



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

**Saltney Small Steps
Saltney Ferry Road
Satney Ferry
Nr Chester
Flintshire
CH4 0BN
United Kingdom**

Date of inspection: January 2014

by

**Wil Williams
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

Saltney Small Steps is a registered playgroup, which provides pre-school education for the children of Saltney Ferry and the surrounding area. The setting was established in 2012 and meets in Saltney Ferry Primary School where it has a classroom dedicated for its own use.

The setting admits children of all ability and background. Currently, very few children have additional learning needs and there is no child from minority ethnic groups or who use English as an additional language. English is the main language spoken at home by all the children.

Currently, there are 12 three-year-old children attending the setting, nearly all of whom receive funding from the local authority.

A qualified supervisor, two practitioners and one part-time supply practitioner support children's learning. The leader was appointed in September 2012.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in November 2013. This is its first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

Current performance is good because:

- nearly all children achieve good standards in literacy and numeracy and make realistic progress in their learning;
- children experiment and explore confidently and make good progress towards becoming independent learners;
- standards of behaviour are good and children are considerate and courteous;
- most children are challenged by exciting and interesting activities;
- provision for developing communication and numeracy skills is good;
- teaching and assessment is good;;
- children's health and wellbeing and the fostering of values such as honesty and respect for truth are promoted effectively; and
- the setting provides a safe and inclusive environment for all children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the quality of management and leadership is good;
- the supervisor has skilfully implemented and managed several improvements in the setting's practices;
- practitioners share the same values and expectations about learning, behaviour and improvements and undertake responsibilities very diligently;
- the setting is continuously self-evaluating and exploring ways to improve;
- productive partnerships with the primary school and parents benefit the setting substantially; and
- the setting provides good value for money.

Recommendations

- A1. Provide more challenging problem-solving activities for the more able children
- A2. Develop a more effective system for staff appraisal.
- A3. Provide more opportunities for children to develop their information communications technology skills.

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

Standards: Good

Bearing in mind their age and their starting point, nearly all children achieve good standards and make realistic progress in all areas of learning. Most recall previous learning well, develop good thinking and problem-solving skills and acquire new knowledge and skills with increasing confidence. Nearly all children work at full capacity and make a sustained effort to concentrate and persevere with tasks for extended periods. During free choice activities, nearly all children experiment and explore confidently, take risks and make good progress towards becoming independent learners.

Standards achieved in communication and literacy skills are good. Nearly all children have well developed speaking and listening skills. Most express their ideas confidently, for example, during role-play or when discussing the tasks at hand, and listen thoughtfully to the contributions of adults and to other children in the group. All children show a keen interest in books and enjoy their content, with or without an adult, handling them as a reader. Most enjoy experimenting with mark making and are beginning to understand some of the functions of writing, for example, for making lists.

Nearly all children join in enthusiastically with rote counting are part of the setting's daily routines, for example counting the number of children present, and use their numeracy skills confidently in day-to-day activities and in their play. Older children count up to five objects reliably. Nearly all record numbers by making marks or drawing pictures and understand the concept of 'one more'. In their play, nearly all children develop an appropriate awareness of the purpose of money. All children are beginning to use the appropriate mathematical language correctly in the different areas of provision.

Nearly all children are confident users of information communications technology (ICT), especially when playing with remote control toys. However, the lack of suitable equipment, such as computer programs, hinders children from acquiring a broader range of ICT skills.

All children have a positive attitude towards learning Welsh and are making good progress in their understanding of the language. All respond positively to basic instructions and understand more words than they can speak. During 'together time' children greet one another in Welsh and repeat some familiar words and phrases. All participate in action songs and rhymes enthusiastically.

Wellbeing: Good

All children show a good level of interest and motivation towards learning and say that they enjoy their time in the setting. Children have a close relationship with practitioners and trust their guidance. Every individual feels safe in the setting and free from physical and verbal abuse. The setting has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Standards of behaviour are good. Both in and around the setting, nearly all children are considerate and courteous towards each other and adults. During their engagement in specific activities or in tasks of their own choice, most children co-operate amenablely, demonstrating increasing levels of independence. All children very willingly undertake responsibilities such as putting equipment away at the end of sessions. As they mature, most learn to make more informed decisions about their learning and are beginning to think more critically about their learning experiences.

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

Thorough planning and clear learning objectives ensure that most children are challenged by exciting and interesting activities in all areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. In both the focus tasks and in the continuous provision, the activities provided engage the interest of nearly all children and encourage them to take risks and to become independent learners. Each theme builds systematically upon previous themes, which ensures there is progression and continuity in learning. Session in the outdoor area and activities such as observing ice blocks melt in water, are integrated skilfully into children's learning experiences and contribute substantially to their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, not enough problem-solving tasks activities are provided to challenge the substantial group of more able children.

Provision for developing children's communication and numeracy and thinking skills is coherent and of good quality. During 'together time', children are encouraged to share their feelings and ideas with their peers and to listen politely to the contributions of others. Children experience 'reading' a range of story and picture books and are encouraged to share a book with other children or adults. There is good emphasis on encouraging children to experiment with mark making and on beginning to understand the different functions of writing. Appropriate opportunities are provided for children to develop their ICT skills.

At the beginning of every session, children are encouraged to greet each other in Welsh and to join in singing a range of number songs and rhymes. There are appropriate opportunities for the more confident children to experiment with using Welsh during their tasks in the different learning areas. .

The traditions and celebrations of the cultures of Wales, particularly St. David's Day, feature annually in the setting's calendar of events Collecting for good causes and

supporting charities promote children's understanding of their place in the wider world appropriately.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and have high expectations for children's learning. They provide stimulating learning experiences across all nearly all areas of learning and use a good range of teaching strategies for ensuring the engagement, and interest of most children. Timely and purposeful intervention in learning encourages children to challenge themselves and to increase their knowledge and understanding. Intelligent use of both focus task and the continuous provision activities ensure there is a good balance between activities initiated by the child and those, which are under the direction of adults. Imaginative use is made of a variety of resources, both indoor and outdoor, to appeal to children's interest and improve learning. There is a clear focus to practitioners' support for individual and groups, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.

Recent developments have ensured that procedures for assessing and tracking children's learning across all seven areas of learning are thorough and effective. The recently established practice of using the outcomes of assessment to plan children's next steps in their learning is effective and has enabled practitioners to respond more effectively to the personal and educational needs of individual children. The setting ensures that parents are well-informed of their children's progress and know what they can do to help them improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing effectively and has appropriate policies and practices for ensuring that these aspects are part of its daily routines. Children are encouraged to eat healthy snacks and to partake in daily physical exercise. Effective induction arrangements ensure that nearly all children settle quickly into the setting. Practitioners help children to manage their feelings and to develop self-awareness and self-respect. The fostering of values such as honesty and respect for truth helps children to distinguish between right and wrong. Practitioners encourage children to show initiative, to understand simple rules of behaviour and to take some responsibility for their own actions.

The setting knows how to access professional support and advice from the local authority, the social services and other specialist agencies.

There are effective arrangements for the early identification of children who may have additional learning needs. The designated practitioner for this aspect ensures there is good provision for children with additional learning need and that parents play an active part in the processes.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

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. There are 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.

With the exception of ICT, there is an ample supply of good quality resources for all areas of learning. Resources in the locality make a valuable contribution to children's learning.

The accommodation is spacious, well maintained and secure. Practitioners make valuable use of attractive displays to reinforce children's learning, for example in Welsh Language development, and good use is made of the outdoor area to provide a wide range of stimulating and interesting experiences across the curriculum.

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

Within a relatively short period since establishing the playgroup, the supervisor has skilfully implemented and managed several changes in the setting's practice. For example, she has changed the way aspects of the curriculum are planned and delivered and has established more purposeful assessment procedures. The supervisor is ably supported by a team of practitioners who share the same values and expectations about learning, behaviour and improvements and undertake responsibilities very diligently. Staff co-operate very closely as a team and are actively involved in the decision-making process. Their willingness to act upon local authority advice and to undertake national priorities and new ventures, such as assessment for learning, is a major strength.

The positive relationship with children, parents and the primary school staff contributes substantially towards creating a sense of community.

Although staff occasionally discuss their performance and their professional needs with the supervisor, the system is too informal and no records are kept of any agreed targets for improvements.

The management committee is kept well-informed of the setting's progress and plays an active part in its programme of work and development.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know the setting well and through purposeful management are continuously self-evaluating and exploring ways to raise standards and improve provision. The supervisor has established robust procedures for maintaining good practice and implementing change in areas that require improvement. Self-evaluation involves all practitioners and takes careful account of the views of

children, parents and the management committee with the setting benefitting substantially from the advice of the local authority advisory teacher.

Purposeful use is made of information gathered through self-evaluation to draw up an action plan which prioritises aspects which the setting needs to improve. The impact of the plan on provision and standards is continuously monitored by the setting. A particularly positive example of this is the way assessment procedures have developed and improved through self-evaluation.

Partnership working: Good

A range of partnership activities makes a positive contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing. Through regular newsletters, parents receive up-to-date information about all aspects of the setting's work. The leader takes advantage of every opportunity to include parents in their children's learning. There is a very productive partnership with Saltney Ferry primary school with the setting benefitting substantially from the use of the school's resources and its indoor and outdoor areas.

The setting has started to forge closer links with a number of organisations in the local community, but as yet, these are not firmly established. Regular visits, reports and professional advice by the local authority support teacher have a very positive impact on the setting's development. If additional support is required for children, practitioners know whom to contact and when.

Resource management: Good

Through effective collaborative working, the setting is developing well as a strong learning community. Members of staff have regular opportunities to update their professional knowledge, understanding and skills. They value the opportunities provided for them to share good practice with colleagues in the primary school and from other settings. This has been a key factor in securing improvements in the setting.

The supervisor and the management committee exercise effective budgetary control. This ensures that children have enough learning resources and that the best possible use is made of staff's time, expertise and experience. Standards and provision for securing the best possible outcomes for children is good. The setting, therefore, 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.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr William Edward 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)

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.