



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

**Sychdyn Playgroup
Memorial Hall
Sychdyn
Flintshire
CH7 6EA**

Date of inspection: May 2015

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

Sychdyn Playgroup is based in the village of Sychdyn in Flintshire and was established in 1970. The playgroup operates from Sychdyn Memorial Hall which serves a wide variety of groups in the community hence the playgroup is a pack away setting. This English-medium playgroup is overseen by a qualified supervisor who is also the registered person and a qualified teacher. There are two practitioners who together with the supervisor carry out the day-to-day running of the group. Parents also undertake regular duties in the setting.

The playgroup is open daily during term time and is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide care for up to 26 children from the age of two and a quarter.

All the children who attend the playgroup are British and all use English as their first language. A small percentage of children have an additional learning need.

About half the children live in Sychdyn and the other half live in the nearby villages of Northop, Buckley and Mynydd Isa.

The playgroup receives support from Flintshire Early Entitlement and is a member of Wales Pre-school Providers Association. There were nine funded three-year-old children on the first inspection morning and eight present on the second.

The last CSSIW inspection was in January 2014 and the last inspection by Estyn was in 2009.

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:

- children make good progress from their starting points;
- teaching is good;
- all children show positive attitudes to learning;
- care, support and guidance are good;
- learning experiences are varied and interesting; and
- the playgroup makes good use of the community and local environment to extend the learning of the children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- there is effective leadership;
- there is a good range of quality resources to support learning;
- the playgroup works effectively with partners for the benefit of the children;
- practitioners work well as a team; and
- the setting has made good progress since the last inspection.

Recommendations

- R1. Continue to develop outdoor learning to reflect forest school experiences.
- R2. Maximise informal opportunities to further develop children's literacy skills.
- R3 For practitioners to visit other settings to share best practice.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which 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

Nearly all children achieve good standards and make good progress from their starting points towards the Foundation Phase outcomes in all areas of learning. They work effectively at full capacity and are constantly busy with tasks. They concentrate and persevere well. Most children are confident to make choices about their play and are developing effective skills in literacy, numeracy and Information Communication Technology in order to access the wider curriculum.

Nearly all children are confident when speaking to adults in the setting. They share their ideas and talk about what they are doing. Nearly all listen to instructions well and use appropriate language during play. All follow stories and show interest in books and experiment with mark making. Nearly all can handle books as a reader. The majority of children select and use mathematical ideas and most children develop appropriate ICT skills through play, for example in the role play area where they operate buttons and switches.

All join in enthusiastically with songs and counting that effectively develop their Welsh vocabulary. Most children understand basic instructions in Welsh and can repeat familiar words and phrases. They show a good interest in Welsh books and the Welsh bear who joins in with their learning and encourages the use of the Welsh language.

Wellbeing: Good

All children settle well and quickly to the activities when they arrive in playgroup and all are developing positive attitudes to learning. Nearly all children are engaged and sustain concentration well, for example when digging for worms and other creatures. These children show a good interest in their work both indoors and out. They show good levels of self-esteem and take part enthusiastically in different learning experiences particularly during outdoor play. All children are happy and feel safe in the setting. Children are confident learners and are involved in making simple choices in the playgroup about their play.

Nearly all children demonstrate good behaviour, they are kind and considerate towards each other and most readily share and take turns with equipment and resources. They do this exceptionally well with minimum adult input. They have successful relationships with each other and relate well to adults around them. They are starting to help their friends, for example when tidying away the equipment or passing resources that are out of reach.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Planning includes a good range of interesting learning experiences such as visits to the local theatre that successfully engages all children and as a result they make good progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. They are busy and purposefully occupied. Although indoors and outdoors are used to develop skills successfully, opportunities to experience those similar to forest school are in the early stages.

Good organisation ensures children settle quickly to activities and learn successfully. Experiences effectively encourage children work together and co-operate. They successfully form relationships with each other and with adults around them and show respect for all cultural backgrounds.

The curriculum builds appropriately on children's existing knowledge and understanding and provides opportunities to develop thinking skills across all areas of learning such as deciding how to adjust pipes to ensure toys can move successfully. Although skills in literacy and numeracy are embedded successfully into the planned experiences for the children, informal opportunities to develop, for example literacy skills are missed including occasions for children to recognise their own names. Although there is a range of technology such as battery operated toys a greater variety would ensure that the children fully develop effective skills.

Practitioners develop children's literacy skills by sharing books including those written in Welsh and by story telling. There are good opportunities to develop early mark making through a range of different medium including sand and cocoa powder.

Most practitioners use a good level of Welsh and they encourage the children effectively both during registration when the children count their friends and story time when they join in with the adventures of the Welsh bear. As a result children respond well. They share traditions and festivals with their friends such as St David's Day and Chinese New Year.

Children have opportunities to learn effectively about caring for living things by finding and observing mini beasts in the field and woodland.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners including volunteers are well briefed before the session and deployed effectively. They have up to date knowledge of child development and the requirements of the Foundation Phase and as a result move all the children's learning forward. All practitioners are good language models and use language effectively to develop learning. Practitioners all employ positive strategies such as encouragement and negotiation to encourage the children to learn, join in and to share equipment.

Without exception practitioners are skilled at knowing when to intervene in children's play and manage behaviour effectively, reminding of simple rules for sharing. As a result children are settled and stay on task well. Practitioners successfully plan activities and use indoors and outdoors for a good range of activities that meet the needs of the children.

All practitioners know the children well and as a result there are high expectations. Most practitioners extend children's play successfully using an effective range of teaching strategies that promote learning and provide opportunities for the children to develop skills, for example how to fit large bricks into a box. Adult support for the children is well focused and makes a good contribution to the quality of their learning.

Most practitioners use a good level of Welsh with the children and successfully encourage the children to listen and respond. Circle times are used effectively to share books and stories.

Practitioners carry out useful observations of the children that inform assessment records effectively. Parents are involved extensively in the achievements of their children and they are actively aware of their progress by taking a turn on rota duty. This means that because they join the group regularly they are aware of the routines and learning outcomes and so are able to support children's learning highly successfully.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The playgroup has a good range of policies and procedures to support the children and successfully promote their health and wellbeing including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

Children learn effectively about simple rules such as sharing and successfully learn to distinguish right from wrong. The playgroup successfully fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect and effectively develops a good understanding of living and sharing with others and as a result children are confident learners who are happy to ask for help.

The children are starting to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world in which they live by visits to the field and woodland, observing living things such as mini beasts and by taking part in the village carnival.

Practitioners provide consistency and individual support to assist children with additional learning needs. As a direct result children achieve effectively and their families are well supported. The playgroup draws upon external professional expertise effectively and practitioners employ positive and successful strategies to help the children to succeed.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup has effectively developed a well established ethos that is inclusive and values the diversity of the children's backgrounds. The setting actively develops tolerant attitudes through a range of different learning experiences and good day-to-day practice. Equal access to the curriculum is offered. All can share resources and take part in all activities. There is an effective range of policies and procedures that actively support the children, and promote their health and wellbeing.

There are sufficient, valued practitioners and volunteers who have knowledge of child development and the Foundation Phase requirements. They create a stimulating learning environment indoors and out making good use of space and know what they need to do to help the children to succeed. They have relevant qualifications and experience of working with children.

There are good opportunities for safe outdoor play and resources are used effectively. They are appropriate and sufficient to address the requirements of the Foundation Phase and successfully support the needs of the children in all areas of learning. All children are kept safe and the accommodation is used effectively, secure and well maintained to support the learning of the children. Indoors and outdoors are used well to develop play and learning and the local community including the theatre, field and woodland are used successfully to enhance the facilities at the setting and enrich the learning experiences of the children.

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

Good leadership contributes to the wellbeing and levels of progress and achievements of the children. Learning and teaching are to a good standard and there are good parental links to support the children. The playgroup is managed well and values, aims and objectives are effectively shared through day-to-day working practice. There is a positive ethos, clear direction and sense of purpose that effectively promotes and sustains improvement and implementation of policies and initiatives is successful.

Practitioners and volunteers are well deployed and their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and as a result all are working effectively for the benefit of the children. There are high expectations and the focus is on the children making progress in their learning.

The leaders fully understand their roles and are effectively informed about the performance of the setting by regular meetings, quality review and self evaluation. Relevant legislation and guidance are taken into account and leaders are involved in national and local priorities such as literacy and numeracy that impact positively on the standards achieved by the children.

An effective training programme and appraisals which involve parental feedback ensure that practitioners are aware of what they need to do and can improve their knowledge and practice.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has made good progress since their previous Estyn inspection and has addressed all the recommendations effectively. Self-evaluation successfully identifies areas for improvement. Practitioners know the setting well and as a result strengths and areas for development are recognised and action is taken to make changes that ensure positive gains and successful improvements for the children. For example, the development of the outdoor area has enabled opportunities to improve learning outcomes and the wellbeing of the children, for example the children have more independence, choice and further skill development opportunities. A few visits to the woodland and field have further extended the range of outdoor learning experiences.

Although practitioners are engaged in professional development and attend courses that effectively raise standards and support the wellbeing of the children there are insufficient opportunities to visit other settings, share good practice, expertise and knowledge and try different ways of working.

All developments in the group have the children at the centre of the provision and all practitioners support each other. They make changes to the activities and resources and as a result this ensures flexibility and extends children's learning.

Partnership working: Good

There is clear communication between parents and the playgroup and feedback is encouraged to ensure consistently good links between home and playgroup are maintained. They have a good level of information about the setting which enables them to be effectively involved in supporting the learning of their children and the work of the playgroup. Parents are also kept well informed of their child's progress by attending registration each morning, speaking to the practitioners, by an on going assessment record and by taking a turn on rota duty where they can see first hand the achievements of their children. As a result parents know what they can do to help their children to learn. Parental feedback evidences an exceptionally high level of satisfaction with the playgroup and the positive impact it makes on their children's progress and achievements.

There is a developing relationship with the village school to ensure a good transition to support the children. There is an effective partnership with the local authority advisory teacher which impacts positively on the achievements of the children and enhances the work of the setting.

Partnerships within the local community such as the visits from the lollipop lady and the fire service successfully add another dimension to the children's learning and experience of the world of work. There is a successful relationship with the local community that ensures effective learning opportunities for the children such as taking part in the village carnival.

The setting has an effective partnership with other professionals to ensure a good level of support for any children with additional learning needs. Practitioners work well together as a team, and all are well briefed before the start of the session and effectively share information for the benefit of all the children. The playgroup is a member of the Wales Pre-school Providers Association and partnership working ensures continued support for the children.

Resource management: Good

All practitioners including volunteers are well deployed and manage a good range of resources successfully to motivate and encourage the children to learn. There are good opportunities for a range of learning experiences both indoors and in the outdoor environment. A good supply of quality resources is well matched to the stages of development of the children and meets any additional learning needs.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of budget matters and future resource needs are well planned for and prioritised to develop the provision and improve outcomes and the wellbeing of the children.

The funding that is received is used effectively and as a result the setting 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

Mrs Anne Elizabeth 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)

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 partnerships 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>

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (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.