



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Little Rascals Preschool
Cwm Golau
Integrated Children's Centre
Duffryn Road
Pentrebach
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 4BJ**

Date of inspection: September 2015

by

**Peter Roach
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

Little Rascals Playgroup is an English medium playgroup located in the Integrated Children's Centre, Pentrebach, on the outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil. Children attend from a wide range of social backgrounds. The playgroup is open for 48 weeks of the year and provides sessions during the morning and afternoon with a short break between. It is managed by a management committee of three members and registered with the Wales Pre-School Providers Association (WPPA) and is currently working towards WPPA Quality Assured Accreditation.

The playgroup is managed on a day-to-day basis by a leader, two deputies and supported by nine additional practitioners. All have appropriate early years qualifications and suitable experience working with young children.

The playgroup is accommodated in a purpose built room with direct access to a secure garden and play area. A Forest School provides opportunities for children to investigate and explore their immediate environment.

The playgroup is registered for 24 children between the ages of two and five years and currently there are 56 children on the register. Children who attend the playgroup live in and around Merthyr Tydfil. All children speak English as their first language and a very few have additional learning needs.

The setting was last inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales in January 2015 and by Estyn in May 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

Current performance is good because:

- Learning experiences are well planned and engage most children's interests.
- teaching provides effective opportunities for children to work independently.
- assessment procedures enable practitioners to plan next steps in children's learning.
- there are positive relationships between practitioners and children.
- the setting provides a happy, caring and supportive environment for all children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- Leaders manage the setting well.
- all practitioners fulfil their roles well and work effectively as a team.
- self-evaluation arrangements are based on first hand experiences.
- partnership arrangements make a positive contribution to children's development and wellbeing.
- all practitioners have a positive attitude to their development and training.

Recommendations

R1. Improve provision for Welsh language development

R2. Ensure planned tasks offer appropriate challenge for all children

R3. Further develop the role of the management committee to ensure they evaluate and monitor the setting's practices regularly.

R4. Ensure future planning activities link directly to children's outcomes.

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?	N/A
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Standards: N/A

There is no report on children's progress, standards in the development of their skills, the Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection upon whom to report without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing: N/A

There is no report on children's progress, standards in the development of their skills, the Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection upon whom to report without identifying individual children.

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

All practitioners successfully stimulate the interest and imagination of almost all children in the setting. Learning experiences have been carefully planned in order to ensure that appropriate attention is given to all areas of learning in the Foundation Phase. As a result, the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the children's age and abilities. Planning interesting learning activities through themes ensures that practitioners take every opportunity to link learning to everyday events. These learning experiences build systematically on previous skills and knowledge learnt. For example, the activity based on the theme of Autumn enabled the children to use their senses effectively whilst handling a wide range of autumn vegetables, a few of which they had grown, others had been donated from a local allotment. The activity culminated in all the children experiencing a vegetable broth, during snack time, which had been prepared earlier.

Throughout the setting there is good provision to develop children's skills. Practitioners are keen to ensure that children are able to hold a reading book correctly and talk enthusiastically about what is happening in the pictures. Many children understand that print conveys meaning. Activities using modelling clay, paintbrushes, chalk and crayons encourage children to practice their early mark making skills. Practitioners ensure children hold the tools correctly. Children's early numeracy skills are developing well. Children know many number rhymes and have good opportunities to use them for tasks they do together such as counting the number of children in a group. There are good opportunities to develop children's information and communication (ICT) skills. Children make effective use of electronic toys, telephones, computers, and I pads as part of their development.

The setting provides good opportunities for children to learn about the history and culture of Wales. Suitable emphasis is placed on Welsh traditions such as celebrating St David's day. Visits to Cardiff castle enhances their knowledge and understanding of how people lived in Wales many years ago. The children learn songs in Welsh, which highlight routines such as 'amser tacluso' and answer the register in Welsh. However these activities are in isolation and opportunities to use basic Welsh words, commands and short phrases in everyday situations are underdeveloped.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a sound knowledge of children's development and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. There is a positive relationship between all practitioners and children. All practitioners play an active part in the planning process and through the 'key worker' system their expertise is used to good effect.

Children are encouraged to choose activities, which are adult led, or to work independently. Practitioners make effective use of both open and closed questioning to enhance children's understanding of the skills taught. They are sensible when intervening and allow children to further develop their thinking and investigative skills. All practitioners model language activities well and provide good role models for children to develop their literacy skills effectively.

Practitioners set clear learning objectives at the start of focused sessions to ensure that many children develop in line with expectation and their ability. However, in a few instances the tasks set do not always challenge the older children sufficiently.

Assessment arrangements throughout the setting are good. A close working relationship between practitioners and children ensure all adults are aware of every child's personal and educational needs. This is supported by good quality day-to-day observational records, which inform future planning and comprehensive child development profiles. These good quality documents provide practitioners, local feeder schools and parents with an up to date record of what their child has achieved throughout the year at the setting.

The setting ensures that all parents are well informed of their child's progress. They receive a written report at the end of the year. They also have the opportunity of discussing their children's progress with the practitioners on a termly basis.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting makes appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Children are encouraged to eat healthily, to take care of their personal hygiene and to take exercise.

The setting is a safe and secure location. No person can enter unannounced and no child can leave without permission. Safeguarding arrangements for ensuring all

children remain safe are effective. All staff have received the relevant safeguarding training. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There are good opportunities for children to learn about other cultures. The setting celebrates Divali, Chinese new year and St David's day every year. There are effective arrangements to encourage children to act sustainably by recycling materials, avoiding waste and saving water.

The setting's provision for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Children are encouraged to show initiative, to control their behaviour and be willing to share resources with one another. Values such as honesty and respect are fostered through good quality 'circle time' sessions.

Arrangements for supporting children with additional learning needs are good. There are well-established arrangements with professional support services to provide children with specialist support when needed. Practitioners provide good day-to-day support for children who need extra help with their learning.

Learning environment: Good

All children in the setting feel welcome and safe. They are happy and all have equal access to the curriculum. They are treated fairly, whatever their background and ability. Practitioners encourage children to treat each other in the same way. The interesting learning environment and the regular opportunities children have to celebrate diversity and to develop positive values and attitudes are prominent features of the setting.

The building and the site are well maintained. There are effective learning areas both inside and outside the building together with a good supply of good quality resources that are well matched to children's needs. Practitioners also make effective use of the secure forest school's area to further enhance children's learning.

Throughout the setting there are a good range of colourful displays of children's work, which enhances learning.

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

Leaders manage the day-to-day activities of the setting well. They work effectively as a team and have clear aims, which focus strongly on providing the best possible start for all the children. Leaders share these effectively with other practitioners. Consequently, there is a strong sense of purpose, which promotes and maintains improvements. All practitioners understand their roles within the setting and work effectively as a team.

There are good arrangements to appraise practitioners' work and identify further professional development needs. The wider use of practitioners' skills leading activities in specific areas of learning is a good example of the constructive discussions that are part of the process.

The management committee is very supportive of the work of the setting. They have been successful in developing a good working relationship with practitioners. However, their role in challenging the day-to-day arrangements as critical friends is underdeveloped.

The setting, through the leaders, gives suitable consideration to local and national priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and practitioners know their setting well. They know what they are doing well and understand what needs to be developed further. This is based on self-evaluation procedures, which relies heavily on first hand information from all stakeholders including the children. The self-evaluation document is brief, succinct and an honest document, which points the way forward for the setting.

Many areas for development from the self-evaluation document become priorities for action in the setting's development plan. This plan has specific actions, realistic timescales, success criteria and the names of practitioners or leaders who are responsible for achieving them. However, in a few instances these specific priorities rely far too much on what needs to be done (such as attending courses or meetings) as opposed to actions which impacts directly on what the children can achieve.

Monitoring arrangements of the outcomes by the setting leader are good. Specific actions are evaluated on a termly basis ensuring, in most cases, improvements remain achievable within the prescribed timescales.

Partnership working: Good

As an integrated children's centre partnership arrangements with a wide range of external agencies, local community and parents are good. The parents, in the questionnaire replies and during discussions, expressed their satisfaction with the setting. At the beginning and at the end of every session there are good opportunities for parents to discuss issues or progress to date with their child's key worker or a member of the management team. Parents are invited to the setting every term to discuss their child's progress and what they, as parents, can do in assisting in the learning process. There is a strong sense of belonging by the parents as they are appreciative of the high standards of care provided.

Leaders and practitioners make effective use of the good quality support provided by the local authority advisory teacher to develop new resources, new teaching techniques and to provide worthwhile training.

There are effective links with the local primary schools, which the setting feeds. As a result, children are familiar with the school's procedures before they begin full-time education.

Good links established with the people and establishments within the local community have resulted in substantial benefit for the children. For example, every Autumn the children work closely with the local church. They collect tins of food to donate to the local food bank.

Resource management: Good

Leaders manage the playgroup effectively and all staff are suitably qualified and deployed appropriately. As a result of regular useful feedback on their performance all practitioners benefit from a range of good quality internal and external training which further develops their understanding of their roles.

The leader manages the finances of the setting well. There are good systems for keeping spending under review. Leaders ensure expenditure links directly to the setting's priorities and objectives. However, the role of the management committee in monitoring expenditure is underdeveloped.

The leader is involved in moderation activities with four other local schools. Together with other practitioners she has visited other settings to observe good practice. These experiences have enabled the setting to develop into a strong learning community which is open to new ideas and willing to experiment with different ways of working.

In view of the effective provision and good leadership, 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

Mr Peter Anthony Roach	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.wales)

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.