



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

**Gwenfro Playgroup
Gwenfro Primary School
Queensway
Wrexham
LL13 8UW**

Date of inspection: May 2013

by

Anne Manning

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

Gwenfro Playgroup is located in Wrexham next to the primary school. This English-medium playgroup is managed by a committee and the general day to day running is carried out by a team of practitioners.

There were 20 funded 3-year-old children on the first inspection afternoon and six present on the second. The early education session is held in the afternoon and the morning session is for the children who attend the Flying Start provision. Nearly all children attending the setting are from the local area and come from disadvantaged social backgrounds. Nearly all children are from a white British background and a few children have additional help for their learning.

Gwenfro Playgroup receives support from Wrexham Early Education and is a member of Wales Pre-school Providers Association.

The setting is open during term time and is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide care for up to 24 children who attend a varying number of sessions.

The last CSSIW inspection was in April 2013 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

Summary

The Setting's current performance	Excellent
The Setting's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is excellent because:

- teaching is excellent;
- care, support and guidance are excellent;
- children make outstanding progress from their starting points;
- learning experiences are highly challenging, varied and interesting; and
- a high level of technology supports the children's learning.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- there is highly effective leadership, making this an exemplar setting;
- self-evaluation is outstanding and identifies areas for development;
- partnership working with other agencies is highly effective;
- practitioners reflect superbly on their own practice and make changes; and
- the setting has made outstandingly good progress since the last inspection.

Recommendations

R1. Further extend planning to include the children's own ideas.

R2. Develop snack time to include re-cycling and extend the responsibilities of the children.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

All children attain excellent standards and make outstanding progress from their starting points towards the Foundation Phase outcomes in all areas of learning. All children stay on task very effectively and all achieve exceptionally well in activities that strengthen and develop their learning.

All children are highly successful in concentrating and persevering with activities and all are constantly engaged and always working at full capacity.

Nearly all children are very confident to talk to adults including visitors to the setting. They share their exciting ideas and discuss their play. They all make themselves understood and carry out complex instructions to a high level. All children show great interest in books and stories and follow the content very enthusiastically making their own observations. All mark make highly successfully and all understand the functions of writing.

Nearly all children are highly confident learners who use a range of materials to solve problems and use mathematical language in an appropriate context. All children are successful, independent learners who use a variety of technology well including computers as part of their play. They have opportunities to control battery operated toys and they use buttons and switches highly effectively to activate equipment.

The majority of children use simple Welsh words and phrases very successfully. They all understand instructions and an impressive range of words. All join in enthusiastically to a high level with songs and stories that effectively develop their

Welsh vocabulary. The setting promotes the Welsh language well and as a result children make exceptionally good progress.

Wellbeing: Good

All children are happy and feel safe in the setting. All children are developing a good understanding of how they can be healthy. They eat the fruit and vegetables they have grown. All are effectively developing a positive attitude to learning and show a good interest in their work. All children settle well and quickly to the activities and are very keen to engage in tasks.

Nearly all children demonstrate exceptionally good behaviour and have successful relationships with each other and adults around them. Many children are kind and considerate and courteous towards each other. Nearly all children co-operate and complete tasks well and work together effectively. They readily share and take turns with equipment. Children are highly confident and are involved in making decisions about their learning and choices in the playgroup.

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

Although practitioners plan together a good range of interesting activities that provide a challenge for the children and successfully take into account their differing learning needs, there is insufficient use made of the children's own ideas to develop and initiate topics of interest.

There are very good opportunities for the children to mark make and to recognise their names. Numeracy skills develop effectively through a consistently good range of activities.

Learning experiences provide occasions for taking turns and sharing, for example when using tools to find worms. Effective opportunities enable children to discover how Information Communication Technology works, including managing remote control toys and a computer successfully as part of their topic.

The range of activities develops respect and tolerance for people from all cultural backgrounds. Activities are focused well and the children have good opportunities to try things for themselves and develop their play and as a result children acquire very good thinking skills across all areas of learning. Although learning experiences encourage children to become confident and independent learners, a few opportunities are missed for the children to refine their skills and extend their responsibilities, for example during snack time by washing their own cups and plates.

Children learn successfully about caring for living things through a range of different activities, for example the Grow with Me project and visits to the zoo.

There are very good opportunities for the children to hear and use the Welsh language. Festivals and traditions are celebrated successfully including St David's Day.

Children learn about re-cycling through their model making, but opportunities to develop this learning are missed, for example during snack time.

Teaching: Excellent

Questioning techniques are outstanding in extending the learning and achievements of the children and as a result they develop skills well above expectation. All practitioners very successfully progress the children's learning.

All practitioners are exceptionally well briefed each day and have extensive knowledge of the Foundation Phase and child development. Practitioners are very well deployed and make highly imaginative use of resources to keep the children's interest and focus on task. The organisation of snack time is outstanding and children are allocated to a member of staff and a particular table and as a result children settle very quickly and easily. Practitioners use this time highly effectively for learning with a small group.

Activities and learning experiences both indoor and outdoor provide highly effective challenge and through the superb creative use of resources, good relationships and humour, practitioners enable the children to learn very quickly. There are very high expectations of the children and because all practitioners know the children well they are aware of what to do to encourage them to improve. As a result of introducing cameras, a computer and remote control toys, children are confident to use this technology independently to develop their own learning.

All practitioners understand how children learn and are very clear about the development opportunities and expected outcomes from each activity. Activities are evaluated comprehensively and practitioners note the children's achievements and their next steps for learning.

All practitioners intervene appropriately to develop and extend the children's play. They introduce new ideas or problems to solve and all provide very effective feedback. All are highly motivated and enthusiastic about the children's achievements.

All practitioners constantly review and evaluate their practice and the progress of the children during the session. This is highly effective and as a result they continually adapt or change an activity to extend individual achievement or provide a different level of skill or way of working to successfully meet the developing needs of the children.

Practitioners successfully provide good opportunities for children to hear and to use the Welsh language.

Practitioners carry out useful observations of the children that very effectively inform assessment records and they note when children need more skill development, but these do not always include a written review of progress. Parents are involved extensively in the achievements of their children and they are actively aware of their progress.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The playgroup provides an excellent level of care support and guidance for the children. The setting is a very happy community in which children and adults respect and appreciate each other's contributions. There are very good transition arrangements to the school and the playgroup has a range of policies and procedures that highly effectively support the children and promote successfully their health and wellbeing including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

There are effective policies and procedures in respect of keeping children safe and child protection and the practitioners have undertaken training. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

Challenging and interesting learning experiences ensure that all children actively learn about sharing and taking turns. The children know how to distinguish right from wrong very successfully and the playgroup fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect and develops an effective understanding of living with others.

Children have good opportunities to take responsibility such as being Helpwr Heddiw. They show very high levels of initiative and help each other by working effectively together, for example when tidying up.

The children very successfully develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world in which they live by celebrating different nationalities, taking care of plants, using technology and observing wildlife and birds that visit their garden.

The playgroup draws upon external professional expertise effectively to support individuals. Practitioners know the children extremely well and as a result of attending the Flying Start provision they are able to provide excellent consistency of care and outcomes. Highly successful strategies and arrangements are in place to assist children with learning needs and they work very successfully with parents and a range of other professionals. There are excellent and on going levels of additional support for children and as a result children achieve beyond expectation and their families are well guided, supported and there are highly effective links with their homes.

Learning environment: Good

The four practitioners, have exceptional knowledge of child development and the Foundation Phase requirements. The group has developed successfully an inclusive setting that values the diversity of background of the children.

The playgroup has the sole use of a large room and a smaller soft play room used for physical play and circle time. Practitioners set out the areas indoors and outdoors consistently well every day for the children's play and learning. All children are very confident learners who are keen to develop their play by accessing resources independently and choosing whether to play indoors or out.

A range of policies and procedures underpins very effectively the running of the group and successfully promotes the wellbeing of the children.

Resources are extensive of high quality and used very creatively to address the Foundation Phase curriculum and well matched to the needs of the children. All children are kept safe and accommodation is secure. Indoors and outdoors are used effectively to develop play and learning and the local environment is used well to enhance the facilities at the setting.

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

Leaders have an outstanding understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are kept well informed and as a result the setting is managed to a very high standard. Values, aims and objectives are effectively shared through day-to-day working practice and meetings for the benefit of the children.

Leaders highly effectively create a positive ethos; there is a sense of purpose and a need to make improvements to enhance the provision for the children.

Learning and teaching are exceptionally well managed in the setting and as a result this group are used as an exemplar to other groups by the local authority. The high levels of expertise and knowledge have resulted in the practitioners of this playgroup advising in the setting up of another group in the school.

Practitioners and children are highly valued and were all observed to be very enthusiastic and highly motivated. Practitioners receive regular advice and support from the local authority teacher and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association and this has very positive gains for the children.

The committee supports the playgroup very effectively and leaders respond exceptionally quickly to any advice and guidance and ensure that any changes impact positively on the provision. Regular appraisals, supervision and an exceptionally strong culture of self-reflection develop the setting and lead to very successful improvements in knowledge and practice.

Leaders set challenging targets and relevant legislation, guidance and national and local priorities are taken into account and used well to improve the well being of the children, for example healthy eating, Designed to Smile and Grow with Me.

There are well established links with parents that support consistently the learning of the children, for example the book lending scheme and Welsh notice board.

There are very high expectations and highly effective relationships with children and their families. High quality leadership contributes very significantly to the well being and outstanding levels of progress and achievements of the children.

Improving quality: Excellent

The setting has made outstandingly good progress since their previous Estyn inspection. Action plans are highly effective and as a result all the recommendations have been met well. All practitioners are involved in an exceptional self-evaluation that effectively identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Information is used highly successfully to prioritise areas for development.

All changes and developments in the group have the children at the centre of the provision and practitioners ensure that improvements are used highly effectively to improve the provision, for example the outdoor area. Practitioners constantly review their practice during the session and make highly successful adaptations to the activities and resources and as a result this ensures flexibility and positive gains for the children in their learning.

Practitioners attend a range of courses and ensure their knowledge is current. All practitioners share their practice for the benefit of the children and the successful development of the setting. Practitioners are able to show effective changes in their work practice, improvements in standards of achievement and progress of the children. All are very open to developments and identify new ways of working.

The setting is used as an exemplar for other settings by the local authority. Practitioners from the group have delivered presentations to other groups including Estyn, the local authority teachers and Flying Start on their practice. Their experience and quality of provision are highly valued and they are involved with Flying Start to develop a new service that will benefit local families.

Partnership working: Good

Children benefit from trust and clear communication between all parties. There is an effective working relationship with the local authority teacher who visits the setting, providing support and guidance. Any suggestions are very quickly acted upon and impact positively on the progress and achievements of the children.

There is a good relationship with the parents of the children and feedback is encouraged to ensure consistently good links between home and playgroup are maintained. The Welsh language is encouraged with a Welsh word of the week. Photographs show what the children have been doing in the playgroup

There is an effective developing working relationship with the local school with joint projects and as a result children experience an easy transition from playgroup. A good level of information is passed on particularly when the children visit the school and the nursery teacher comes to the playgroup.

The playgroup is an active member of the Wales Pre-school Providers Association and partnership working with other professionals ensures active support for any children with additional learning needs.

There are good links with the local community and a range of visitors have been into the setting to extend the knowledge and understanding of the children.

The practitioners undertake training and share their excellent practice with colleagues and as a result standards of achievement are raised.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup is exceptionally well resourced, spacious with a secure outdoor area that enables children to learn effectively. There are sufficient experienced practitioners to meet the needs of the children and they work together well to ensure appropriate support to create a happy, safe and stimulating environment both indoors and out.

All practitioners are well prepared before the start of the session, then well deployed and move effectively round the areas of learning to successfully develop ideas and encourage the children.

Self-evaluation links highly effectively to future resource needs and equipment purchases are prioritised well and successfully take into account the developing needs of the children. Resources of exceptional quality are managed well to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum and used effectively to support the achievement of the children.

Practitioners use a range of resources well to motivate the children to learn effectively. Outdoors is used successfully and very effectively to promote the Foundation Phase outcomes.

Leaders have a strong understanding of budget matters and ensure that any extra resources and equipment benefit the children and improve standards. Spending is prioritised well to develop the provision. Leaders evaluate financial decisions effectively to ensure a positive, direct impact on the children's well being and progress.

Funding links effectively to improvements and the playgroup provides consistently good value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

Parents are very happy with the service offered.

They value the provision and the staff.

They confirmed that they are involved in the learning of their children and well supported.

Responses to discussions with children

Children are happy and feel safe at the playgroup. They are highly confident learners with well developed thinking skills. They enjoy coming to the group and finding out particularly outdoors in the garden and growing plants. They settle very quickly and like all the staff and the activities, many enjoy the soft play room and computers.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Anne 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.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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.