjoy reading stories about Ticw the bear. A minority are able to remember familiar words and phrases from these stories. Children do not yet use the Welsh words they have learned spontaneously in their play or when talking to an adult.

Wellbeing: Good

All children are happy and confident in the setting. They come into the playgroup happily and settle immediately to an activity. All join in with activities and are interested to try out new experiences such as exploring squirting and manipulating shaving foam. They say that they enjoy coming to the group and have made friends that they look forward to seeing and playing with. They are developing responsibility and independence through taking their turn at being 'Helpwr Heddiw' and carrying out their tasks which include ringing a bell to announce time to tidy up and collecting any uneaten food for the food recycling bin.

Children all have good relationships with the adults in the setting. They show that they trust and care for them and freely ask for help. Behaviour in the setting is good. Children understand the need to share and to take turns and know that it is important to treat each other nicely.

All children know that it is important to have clean hands after using the toilet and before eating their snacks. They are beginning to understand that they need to eat certain foods such as fruit and vegetables to be healthy. They are developing good independent skills: most are able to cut their fruit and to spread butter on toast at snack time and many can put their coats on independently.

Although children are not yet involved in helping to plan activities for the setting they do make decisions about what they would like to do and know that if they ask for a particular activity the practitioners will try to organise this for them.

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

Practitioners work together to plan a curriculum which takes into account the requirements of the Foundation Phase and the identified needs of the children in the group. Over time plans cover all areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. Staff meet together daily to discuss children's progress and responses to the activities and adapt the planned activities appropriately to meet their needs. These activities succeed in engaging children's interest and curiosity both indoors and outdoors and enable children to make good progress in communication, numeracy, ICT and the wider creative skills. Children are encouraged to think for themselves and are provided with many opportunities to solve problems, be independent and experiment with new experiences.

Welsh is well used during group time through reading stories in Welsh and singing Welsh songs but the consistent use of incidental Welsh throughout the session to develop children's independent use of the language is limited. All children celebrate and learn about Welsh culture and traditions when they celebrate St David's Day.

The setting has involved children in regular recycling of paper and of food left over from their snacks and the children are also actively engaged in saving left over toast to feed to the birds outside. Cultural diversity is well promoted though a range of dolls from other cultures, use of pictures of children from around the world in pictures and displays and celebration of a number of different festivals. Children listen to music from around the world, taste different food, make craft items and listen to stories as part of these celebrations.

Teaching: Good

The setting leader and her assistant are very experienced and have a sound understanding of the principles of the Foundation Phase and they implement their ideas imaginatively to suit the needs of the children. All staff interact positively with the children. Daily shared evaluations ensure that they all have a good understanding of the developing needs of each child and they direct their questioning appropriately. There is a good balance between adult intervention and allowing children to follow their own ideas to develop their decision making skills. Children are free to select from either adult led or independent activities but are not yet involved in planning future activities.

Practitioners assess by observing the children while they are engaged in their learning experiences. The information gathered informs the next steps in planning and contributes to the Local Authority's transition document 'Dyma Fi' which is

shared with parents and carers at the end of the school year. The setting has identified the need to keep parents better informed about their child's progress and have recently produced a mid-year report for each child which was shared informally with parents. These gave a good summary of the child's development under the areas of learning but did not indicate the child's next steps in learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Good arrangements are in place to support children's health and wellbeing. Practitioners value children as individuals and strive to enable each child to develop their potential and personality. A range of policies relating directly to the practice within the playgroup ensures that children settle quickly when they start at the setting and are kept safe from harm and bullying.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no reason for concern. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are robust and adhered to and there are good procedures for managing children's arrival at and leaving the setting.

Provision for ensuring children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for children to experience a sense of awe and wonder about their surroundings and they say a short prayer together before eating their snack. Practitioners are good role models and foster a sense of right and wrong and of treating one other with respect. Although there are currently no children with identified additional learning needs, practitioners are aware of the need for early identification and have worked closely with other professionals in past years.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup is an inclusive community and respects and celebrates diversity. All children have access to the full range of activities. Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities and help to create a bright and welcoming environment. The setting makes thoughtful use of the space available and the room is attractively decorated with examples of recent children's work. Staff have worked hard on the outdoor provision to provide a learning environment which enables children to explore a wide range of interesting experiences and have plans to further develop the area adjacent to the setting.

The setting employs sufficient well-trained practitioners to meet the needs of all children. They have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase. All practitioners are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills through relevant training. A wide range of natural and man-made resources are carefully selected for their quality and effectiveness in supporting the children's learning needs.

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

The setting leaders create a very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. All practitioners in the setting share a sense of purpose and vision for improvement. The team is very close and all practitioners work well together. They are aware of the changes that need to take place and are keen to give the children the best experiences they can and to ensure that they themselves are doing their best. Staff meet together to evaluate each day and weekly to plan for the week ahead. Due to the small size of the setting these meetings are informal but effective. Annual appraisals are in place and used well to improve performance.

The setting is overseen by a management committee which is made up of the parents and carers of the children attending the playgroup together with the playgroup staff who ensure that the committee understands current priorities. The committee meets once a term and minutes are displayed.

Practitioners respond well to local and national priorities. They are fully involved in training and developments connected with the Foundation Phase and also with Wrexham's 'Grow with Me' initiative.

Improving quality: Good

The setting's self-evaluation is an effective document which successfully reflects the setting's strengths, identifies appropriate targets for improvement and is shared by all practitioners. Leaders take into account comments from parents in an annual questionnaire and have made significant changes and improvements as a result.

Practitioners regularly attend professional courses provided by the Local Authority which have impacted positively on the provision of the setting. The setting has been identified as an example of good practice by the Local Authority and regularly welcomes visits from other settings. In their turn they have visited settings to support their delivery of their targets for improvement, for example a Welsh medium setting to help to improve their provision for the Welsh language.

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners take very positive steps to involve parents and carers in the setting. Parents are kept informed about all aspects of the setting's activities through regular newsletters and notices in the foyer. There is also a rota for parents to come and help in order to meet staff:children ratios which gives parents and carers good opportunities to see the work of the playgroup and their child's progress at first hand. Parents are very appreciative of the work of the playgroup and feel that their children are well supported both educationally and emotionally.

The setting has good links with the local primary school and has recently put a transition policy together with school to support the children when they move on to the nursery class. They have also been invited to make use of the school's Forest School area and their Japanese and sensory gardens and also to a Teddy Bear's Picnic in the summer term.

The setting welcomes the support they receive from the Early Entitlement teacher from the Local Authority and there is clear evidence that they have acted positively on the advice she has given.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup has a good range of resources which are used appropriately to support the planned activities. Practitioners work well together to ensure that the areas of learning both indoors and outdoors are effectively overseen to support children's learning.

Practitioners work hard to raise money for the setting through a number of imaginative schemes and spending decisions are carefully considered to ensure that new resources are of high quality and will support the children's learning and wellbeing.

The setting gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10).

Responses to discussions with children

Children say they enjoy coming to the playgroup. They like the 'aunties' and look forward to playing with their friends.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

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| Mary Dyas | 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)

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

Glossary of terms

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| 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> |

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| National Childminding Association (NCMA) | This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support. |
| National (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. |