



*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**

**All Sorts Playgroup  
Community Centre  
Crickhowell  
Powys  
NP8 1AW**

**Date of inspection: October 2011**

**by**

**Elizabeth Anne Mayo**

**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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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## Context

Allsorts Playgroup is an English-medium setting which meets in the Community Centre in Crickhowell. The group has been meeting there for over 20 years. The setting has the use of two rooms within the centre and a secure outdoor play area. Children who attend the setting live in Crickhowell and surrounding areas including, Abergavenny, Llangattock and Gilwern.

The setting has recently extended its opening hours from 8.30am to 3pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday it opens from 9am until 1pm. The setting offers provision for 40 weeks of the year for up to 24 children and admits children from the age of two. Currently, thirteen three year olds are funded by Powys Early Years Partnership. At the time of the inspection seven funded children attended on Monday and five on Tuesday.

The children who attend are considered to come mainly from advantaged backgrounds. Most children come from homes where English is the main language although a few come from homes where English is an additional language. No children come from homes where Welsh is the first language. The setting is inclusive and welcomes children with additional learning needs (ALN). At present, seven per cent are recognised as having ALN.

The setting employs six staff including a play manager. A volunteer assists with snack time. The play manager is the registered person for the setting and has overall responsibility, along with the management committee.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in June 2011. The setting was last inspected by Estyn in 2005.

## Summary

<b>The Setting's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The Setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

### Current performance

The setting is adequate because:

- most children make appropriate progress in relation to their stage of development;
- many children apply their speaking, listening and mathematical skills appropriately in play situations and when working with adults; and
- all children feel safe in the setting, behave well and have secure relationships with adults.

However:

- early reading, writing, information and communication technology (ICT) and Welsh skills are underdeveloped; and
- planning and assessment procedures do not always impact positively on children's standards.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- staff are developing their understanding of the Foundation Phase;
- setting manager and staff have a positive attitude towards improvement; and
- systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures have been established.

However:

- self-evaluation and improvement planning are not evaluative enough; and
- not enough progress has been made in addressing four of the five key issues from the previous inspection.

## **Recommendations**

R1 Improve standards and provision for early reading and writing, ICT and Welsh.

R2 Improve children's standards of independence and give them greater opportunities to decide how and what they learn.

R3 Make better use of assessment to plan more effectively so that all children are challenged appropriately.

R4 Use practitioner's time more effectively to support children's learning.

R5 Further develop self-evaluation to make sure that the quality of children's learning is evaluated.

### **What happens next?**

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress 12 months after the publication of the report.

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Standards: Adequate**

Most children make appropriate progress in relation to their stage of development. They acquire new knowledge and understanding at a satisfactory rate. Many children are able to sustain concentration and persevere with their learning. Most children take responsibility for tidying away resources at the end of sessions. However, most children do not show enough independence in their learning and rely too heavily on adult direction.

Many children apply their early speaking and listening skills appropriately in play situations and when working with adults. They usually listen attentively and respond appropriately to questions asked by adults. Many children use mature vocabulary and full sentences to express themselves to familiar adults. A minority, however, are reluctant to discuss their activities with visitors.

Most children enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes and experimenting with simple musical instruments. They listen attentively to stories; however, a few become distracted during whole group sessions. Many handle books appropriately and are able to recognise their name. However, children do not make enough progress in gaining early reading and writing skills.

Most children are able to count to ten and name some familiar shapes. Many use simple mathematical language in play situations. A few children choose to play in the mathematics area during free choice activities.

Children's creative and imaginative skills are developing appropriately. Their skills in using ICT, such as computers and programmable toys are less well developed.

Many children enjoy joining in with Welsh songs. Most can respond to the register in Welsh. Children are aware of some of the customs and traditions of Wales. Children are not confident enough to use the Welsh language spontaneously in their play. Their understanding of instructions in Welsh is at a very early stage.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

All children are developing an appropriate understanding of the importance of healthy eating and taking physical activity. Children enjoy eating their healthy snacks and know they have to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. All children participate well in physical activity in the outdoor area.

Children settle well when entering the playgroup and quickly become interested in activities. Most children take turns, share toys and cooperate well. They confidently ask familiar adults for help and know what to do if they hurt themselves or feel unwell.

Overall, behaviour is good both indoors and outdoors. However, a few children do not always listen carefully to adults in whole group sessions. Children are polite to each other and adults and treat children from all cultural backgrounds respectfully. They follow appropriate routines and have a good understanding of what is fair.

Although children confidently make choices about what they like playing with they do not yet have a say in what or how they learn or make choices about where they sit at lunchtime. Children do not always take responsibility for preparing food at snack time or for washing up items used. Children enjoy going to the local shops to buy the ingredients for cooking activities such as making Welsh cakes for St. David's Day celebrations.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>
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<b>Adequate</b>
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**Learning experiences: Adequate**

The setting provides a range of activities which are suitable to meet the needs of most children.

Practitioners know the children well and generally respond appropriately to their varying needs and abilities. However, planning is not yet specific enough to systematically meet the needs of individual learners and this means some more able children are not challenged enough.

Overall, the provision for developing children's speaking and listening and mathematical skills is effective. Practitioners act as good language models and promote good language skills; however, they do not always make good use of opportunities to extend children's skills in reading and writing through a range of learning experiences. Through play activities practitioners encourage children to count in English and in Welsh.

The provision for developing children's skills in ICT is at an early stage of development. Children do not have enough opportunities to use ICT to reinforce and enrich their learning across all areas of learning.

Although practitioners use Welsh for whole group activities incidental Welsh is not used regularly enough to develop children's skills. There are appropriate opportunities for the children to learn about the traditions and celebrations of Wales.

The setting makes appropriate use of visitors and visits to stimulate and extend children's learning experiences. It is in the very early stages of developing children's awareness of the importance of sustainability or the impact we have on the world.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of the Foundation Phase. They understand the importance of providing opportunities for children to learn through play and active learning. Overall, they use a range of approaches that engage most children. Practitioners work effectively as a team and have a consistent approach to managing children's behaviour. Rules and routines are well established in the setting ensuring that all children feel safe and well cared for.

Practitioners usually ensure that children have enough time to complete activities and intervene sensitively to encourage children to persevere. On occasions, adults over direct children's activities so that children do not have enough opportunities to work independently, develop problem-solving skills or explore their own interests. Some practitioners make good use of questioning which encourages children's thinking skills. This, however, is not consistent which means that children are not challenged enough.

Practitioner's positive oral feedback to children impacts well on children's self-esteem but does not help them understand what they need to do to improve. The setting has recently introduced on-entry and observational assessments. It is not always clear how these assessments will help to measure children's progress or decide the next stage of an individual's learning. During the inspection no adults were seen to carry out observations.

Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through informal meetings and end of year written reports.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Effective arrangements are in place to support children's health and wellbeing. These arrangements contribute well to children's general development and wellbeing. Learning experiences promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The setting has appropriate arrangements in place for providing children with specialist support if required. The setting has good links with other agencies and seeks help from specialists to support children's development when necessary.



Practitioners make suitable arrangements for the integration of children with additional learning needs. They develop effective individual educational plans to meet their learning needs and work with other agencies and parents to provide support.

Good induction arrangements and the strong caring ethos of the setting means that children quickly settle into daily routines and are keen to learn. Close links are established with the local primary schools to which most children transfer, although there is no agreed transfer of assessment information.

The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. All practitioners receive relevant training and understand their roles and responsibilities. The setting has a comprehensive range of policies and conducts regular risk assessments to ensure children's safety during sessions and on outside visits.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting provides a welcoming and inclusive environment to all children and their families. Adults value the children and encourage them to respect each other and celebrate diversity through a variety of activities, such as the Chinese new Year and the Indian festival of light. All children have equal access to all aspects of provision. Recently, the main room used has been organised to include most of the seven areas of learning. Displays of children's work are used to decorate large wall spaces.

Appropriate use is made of the outdoor learning environment and indoor facilities to provide children with opportunities to support their physical development and a range of learning experiences.

The setting employs enough trained staff and experienced staff to meet the needs of children; however, they are not always used effectively to enhance the learning of all children. Practitioners are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills through relevant training.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Leadership: Adequate**

The setting manager promotes a very positive ethos in the playgroup. Staff, parents and children all feel valued and respected. Members of staff are developing a collaborative approach to planning and are usually successful in ensuring that most children make appropriate progress. The setting has clear policies and aims which are understood and implemented by all practitioners.

The setting manager has been in post for a year and during that time she has established a good relationship with the local authority and encouraged adults to become self-reflective practitioners concerned with self-improvement. Although an appraisal system is in place it is not yet fully embedded.

The setting manager meets regularly with the management committee. However, the management committee are not involved enough in setting the strategic direction for the setting or improving provision for the children. The formal monitoring of children's standards and the quality of teaching in order to determine the setting's future priorities is at an early stage of development.

The setting is responding appropriately to local and national priorities related to the development of the Foundation Phase.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

Self-evaluation is developing steadily. The manager and staff demonstrate a firm commitment to continuous improvement. Since the appointment of the setting manager several improvements have been made in the quality of provision and management policies and procedures. Managers take good account of the views of staff and parents. For example, the setting responded well to recent parent requests for extended opening hours and better communication.

The self-evaluation report written by the setting for the inspection is a useful document which includes relevant and appropriate comments. This is a good starting point; however, self-evaluation does not focus enough on the standards achieved by children or make suitably evaluative comments about the quality of provision. Improvement Plans contain relevant targets although they do not always identify measurable outcomes or focus sufficiently on children's standards.

All practitioners make good use of the training and support provided by the local authority, although they have not yet visited other settings to observe good practice. The manager has responded well to advice from the local authority and has implemented initiatives which have not yet had time to impact on children's standards.

### **Partnership working: Good**

A good range of partnership working contributes to children's progress and wellbeing. Regular newsletters keep parents informed about playgroup activities and important information. Feedback from parent questionnaires and discussion is very positive about the strong links experienced by staff and parents.

Practitioners have developed a good working relationship with the local authority advisory teacher. Her evaluative reports help the setting to improve their provision. A positive relationship with the Wales Pre-School Playgroup Association (WPPA) also provides good support for the setting.

The setting has good links with the local community. Visits to the church for seasonal celebrations and to local shops help to contribute to children's development. This is also enhanced by their use of Crickhowell High School's grounds.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

Managers make good use of the funding available to provide sufficient staffing and resources to support children's learning. Overall, practitioners are employed appropriately, although their time, experience and expertise is not always used to best effect.

Generally, there are enough resources to enable children to achieve many of the Foundation Phase outcomes. However, resources for ICT are limited which means that children do not fully develop their information and communication technology skills.

In view of the fact that standards of achievement are adequate, the setting provides adequate value for money.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Analysis of the seven questionnaires received indicated high levels of satisfaction with the provision offered by the setting. All parents feel their child is happy and safe in the setting and that they make good progress. They are very pleased with the way their child was helped to settle into the setting. All parents state that the setting is well run and are comfortable to approach staff with any questions, suggestions or problems.

One parent does not feel that their child receives appropriate support in relation to their individual needs.

### **Responses to discussions with children**

Children say they enjoy coming to the setting and seeing their friends. They know who to go to for help and that all practitioners are kind to them. Children say they enjoy playing outside.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

Mrs E A Mayo	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](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.