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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Pili Pala Playgroup
Ysgol Rhewl
Rhuthun
Denbighshire
LL15 2TU**

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

Pili Pala Playgroup opened in November 2003 and shares a classroom and facilities with the under-fives in Ysgol Rhewl, near Rhuthin. The setting serves the village of Rhewl itself and the surrounding area, which it describes as being neither prosperous nor socially disadvantaged.

Children of all abilities and backgrounds are admitted to the setting. During the inspection, there no children were identified as having additional learning needs or were from a minority ethnic group. English is the main language spoken at home by all the children.

The setting is open for five afternoon sessions per week for three year-old children. Currently there are five children on the register two of whom are funded by the local authority.

A leader and one practitioner, all of whom are appropriately qualified to teach early years, support children's learning.

After leaving the setting, almost all the children transfer to Ysgol Rhewl.

The setting was inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in November 2012 and by Estyn during June 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

Current performance is good because:

- learning experiences successfully meet the needs and interests of children across the full ability range;
- systematic planning ensures that children acquire the necessary literacy, number and information communications technology skills;
- good teaching encourages children's engagement and enjoyment in learning;
- systematic assessment leads to more effective planning for children's future development;
- the quality of care, support and guidance is good; and
- the setting is an inclusive community.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leader has a clear vision and high expectations for the setting's development;
- recent developments have led to significant improvement in setting's work;
- staff work very closely as a team and share common values about learning;
- the management committee undertakes its responsibilities very conscientiously;
- practitioners are continuously self-evaluating and exploring ways to improve; and
- a good range of partnership activities makes a positive contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing.

Recommendations

R1 Establish a home corner that is specifically for the use of the setting's children.

R2 Ensure better progression between indoor and outdoor learning.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills 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?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Through effective collaboration with the Foundation Phase teacher, the setting provides a broad range of learning experiences which successfully meet the needs and interests of children across the full ability range. This enables every child to make good progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes. Stimulating and flexible activities promote children's engagement well and encourage them to play an active role in their learning. Systematic long term planning, ensures that as children progress through the Foundation Phase the curriculum builds systematically on current knowledge, understanding and skills.

The practical and open-ended nature of the learning experiences provides valuable opportunities for children to form positive relationships with each other and to nurture a sense of respect and tolerance towards others. Children are encouraged to take risks, to experiment with new experiences and to investigate their environment such as the nature area, confidently. This contributes well to their development as independent learners. Activities both in and outdoors, provide good opportunities for developing children's physical and creative skills and for raising their awareness of the natural world. However, the practice of planning separately for the indoor and outdoor environment leads to a lack of continuity in children's learning.

Through careful and systematic planning, the setting ensures that children acquire the necessary literacy, communication, number and information communications technology skills to enable them to take advantage of all their learning experiences. Challenging practical experiences, such as making sandwiches for their snack, provide children will good opportunities to develop their thinking skills and to devise different strategies for solving problems.

There is good provision for promoting the Welsh language. Children quite frequently hear the adults around them speaking Welsh and are encouraged to use the Welsh language as much as possible. Children's awareness of the traditions and the cultural celebrations of Wales is developed in a meaningful and interesting way.

Children are actively involved in the setting's aim to act sustainably through minimising waste, saving energy and recycling paper. Through role-play and celebrating occasions such as the Chinese New Year, children's understanding of the wider world is promoted appropriately.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and have high expectations for children's learning. The stimulating, challenging and exciting environment created encourages children's engagement, participation and enjoyment. Learning experiences are skilfully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including the more able and talented. Practitioners know when it is appropriate to intervene in children's learning and they do so sensitively and skilfully to encourage children to challenge themselves as they learn. A good balance is maintained between child-selected and practitioner directed activities. Imaginative use is made of a variety of resources to appeal to children's interest and improve learning. Clearly focused adult support makes a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.

Systematic observation and recording of children's learning, enables practitioners to keep a close eye on every child's progress and to plan more effectively for their future development. Should parents want to discuss their child's progress or wellbeing, practitioners are always accessible to them at the start and end of all sessions. At the end of their child's time in the setting, parents receive a photographic record of their child's progress in the seven areas of learning. This ensures they have current information about their child's achievements, wellbeing and development.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners take great care of children and ensure that the setting is a comfortable, homely and safe place for them to learn and play. Children are encouraged to look at the setting as a community where people learn to live together in harmony. Practitioners know the children well and provide clear guidance for them during sessions. Healthy eating habits, as well as hygienes, for example cleaning their teeth, and physical activity, are successfully promoted and well supported by parents.

During their daily involvement with children, practitioners strongly emphasise the need for everyone to be kind to each other, to be honest and fair and to behave in a responsible manner. This greatly helps the children to learn to differentiate between right and wrong. Regular opportunities for children to undertake responsibilities and to make their own decisions about their learning contribute well towards their personal and social development.

Effective induction arrangements help children to settle down quickly at the setting. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children satisfy the requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners have a good understanding of how to access professional help for children and parents. There are effective processes for the early identification of children with additional learning needs, so that and additional support can be provided for them if necessary.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community, where all children have equal access to all the areas of learning and activities provided for them. There is a strong emphasis on

developing tolerant attitudes and ensuring that children and staff are free from harassment. The setting has enough practitioners, who have sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating environment in which every child is able to take full advantage of learning experiences and to develop positive values and attitudes.

There is an ample supply of good quality resources, which enable practitioners to fulfil the requirements of the Foundation Phase successfully. Resources in the community such as the local park are used effectively by staff to support learning in the classroom.

The buildings and accommodation are of good quality and are accessible to all children and parents, including the disabled. The spacious classroom which the setting is able to share with the Foundation Phase class is provides a comfortable and stimulating environment for teaching and learning. However, the setting has not allocated itself a home corner where it can display books and materials that are of particular relevance to younger children.

The school grounds and particularly the outdoor learning areas are used very well to enrich children's learning experiences.

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

Leadership: Good

Recent developments have led to significant improvement in standards, provision and management. The leader has a clear vision for the setting's development. She conveys high expectations and supports and challenges everyone to do their best. The positive ethos, which permeates through the setting, ensures that children and staff feel appreciated. The leader and practitioner work very closely as a team, they have shared values about learning, behaviour and relationships and ensure the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase. Their willingness to act upon local authority advice and to undertake national priorities and new ventures, such as assessment for learning, is strength. Clear aims and policies have been established which concentrate on children's needs and are implemented conscientiously by all staff. The positive relationship with children, parents and the school staff contributes substantially towards creating a sense of community. There is an appropriate performance management system which helps staff to evaluate and improve their practice and to identify their professional needs.

The management committee undertakes its responsibilities very conscientiously despite the fact that it has few members. The committee shares Information with parents through newsletters and meetings and supports the leader in her work. Committee members ensure that any complaints are resolved immediately and that the setting complies with legal requirements.

Improving quality: Good

The leader knows the setting well and with local authority support has, within a short period, succeeded in establishing effective self-evaluation systems. Outcomes of formal local authority audits, together with the support teacher's advice, are used purposefully by the setting to identify good practice and to prioritise matters it wishes

to improve. Self-evaluation takes careful account of the views of parents and benefits substantially from the advice given by staff within the school.

Information from self-evaluation is used purposefully to prioritise the matters which the setting wishes to improve. The steps taken to improve standards and to address the recommendations of the local authority audit have led to positive outcomes.

The well-established culture of collaboration, together with the willingness of staff to undertake responsibilities, is enabling the setting to develop as a strong learning community. Practitioners are very open to new ideas and are willing to try out different ways of working and to share their knowledge with others within the setting and the school.

Partnership working: Good

A good range of partnership activities makes a positive contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing. There is an extremely productive partnership with Ysgol Rhewl with the setting benefitting substantially from the school's willingness to share its resources and expertise. A noteworthy feature is the active involvement of the school's headteacher, staff and the governing body in the setting's development. The close relationship between the setting and the school's Foundation Phase class ensure that children transfer seamlessly to full time education.

Parents receive regular information about all aspects of the setting's work with the leader taking advantage of every opportunity to include them in their children's learning. Practitioners work very well together, share information about children and know who to contact and when, if additional support is required for children. There are many useful links with a number of organisations in the local community. Regular visits, reports and professional advice by the local authority support teacher have a very positive impact on the setting's development.

Resource management: Good

The setting has an appropriate number of staff to teach all aspects of the curriculum. Members of staff are deployed effectively to make the best possible use of their time, expertise and experience. Resources are managed well.

The leader and the management committee have a thorough understanding of their budget and prioritise their spending in line with the setting's developmental needs. Financial decisions are carefully evaluated by the leader and the management committee to make sure that they have a positive effect on standards and children's progress and wellbeing. The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholders' satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on parental questionnaires as only a small number of responses were received.

Responses to discussions with children

Children say that they are happy in the setting and are confident to turn to any adult to ask for advice and support.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Wil Williams	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.