



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

**Rhayader Under 5's
Dolgerddan Hall
Dark Lane
Rhayader
Powys
LD6 5DA**

Date of inspection: September 2013

by

**Eifion R Morgan
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

Rhayader Under 5's playgroup is located in Dolgerddon Hall – a building of character situated in its own grounds, a short distance from the town centre of Rhayader. Dolgerddon Hall accommodates several organisations, including the Youth Club and adult-education classes. However, the Under 5's have sole use of three spacious adjacent rooms and enjoy access to the outside. The garden area is undergoing a major renovation by volunteers, (including parents), from the local community.

The Nursery is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 20 children.

Rhayader is a small market town in mid-Wales comprising mainly of local families. Its population is neither particularly disadvantaged nor socio-economically advantaged. A few children are from single parent homes, none are of an ethnic background and all are English speaking. No child speaks Welsh in this anglicized community. Very few children have been identified with additional learning needs. These children receive additional support as appropriate.

Children can attend the Nursery following their second birthday and are able to move to their next phase of their education in the term following their 3rd birthday, although some parents delay the transfer until later.

The Nursery welcomes children whatever their background or ability. Parents and carers bringing their children to the Nursery have access to a large hallway. A notice board provides parents and carers with useful information including the activities undertaken by their children. Access to the Nursery rooms is kept locked and no one can enter or leave unannounced. Children are accompanied to the toilet and also to the outside play areas. The Nursery is generously staffed with well qualified, experienced adults. Adults meet the children each morning and are available to converse with parents. Where necessary, parents stay awhile to settle their children.

The Nursery was previously inspected in 2012 by CSSIW and recommendations have been addressed. An Estyn inspection took place in 2008 and the subsequent development plan ensured that the recommendations were addressed. Since then a new leader has assumed responsibility and new staff appointed.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- the setting's nurturing ethos supports high standards of children's wellbeing;
- all children have good attitudes and are enthusiastic learners;
- all children are well behaved;
- all children make good progress and achieve well;
- all children have good communication skills, particularly their speaking and listening skills;
- relationships are good
- staff are caring and value children as individuals.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because;

- the leader has a clear vision for the future development of the setting which is shared by all staff and management committee;
- staff are receptive to change and have attended a good range of local authority courses;
- staff work well as a team, and reflect on professional training courses they have attended;
- the setting is well supported by the local authority and this provides them with ideas and confidence to develop;
- the setting has a very good track record of improvement.

Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1. review classroom organisation so as to provide children with access to a wider range of resources across the 7 areas of learning.

R2. encourage children to make choices and to become independent learners.

R3. continue to develop the outside play areas and if possible provide immediate access so to increase the range of choices available for children.

R4. improve links with the receiving primary school.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

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

All children achieve good standards and are making good progress relative to their age. All children are acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills that enable them to take part in activities that will develop their learning.

All children are developing good communication skills that enable them to express their ideas and feelings and to make themselves understood. They have particularly good speaking and listening skills. In circle time activities they listen to each other intently and show interest, such as when talking about their favourite farm animal. Children are interested in books and follow stories and enjoy mark-making.

All children enjoy counting and all do so to 20. Most children count independently, such as counting the number of children present, and use mathematical language. They have opportunities to use a computer and digital cameras. Toy cash registers give them an idea of money and its use. All children have opportunities to develop their creative ideas using paint. They enjoy role play and have good opportunities to develop their physical skills.

All children are making progress in their Welsh language development, relative to their initial knowledge and understanding of the language. All children answer to their name during registration and count fluently in Welsh to 10. They enjoy Welsh songs, particularly action songs. Children enjoy Welsh stories and follow stories in their story books.

Wellbeing: Good

All children behave well and relate well to each other and to adults. They respond quickly to suggestions and instructions. Children are happy to come to the Nursery in the morning, greet each other and staff and are soon actively involved in activities set out for them. Children are considerate and friendly.

All children have a positive attitude to learning as was observed during circle time. Children listen intently to each other and respond sensibly. Activities tend to be adult led and consequently children have too little opportunities to work independently. They accept responsibility, such as helping during snack time.

Overall, the provision made to ensure children's participation and enjoyment in learning contributes substantially to the good outcomes apparent in the setting.

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

Planning is done collaboratively with staff assuming responsibility for different aspects of the curriculum. Children's interests are fully taken into account and this ensures that the chosen topic engages the children. Planning is flexible and is well focused on ensuring children progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. Weekly planning encompasses the 7 areas of learning and builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. It also successfully takes into account children's prior achievement and caters for the more able children.

The taught curriculum is successful in developing good relationships in the class with children showing respect for each other's needs. Activities tend to be adult led and whilst adults encourage children's thinking skills through relevant questioning, there are insufficient opportunities for children to become independent learners.

Good use is made of the rich local environment enabling children to have a good understanding of the world in which they live. In this rural community children understand that living things need to be treated with care.

All children are acquiring their basic key skills and in particular their communication skills of speaking and listening. They have access to ICT equipment. Overall, skill development is well co-ordinated and planned for and this ensures coherence in children's experiences across the curriculum.

Planning incorporates opportunities for children to develop their competence in the Welsh language and an understanding of the cultures of Wales. Welsh is planned to be used incidentally, such as during registration and circle time and more formally for small group activities, such as story time.

The setting celebrates St. David's day by dressing appropriately, sampling goods, such as Welsh cakes and drawing representative of Welsh emblems, such as daffodils

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are well qualified and experienced and have an up-to-date knowledge of child development. Their experience includes teaching young children and of child supervision. Staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and its philosophy. All have high expectations of children, both in terms of their academic and personal development and these aspirations are realised in practice.

Staff understand the importance for children to learn through play and provide sufficient and varied opportunities for them. However, activities tend to be practitioner or adult directed with insufficient opportunities for child selected activities. The range of activities available in some of the fields of learning is also limited. Overall, this reduces the opportunities for children to make choices and to develop their independent learning skills.

Children are well managed resulting in a calm, supportive environment. Questioning is well used to challenge children and adults are good language models. Children benefit from a stimulating and exciting environment where all children are actively involved, showing their enjoyment in learning.

Children are assessed regularly and comprehensively. All staff are involved, noting children's achievements during the sessions. Records of children's achievements are detailed and are a good measure of children's progress.

A particularly good feature is the use of the outcomes of assessment when planning future activities. The "key worker" system helps to identify individual needs and these are carefully planned for. This ensures that children's needs are addressed, any weaknesses supported and the more able suitably challenged. Parents are made aware through notes on the notice board of activities undertaken in the session. Details of what parents can do to help with their child's progress are not included.

Care, support and guidance: Good

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

Day-to-day activities help to develop children's self-confidence and children know they are well cared for. Staff are sensitive to children's needs and overall children are very well supported. This impacts well on standards children achieve and on their wellbeing. The interaction between adults and children fosters values such as respect for each other, sharing and the ability to work collaboratively. Children are well aware of the code of behaviour expected of them and know the difference between right and wrong. Opportunities to take responsibility and to work independently are more limited.

Visits to the locality and the rich local environment help to develop children's curiosity, an appreciation of the world in which they live and the people that help them. Children relate well to each other, displaying a caring attitude and are happy to share and play with each other. Children's cultural development includes celebration of St. David's day. The setting is effective in helping the children achieve their emotional and physical health and wellbeing. The recently introduced grouping of the 3 year olds for 3 mornings a week is effective in that it enables these children to be well supported and to receive a broad and balanced curriculum at their level of understanding. Children benefit through having healthy snacks, sufficient exercise and a safe working environment.

The building is secure and no person can enter or leave unannounced. Whenever children go outside they are supervised and the setting has undertaken the appropriate risk assessment. The setting leader is the responsible person dealing with child protection and she and her assistants have attended relevant child protection courses recently. All adults are aware of the necessary procedures should cause arise. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008) and the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Good arrangements are in place to support children with additional learning needs. Currently one child, identified with some speech and language problems, attends on one morning a week and has 1:1 support. Parents have been consulted and are actively involved in any decisions made.

The setting conducts regular reviews of children's progress and parents are kept informed. Parents are also made aware of the daily activities undertaken by their children.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a warm, friendly, nurturing ethos that fully supports children and is appreciative of their individual needs and expectations. Staff greet each child to the morning session and whilst practically all are happy to attend, staff show affection and understanding to any child that is somewhat fretful.

All children have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and all are encouraged to take a full part in all activities. Adults respect each child as an individual and as a consequence children respect each other.

Children have a tolerant attitude and are free from any form of oppressive behaviour. Children with any form of disability are fully integrated into all activities.

There have been no instances of complaint; the Estyn questionnaires and the setting's annual questionnaire indicate that parents are fully supportive of the work of the setting.

The setting is generously staffed with appropriately qualified and experienced individuals. Resources are adequate and suitable to meet the needs of the children and the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

The staff, parents, individuals and organisations from the community have been actively involved recently in developing the setting. Recent redecorations have produced a well-lit, attractive internal environment and renovations are in place to develop a play area for the children. Whilst incomplete at present, the setting has plans in place and work is continuing to improve the facilities for the children. However, whilst the local environment is well used to extend children's experiences, children do not have immediate and free access to the outside. This limits the degree of choice available to them.

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

The Nursery leader has a clear vision for the future of the setting and provides strategic direction for the future development of the Nursery. Due to illness she has only effectively been in post since the latter months of 2012 and since then she has enjoyed the full support of her staff who feel valued and an integral part of the development. Currently a sense of purpose is evident, well focused on promoting

and sustaining improvement. Staff share common values and norms about learning, behaviour and personal relationships. Staff know their roles and fully accept their responsibilities and have been active in developing the facilities. Parents, the community and local organisations have, and continue to be involved and the leader has been an effective force in co-ordinating change. This is an outstanding example of what can be achieved within a community. The leader with her staff's support have successfully co-ordinated these improvements.

Overall, developments have focused on children's needs and in providing the best possible provision for the children. Outcomes are evaluated and developments monitored and the management committee kept fully informed.

The high expectations evident are well on the way to being achieved and this augers well for the future, particularly since the staff are well aware of what needs to be done.

There is regular staff appraisal so as to identify needs and professional training required. Staff attend local authority training courses and such courses have been effective in providing ideas to improve the provision with the subsequent and noticeable improvement in children's achievement. The setting has successfully implemented national initiatives such as the Foundation Phase curriculum and local priorities including Healthy Eating and outdoor learning.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has developed a strong culture of self-evaluation. This has provided the leader with an accurate picture of the setting's strengths and areas for development. Much has been achieved and the work is time-tabled to continue. Improvements are well focused on improving the provision for the children.

On-going improvements have involved parents, staff, the community and local organisations and have been well co-ordinated. Such improvements are planned to continue. The management committee is actively involved and fully supportive. Funding has been sought, obtained and well used.

Overall, the improvements have had a positive effect and have resulted in improvements in children's standards of achievement. However, this is an evolving process and the setting recognises that more opportunities need to be made available to develop children's individual learning skills, both inside and outside the classroom.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has established good and effective links with parents. Initially parents can view the setting before deciding if their child will attend. There is a useful and informative starter pack providing administrative details and references to policies and procedures. The setting has an open door policy and parents can remain with their children as long as necessary to avoid them becoming stressed. In reality the welcoming and affectionate attitude of the Nursery staff is very effective in settling the children. Parents are appreciative of the staff and a good trusting relationship exists.

Overall, parents have a high degree of satisfaction with the Nursery and what it offers.

Links with the receiving primary school are underdeveloped.

Staff make good use of the local authority services and have attended a variety of worthwhile courses. Such courses have had a beneficial effect on provision and raising standards. Good links are in place with the local authority advisory teacher and the setting has benefited from her advice and support.

Worthwhile links have been established with the community and local employers. The parents, management committee, community and local organisations have financed and undertaken the work to develop the outside provision and this is planned to continue. Overall, the contribution of these individuals and organisations has had a significant impact on the provision and children's progress.

Resource management: Good

The leader planned and continues to carry out strategies to manage the setting efficiently and effectively. This has contributed very substantially to the development of a good learning community and to achieving collaboration of all staff and involving the parents and community.

Training and the sharing of good practice has improved the quality of the provision and raised standards. Such improvements are supported by continuous professional development enabling staff to develop approaches to learning and teaching in line with the Foundation Phase philosophy. A good feature is that staff have experience of other settings in the locality. Staff also reflect on their own practice and evaluate the impact of professional training.

The setting is generously staffed and staff are well deployed making the best use of their time. Staff are fully involved in planning and consequently are well aware of their responsibilities.

Annual appraisal identifies the professional needs of individuals who often attend local authority courses in their own time. The local authority is active in providing relevant training courses and this has a good impact on raising standards.

The setting has endeavoured to provide the best standards of accommodation for the children. Much has been done by volunteer help and subsequently is very cost effective. The budget is carefully controlled; areas for development are prioritised and agreed by the management committee and resources allocated appropriately.

Overall, the setting is very effective in deploying its resources and provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Responses to discussions with children

Children enjoyed coming to the Nursery and meeting their friends. They particularly enjoyed the different activities set out for them.

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)

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.