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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Clawdd Offa Playgroup
Ysgol Clawdd Offa
Ffordd Clawdd Offa
Prestatyn
LL19 8AZ**

Date of inspection: May 2013

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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Context

Clawdd Offa Playgroup is based in a room in Ysgol Clawdd Offa primary school in Prestatyn, North Wales. This is a new purpose built school situated on the outskirts of Prestatyn in a semi-rural location. There is immediate access from the main teaching room to a tarmaced area. The Playgroup has free access to other school facilities when not in use. Currently there are 52 children on the register and the playgroup is registered by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to take up to 18 children in any one session. During the inspection there were 15 children aged 3 years present, of whom 13 are funded. Children attend from the age of 2½ years and leave for the next phase of their education following their 4th birthday.

Children come from the immediate area – an area of owner occupied houses and the area is described by the playgroup as neither advantaged nor disadvantaged socio-economically. The playgroup accepts children from ethnic backgrounds and currently there are 2 children with additional learning needs (ALN). No child speaks Welsh nor does any child come from families that are Welsh speaking. All speak English fluently.

The playgroup was previously inspected by Estyn in 2007 when it was based in a Church Hall in Prestatyn. It moved to its present location 4 years ago. Some of the recommendations in the previous report have been addressed. These include the provision for children's spiritual development and outside play areas for their physical development. However, two recommendations concerning improvement in the short term planning and assessment remain to be fully developed. The setting was recently inspected by CSSIW in November 2012. There were no major recommendations.

Summary

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

Current performance

Main findings

The playgroup's current performance is good because of:

- standards achieved and children's progress;
- children's wellbeing, their participation and enjoyment in learning;
- children's positive attitudes and behaviour;
- the care, guidance and support provided for the children;
- the settings provision for children with additional learning needs;
- the links with parents.

However there are areas for improvement including:

- the use of assessment to record what children have achieved and to identify the next steps in children's learning;
- planning the learning experiences provided for children so that the curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills;
- providing a good range of activities to motivate and challenge children.

Prospects for improvement

Main findings

The playgroup's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- the children are well motivated and responsive.

However, areas for improvement that need to be implemented immediately include:

- plan future strategies based on effective self-evaluation;
- developing an effective development plan prioritising areas for improvement;
- incorporating the suggestions for improvement identified by the Local Authority

advisory teacher.

Recommendations

The Cylch needs to:

R1. develop assessment procedures to identify what children have achieved and the next steps in their learning.

R2. provide a greater range of activities as part of the continuous provision provided for the children that suitably challenges them.

R3. ensure that the curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

R4. clearly identify areas for improvement based on self-evaluation.

R5. produce a development plan incorporating priorities, time scale, targets and success criteria.

What happens next?

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?	Good
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Standards: Good

Most children achieve good standards and make realistic progress from their starting point. All children soon become actively engaged in tasks set out for them and only lose interest when periods of time for activities are overlong. All children make choices and persevere well on tasks that motivate them.

Most children have good communication skills. They listen attentively to adults and carry out instructions promptly and willingly. Their language is developing well and they make themselves understood using a good vocabulary. All children enjoy listening to stories and the more able identify characters in story books. A few children were observed mark-making and they are aware of some of the functions of writing. Overall, children's literacy skills are a particularly good feature of the playgroup.

The majority of children have good number skills – the more able count accurately beyond 10 and are using mathematical language in relevant context. Their knowledge of pattern, sequence and relationships is underdeveloped.

All children play with digital equipment, such as cash registers and mobile phones. However children do not have access to a computer and as such cannot develop their computer skills.

Most children have a basic understanding of simple Welsh words and understand more than they can speak. More able children repeat familiar words. All children listen attentively and respond quickly to suggestions and instructions. However, the Welsh language is underdeveloped.

Wellbeing: Good

All children have a positive attitude to learning and show interest in work that motivates them. In the main, they sustain concentration for significant periods of time and only become distracted when they lose interest due to too long a period of time given for an activity. All children show good behaviour and are considerate to others. They relate well to each other.

All children have an appropriate understanding of keeping clean and healthy relative to their age. They wash their hands after activities without prompting by practitioners. A notable feature is children's confidence derived from feeling safe and free from any physical or verbal abuse in the setting.

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

Staff meet every week to plan the curriculum, and this allows participants to collaborate and to know what is expected of them. A thematic approach is used and weekly schemes of work are prepared which incorporate the 6 areas of learning identified in the Foundation Phase curriculum. However, there is no clear indication of how the curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

All children are beginning to acquire their basic skills, particularly their communication skills, enabling them to access areas of learning. Whilst staff use questioning well to develop children's thinking skills, there is no coherent provision for developing children's skills progressively.

Day-to-day activities encourage children to form good relationships and all children show respect and tolerance towards each other and adults. Children are respected as individuals and staff are sensitive to their individual needs. Children are well supported and are confident. They choose their favourite activities both in the classroom and outside and show a good degree of independence.

All children are encouraged to use the Welsh language but the use of Welsh words is infrequent. The language is used incidentally by the staff throughout the sessions and more formally during group discussion. The planning also incorporates reference to some of the traditions and celebrations of Welsh culture such as St. David's day.

Opportunities for children to learn about recycling are limited and this is underdeveloped at present.

Teaching: Adequate

Practitioners have many years experience of working with young children and have an understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. All practitioners are involved in planning and are well briefed as to their roles. Staff have high expectations of children, particularly in terms of their behaviour and this is borne out in practice. Children with additional learning needs are well supported.

Activities, both in the classroom and out of doors are child centred with adult support. Such activities interest children but are often overlong and do not always challenge them sufficiently. Children are well behaved and benefit from the positive behaviour strategies employed by the staff, praising good behaviour and having high expectations of the children.

Staff are good language models and use questioning well to reinforce learning and to encourage children to think for themselves.

Staff are well aware of children's ability and progress and use this information when questioning and supporting individual children. Children's achievements are recorded in their "Playing to Learn/Learning to Play" booklets. These records of achievement accompany the children when they move to the next phase of their education. Overall, however, assessment is not used constructively in that future activities are not planned to meet children's needs and interests. The next steps in children's learning are not identified resulting in lack of challenge, particularly for the more able.

Parents reported that they were aware of their children's progress through regular discussion with the staff.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Day-to-day activities foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect for each other. Children have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and act accordingly. Many children show initiative such as when helping staff clear away. In their play they show that they are able to share with others. Practically all children understand the playgroup's expectations in terms of behaviour and are well adapted to living as a community.

Specialist services are well used to support children's development. The effective links established with professional services are well directed at supporting children with particular needs. Children suspected of having additional learning needs are closely monitored and help arranged as required. Staff are responsive to parental concerns and react quickly so enabling such children to receive support with the minimum of delay. The local authority advisory teacher for additional learning needs with specialism for children in the Foundation Phase has provided invaluable support. Individual Play Plans (otherwise known as Individual Educational Plans) have been prepared and so providing the necessary basis for dealing with such children. Such plans clearly focus on issues of concern, targets and identify the way forward. Parents are involved at each stage. This is an example of good practice. Playgroup practitioners also administer the necessary medicine where this is necessary. The setting provides quality support for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Children are well cared for by staff who show a notable degree of affection for these young children. Staff have received recent

training in child protection and know their responsibilities. Policies and procedures are in place. The setting promotes safe practice.

The settings provision for safeguarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting has established an ethos that is fully inclusive and is sensitive to children's needs. All children are respected as individuals and in turn they respect both each other and adults working in the playgroup. All children have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum. Adults and children show a tolerant attitude and this ensures freedom from all kinds of harassment and oppressive behaviour. Policies and procedures are in place to minimise the possible recurrence of any form of discrimination. The playgroup is well designed to accommodate any child with any form of physical disability. Children benefit from equal opportunities.

There are sufficient practitioners with relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children. The accommodation is well appointed and ideal for accommodating the playgroup. It is part of the primary school and benefits from using their resources. The setting and grounds are secure. Overall, however, resources are rather sparse in terms of meeting the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Activities are not sufficiently differentiated to challenge all children and provide them with sufficient variety so as to extend their thinking processes. The pace of sessions also tends to be rather slow.

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

Staff work together well; they know their roles and responsibilities and complement each other. In the main, the sense of purpose evident in the playgroup is designed to ensure children's wellbeing and this is accomplished in practice. Practitioners share this aim and are responsive to children's basic needs. Children are well managed using positive behaviour strategies and there are effective links with parents. However, whilst children are well cared for, insufficient attention has been directed at improving the education provision for the children. Planning has not identified the educational goals and overall challenging targets have not been identified. The specific educational needs of the children have not been clearly identified neither as a consequence are the next steps in individual children's learning been identified. Educational expectations and targets are identified for the few children with additional learning needs but not for the substantial majority of the children.

Parents, in discussion, said that they were aware of what the children had done during the day but were rather vague as to what they could do to support their children's learning.

There is no management committee. The two leaders are responsible for the running of the playgroup on behalf of the Local Authority.

The playgroup meets national and local priorities such as implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum and pursuing Healthy School initiatives.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The use of self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for improvement is at an early stage of development. In its present form it identifies what the playgroup achieved and categorised under the heading in the Estyn "Guidance for the Inspection of a non-maintained setting". However, there is no attempt to prioritise areas for improvement nor is there mention of strategies to be implemented to bring about improvement. Self-evaluation does not lead to development plans, targets or time scales for improvement. Parents are not involved.

Whilst the Local Authority support teacher has consistently provided guidance for improvement this has not been effectively implemented.

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners have established a good relationship with parents and carers. Parents stay with their children to settle them down when bringing their children to the playgroup if necessary and staff welcome the children affectionately. Staff are always available to meet and talk with parents and this is very much appreciated. Parents, in discussion, stated that they were very happy with the playgroup and appreciated the regular contact with staff.

The playgroup enjoys the benefit of being an integral part of the school building. Children feel part of the school and this facilitates the transfer of the children to the next phase of their education. Children have opportunities to meet the Nursery teacher and children's record books are made available to the school.

The Local Authority, through its staff has provided the playgroup with good quality advice and help. Such advice, in terms of planning, resourcing and assessing quality is yet to be fully implemented.

Resource management: Adequate

The setting benefits from occupying a purpose built teaching room within this newly erected school. Children have immediate access to the outside play area and can make use of the school facilities when not being used. Resources available to the

children are focused on the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum. However, the limited range of practical resources does not sufficiently motivate and challenge the children. The setting has not planned for future resource needs.

Staff work well together for the benefit of the children and successfully provide an environment that the children enjoy. The outdoor area provides opportunities for children to extend their skills, notably their physical and social development.

The setting provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Response to parents questionnaire

A total of 16 replies were received. All were very supportive of the Playgroup. All strongly agreed that their child likes the setting. Further analysis of the replies are summarised below:

Respondents were asked to reply to statements in terms of “strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or don’t know”.

All strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements.

Overall I am satisfied with the setting

My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.

My child is making good progress at the setting.

Children behave well in the setting.

Teaching is good.

Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.

My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.

My child is safe at the setting.

My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.

I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.

My child is well prepared for moving on to school.

The setting is well run.

A small number of parents/carers disagreed with the statement.

I am kept well informed about my child’s progress.

Half the respondents also added comments on their responses. All were highly complimentary of the staff and what they provide in terms of experiences for the children. Many responded with very complimentary comments about the staff, including their support and approachability. Many also reported on the progress their child had made at the playgroup.

Responses to discussions with learners

Children enjoy their time at the Playgroup. They are eager to be involved in all activities and play contentedly with their friends. In discussion, they said that they looked forward to meeting their friends and enjoyed the outside play in particular.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R Morgan	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

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 partnership's 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>

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.