



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

**Hawkesbury Playgroup
Community Centre
Mill Lane
Buckley
Flintshire
CH7 3HA**

Date of inspection: November 2012

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

Hawkesbury Playgroup is located in the small town of Buckley near Mold in North Wales. The medium-sized playgroup is managed by a voluntary committee and the general day to day running is carried out by a supervisor, who is also the registered person for the group, and practitioners.

The playgroup is based in the Community Centre and because the accommodation is shared by other members of the community this means that the practitioners have to set out and clear away the equipment before and after each session. There is an entrance hall outside the room that has information for parents to view when they drop off or collect their children and a large room divided into areas for play. There is no outside area.

The playgroup operates every morning during term time from 9.15 to 11.15 and two afternoons, Monday and Thursday, from 12.30 to 2.30. Hawkesbury Playgroup is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide sessional care and the children attending the playgroup are aged between two and a half and part time school age. The last Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspection was in July 2012 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

There are five practitioners working in the playgroup, four of whom are qualified to levels 2 and 3. There were seven children present aged three for the first inspection morning but only four present for the second visit. None of the children are eligible for funding during this autumn term.

The playgroup is English speaking, providing care and education for children from families for whom all this is their first language. Ethnicity is all White British and no child had additional needs.

The playgroup has an equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children. Nearly all children attending the playgroup are from the town and are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds.

The playgroup is a member of the Wales Pre-School Provider Association and receives support from Flintshire local authority.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is adequate because:

Care support and guidance are good.

Nearly all learning experiences are adult directed and do not provide sufficient challenge.

The Foundation Phase ethos is not fully embedded in the provision.

The provision includes good opportunities to develop literacy skills.

The setting does not make use of outdoors to extend the learning of the children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate because:

Self evaluation is in the early stages.

There is a good working relationship with the early education teacher.

Progress since the last inspection is adequate.

Relationships between children, parents, carers and practitioners are good and contribute to the well being of the children.

Recommendations

R1. Utilise the local community and make use of outdoors to develop and extend the learning experiences of the children.

R2. Limit adult direction to enable children to become more independent learners and provide more challenge.

R3. For practitioners to visit exemplar settings in order to extend their professional development.

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?

N/A

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

Learning experiences effectively encourage relationships with others and enable the children to show respect and tolerance for people from all cultural backgrounds. Although activities support working together, for example, when tidying up, experiences do not always provide sufficient challenge for the more able children or opportunities for them to develop thinking skills. Learning experiences successfully develop literacy skills and all children have good opportunities to look at and handle a variety of books. Good mark making opportunities ensure many children actively use a range of techniques and a few children take pads and pencils into different areas of play, often mirroring adults around them.

Planning engages the majority of children and although evaluated does not always reflect individual learning needs. Learning experiences support the development of physical skills, creative skills and Information Communication Technology and enable the majority to progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes. Nearly all children are confident to talk about what they are doing especially when painting or playing in the kitchen area.

Although learning experiences do not take the children out of their indoor environment, practitioners 'bring the outside in', for example, a tray of snow and planting flowers that actively provide outside experiences indoors. All children successfully learn about living things by caring for the flowers they have grown and through visitors bringing in their pets.

All children are effectively encouraged to use Welsh particularly during circle time when they answer the register in Welsh, when playing with Ticw the Welsh bear and listening to stories. All children learn about the traditions of Wales and celebrate Welsh festivals.

Environmental projects such as re-cycling and opportunities for the children to learn about sustainability are in the early stages.

Teaching: Adequate

Nearly all practitioners are qualified, have adequate knowledge of the Foundation Phase outcomes and undertaken training, however the ethos is not yet fully embedded. All children have choice of activity, but this is limited to the resources that are set out and chosen by the practitioners before the children arrive in the setting.

A few activities provide challenge and meet the learning needs of the children but nearly all are adult directed and there are insufficient opportunities for the children to become independent learners and develop their own play.

The teaching style and approach provides too few opportunities for the children to explore and think for themselves. All practitioners are good language models and nearly all intervene appropriately in children's play to move the learning forward. A few learning opportunities are missed, for example, the children are not involved in the preparation of snack.

All practitioners are effectively deployed and are briefed about what they are expected to do. All practitioners effectively manage behaviour and are good role models for the children. They give good explanations and helpful feedback to encourage the children to improve.

All children are observed during every session and the notes made are recorded in their assessment booklets 'This is Me'. Skills that children need to develop are not always noted and assessment information is in the early stages of informing planning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are an effective range of policies and procedures to support the wellbeing of the children. There is provision for the children to exercise and develop physical skills indoors and they are provided with a healthy snack. Children are starting to understand simple rules, for example, sharing and taking turns. They are beginning to form relationships with each other and with adults around them. There are good opportunities for the children to learn about honesty, fairness and respect. The practitioners encourage the children to distinguish right from wrong.

Learning experiences promote children's personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are happy and secure with the adults around them and they are confident to ask for support.

Any additional learning needs are taken into account and the playgroup has re arranged activities in order to support a child and offer one to one support if required. A member of staff has undertaken a sign language course in order to communicate more effectively. Although no children have additional needs, the setting works with other agencies to support both the children and their families.

All the children know the playgroup routines well and enjoy coming to the setting. They were observed to be relaxed, happy and well cared for.

The playgroup has effective procedures in place in respect of safeguarding and a policy that reflects the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. Most of the practitioners have completed child protection training and the supervisor has responsibility for dealing with any issues.

Learning environment: Adequate

All children are provided with equality of opportunity and all have access to the provision offered. The setting is inclusive and values the diversity of background of the children and creates a relaxed atmosphere where the children are happy in the playgroup.

A well understood range of policies and procedures ensures that children are kept safe and well supported. The room is well set out by practitioners into areas of learning, but the children do not have sufficient opportunities to help themselves to resources.

There are sufficient, experienced practitioners with appropriate qualifications working with the children. The resources and indoor accommodation are suitable but there is no use made of the outdoors or the local environment to develop and extend the learning of the children and develop their experiences.

The premises are shared and the practitioners effectively put out and clear away the equipment before and after every session. There is limited space but the area available is not used to best effect to display the work and achievements of the children.

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

The playgroup is led by a voluntary committee and a paid member of staff who supports the role of the committee. The management committee are aware of their roles but are not always sufficiently informed about the performance of the setting.

The majority of practitioners have had appraisals to support them in their work in the playgroup and improve their practice. There is a lack of strategic thinking from the leaders that is insufficiently focussed on improving learning. Leaders are not always involved in local priorities such as re-cycling but do however take account of the national healthy eating initiative.

There is a sense of purpose however in the playgroup that focuses on the needs of the children. Relationships between children, parents, carers and practitioners are good and contribute to the well being of the children. Practitioners have a focus on achieving progress towards the priorities in the setting.

Improving quality: Adequate

The playgroup has made adequate progress since the last inspection. Although quality review and self evaluation are still in the early stages, this results in positive gains for the children and the playgroup uses this information effectively to identify areas of strength and weakness. The playgroup prioritises areas for improvement and implements strategies for improvement.

All practitioners attend courses put on by the local authority and meet with colleagues whilst training, but there are insufficient opportunities for them to visit other settings and effectively develop their practice.

Partnership working: Adequate

There is a good relationship with the early education teacher who provides advice and guidance to the group. This partnership is purposeful and beneficial.

The setting provides placements for students and pupils on work experience. There are good links with the local primary school and transition arrangements are good. The playgroup works successfully in partnership with parents to improve the learning and well being of the children, however there are insufficient links with the community to extend the learning and experiences of the children.

The playgroup works in partnership with Wales Pre-School Providers Association who provides effective support for children who have specialist needs.

There are opportunities for verbal feedback when parents drop off or collect their children. Notices are displayed for parents in the entrance and this ensures they are aware of how the setting runs.

Resource management: Adequate

Outdoors is not used sufficiently well and although resources are used indoors to develop skills across all areas of learning, these are not always creatively used to interest and encourage all children to learn.

All practitioners are deployed well including students on placement. They are involved in the management of resources and they make suggestions for new equipment that will benefit the children. Future resource needs are planned for and equipment from early education effectively supplements the playgroup's own.

Leaders have an appropriate understanding of budget matters but the impact of the resources on the teaching and learning is in the early stages. The setting provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. (This is because there were only a small number of relevant children at the time of the inspection.)

Responses to discussions with children

Children are happy and busy at the playgroup. They like all the staff and enjoy coming to the playgroup and playing.

Appendix 2

Anne Manning

Reporting Inspector

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.