



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

**A report on**

**Playdays Playgroup  
Ysgol Emmanuel  
Victoria Rd  
Rhyl  
Denbighshire  
LL18 2EG**

**Date of inspection: May 2017**

**by**

**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

Playdays Playgroup is an English medium setting for two to four-year-olds in Rhyl, Denbighshire. Nearly all the children come from the local area. The setting is registered to take up to 18 children per session. At the time of the inspection there were eight children in receipt of funded education. The setting meets for two sessions each day from 9:05 to 11:35 and 12.30 to 15:00.

The playgroup is based in a classroom in Ysgol Emmanuel and has access to their outdoor area and some other facilities. The setting has identified a few children as having additional learning needs. Nearly all children speak English as their first language and a very few children have English as an additional language. Very few children speak Welsh at home.

The present leader was appointed in 2015 and is supported by four other assistants.

Playdays is a member of the Denbighshire Early Years and Child Care Partnership. There is an arrangement with the local authority which provides the setting with regular support from a teacher within Ysgol Emmanuel. It also receives termly support from the local authority advisory teacher.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in August 2016 and by Estyn in May 2011.

## Summary

<b>The setting's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Nearly all children enjoy their time in the setting and behave well
- Most children's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Most children co-operate well with each other and share toys and equipment readily
- Practitioners work together purposefully and their nurturing approach creates an effective learning environment
- Many children show high levels of concentration and interest in their play; they persevere with activities for a reasonable amount of time and show pleasure in achieving their goals
- It has very effective arrangements for care, support and guidance
- It is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of its provision.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader has a clear vision for the setting
- There is a very strong commitment to team working
- Training attended by practitioners is effective and has a positive impact on children's learning
- It has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection and has developed a reflective approach to support improvement
- It has satisfactory processes and procedures to evaluate its provision and the standards that children achieve
- Partnerships with the local school are strong
- Partnerships with parents have developed and are continuing to improve
- It provides good value for money

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's early writing skills
- R2 Ensure that processes for self-evaluation are brought together into a self-evaluation record that focuses clearly on improving outcomes for children

### **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

#### Standards: Good

Many children enter the setting with skills and knowledge below the levels expected for their age. During their time at the setting most children make good progress, particularly in developing their personal and social skills.

Most children listen attentively. They pay good attention when others are talking and allow other children to speak without interrupting them. They interact confidently with each other and have good manners. During story time, they pay close attention and a few join in enthusiastically with aspects of the story. Many children speak clearly and a few are happy to share information about what they are doing with adults. For example, they talk about what they are making in the role-play kitchen. A few children are confident when making marks with a range of equipment on different surfaces. For example, they use a drawing program on a tablet to draw mini-beasts. However, many children's early writing skills are under-developed.

Most children's numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points. A majority count spontaneously as part of their play. For example, they count how many cones they have lined up or how many legs there are on the mini beasts they find. Around a half of the children say numbers in order up to six and a few can count objects accurately to eight. A few children match shapes accurately and around half of them make good use of mathematical vocabulary such as describing a friend as being 'bigger' when measuring their height with an adult.

Overall, children's physical skills are developing well. Most children cope with fine motor tasks appropriately, such as cutting toy fruit in the role play area or rolling out dough. A minority of children use tablets confidently to select apps or take photographs. A majority of children demonstrate good gross motor skills such as negotiating space in wheeled vehicles or taking part in a music and movement session.

All children make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they will use. They are developing their problem-solving skills appropriately. Most children access and use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment such as tablets and battery-operated toys appropriately, with help. A few children use a tablet confidently, selecting apps and playing games independently. Most children respond to simple commands spoken in Welsh for daily routines. They say 'thank you' and 'good morning' in Welsh and respond well to a range of Welsh songs and rhymes. A minority of children use Welsh spontaneously, such as when naming colours and fruit at snack time.

#### Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children settle well as soon as they arrive at the setting. They co-operate well with one another and share toys and equipment willingly. Most take good notice

of instructions given by an adult and respond to requests quickly. For example, they join their family groups and wait patiently for others. A majority help to tidy up when asked.

All children look after the setting's resources well and treat adults and children respectfully. A few are beginning to show concern for others when they are hurt or upset. All children are developing their independence such as washing their cup and plate after snack and cleaning their teeth.

A majority of children sustain interest in activities and move confidently to another activity when ready. Nearly all children make independent choices about what they want to play with from activities offered and all children do this when supported by an adult. Nearly all show an interest in the outside activities and particularly enjoy the opportunities to explore and investigate in the sand and water areas.

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

Practitioners provide a good range of interesting learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage most children successfully. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning through play and first-hand experiences. Practitioners provide a good range of open ended activities, which promote investigation and exploration.

The setting makes good use of visitors and local visits to enhance the curriculum such as going to the beach and Lifeboat Station. As a result, children learn about their local area. The setting also joins with the local school to share events and experiences such as Sports Day.

Practitioners provide good opportunities for children to develop their physical skills throughout the setting. Activities include using balancing equipment, throwing balls, threading laces and solving puzzles. The sand pit provides opportunities for large scale digging and the popular water area encourages children to fill, pour and transport water across the play area.

There is good provision to develop children's numeracy skills. Children have regular opportunities to count and to recognise numbers and shapes. The setting has a wide range of appropriate resources such as tape measures and balancing scales that provide children with appropriate opportunities to develop mathematical concepts.

Practitioners provide children with many successful opportunities to develop their communication skills effectively. They support children to join in with conversations and ask many open-ended questions. Practitioners provide cosy spaces that promote children's communication very effectively. Practitioners share books and stories with children and model how to handle books with care. The environment is full of language with many captions and labels written in both English and Welsh.

Provision for developing children's thinking skills is appropriate. For example, practitioners ask children if they can find a way to get the mini-beasts out of a block of ice. They provide adequate opportunities for children to take part in a variety of

mark making activities, however, very few children use the equipment available. Provision for developing children's early writing skills, such as writing a shopping list in the role-play area, is limited.

Practitioners use tablets well to support children in developing their ICT skills. Other opportunities to use ICT are available such as a battery-operated radio, however, this provision is generally underdeveloped.

Practitioners plan effectively to support children's skills in Welsh. Practitioners model Welsh appropriately through singing songs, using Welsh phrases and asking children to repeat key words. They use Welsh to greet children on arrival and when asking children to find their picture or name at the beginning of the session. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage. For example, they dress up in traditional costume and celebrate St David's Day.

### **Teaching: Good**

Practitioners have a sound understanding of Foundation Phase practice. They use an effective range of strategies well to encourage and motivate children to learn. They combine focused tasks with children's free play very successfully. As a result, a majority of children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy extended periods of uninterrupted learning during their play. Practitioners have very good working relationships with the children. They know the children well and manage their behaviour sensitively and effectively.

Activities build suitably on children's interests and experiences. Practitioners explain things clearly, model activities well and make effective use of rich questions. The use of open ended questions challenge children to extend their thinking and problem-solving skills appropriately. Practitioners use resources imaginatively such as when setting up an imaginative area relating to a traditional story.

The setting has a useful range of assessment procedures which practitioners use successfully. For example, practitioners use sticky notes and longer observations to record significant steps in children's learning. They share this information with other staff on an ongoing basis which enables them to respond to children's individual needs and plan worthwhile activities for them. In addition, children's files provide detailed and useful information about their progress. Practitioners set targets, which clearly identify the next steps in children's learning.

Practitioners keep parents well informed about their children's progress and development through regular verbal updates and open days. They provide useful communication books for the parents of children with additional learning needs.

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

The setting has effective arrangements to support children's healthy eating and drinking. During snack time, practitioners encourage children to eat fruit and provide water or milk to drink. Practitioners provide valuable opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise on a daily basis. They provide opportunities for children to take part in healthy community events such as Sports Day. Children enjoy this. It



develops their co-ordination successfully and encourages them to adopt a healthy life-style.

Practitioners are good role-models and support children to develop respect for others and a sense of right and wrong successfully. They encourage children to share equipment and to take care of resources. Children make choices about what they would like to eat and help with clearing away but they do not help to prepare the snack.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, children are fascinated by nature when observing caterpillars change into butterflies. Children have appropriate opportunities to find out about other cultures through, for example, learning about the Chinese New Year. Opportunities for children to learn about sustainable issues have improved and children enjoy dressing up as environmental super-heroes before taking the left-over snack to the composter.

The setting has developed a range of effective strategies to promote good behaviour and children respond to these well. The leader has clear expectations which she communicates clearly. This ensures a successful team approach and consistency for the children.

There are good processes to support children with additional learning needs. The setting has effective links with a range of support agencies and involves parents well in developing children's individual play plans. Staff receive appropriate training to enable them to meet the needs of individual children.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is welcoming and staff are friendly and approachable. It is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of the setting's provision. Practitioners lead by example in encouraging children to show tolerance towards one another and respect for the setting's equipment.

The setting is in a building within the local school and benefits well from access to the school's forest area in addition to its own outdoor area. The setting's accommodation is secure and maintained well. There are plenty of good quality resources, which meet the needs of children.

Practitioners make good use of the available space indoors and outdoors. Designated learning areas make it easy for children to access resources independently.

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

The leader manages the setting well. She has a strong vision for the setting, which she communicates clearly to staff and parents. This focuses on providing a high standard of care for all children while respecting their individual differences and developing their skills at an appropriate rate. The aim of the setting is to take children's learning forward at a level that suits them, and to embrace opportunities for outdoor learning.

The leader has high expectations of all staff and models behaviours that she expects others to follow, such as treating all children with respect and using a calm and consistent approach at all times. All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities well. These are defined clearly and practitioners work together effectively with a clear sense of purpose to fulfil the aims of the setting.

The setting has effective arrangements to manage the performance of staff. All staff have good opportunities to discuss and reflect on their performance. The leader supports them effectively in developing their knowledge of the Foundation Phase and improving their skills in delivering it. All staff are eager to take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development and strive to improve their performance.

The leader keeps the management committee well informed. She provides a useful written report for committee meetings. The management committee is supportive and members have a good understanding of the issues affecting the setting.

Leaders pay good attention to local and national priorities and there is a suitable focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

**Improving quality: Good**

The setting has effective systems to evaluate its performance and to set targets for improvement. Leaders take good account of the views of staff, parents and children and respond appropriately. They also make good use of information from any external reviews to inform the self-evaluation process. Practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to improve. They explain clearly what they have identified that they need to do to raise standards. However, the self-evaluation document does not always reflect this thinking well enough and does not focus on what the children can do.

The improvement plan sets out clearly what the setting needs to improve. The targets in the plan come directly from the self-evaluation process and are suitable targets for the setting. The improvement plan is a well-organised document that sets out appropriately actions, cost implications, timescales and how practitioners will monitor and evaluate the plan.

The setting has made strong progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection and has a track record of making effective improvements through self-evaluation and improvement planning.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Partnerships with parents are strong. Practitioners keep parents well informed about what their child is learning through newsletters and regular feedback at the end of sessions and through social media. Useful noticeboards, inside and outside, make clear the setting's ethos and expectations and encourage parents to take an active part in its life. Practitioners offer valuable opportunities for parents to come and play alongside their children during sessions. This allows them to see the sort of things that their child does in the setting and helps them to support and develop their child's literacy and numeracy skills at home.

The setting has very well-established links with the local school in which it is situated. The reception teacher from the school provides support to practitioners about how to deliver the Foundation Phase. This partnership works well as the teacher is on site to provide advice when required. There are good opportunities for children to visit the nursery class before transfer to school. This promotes a smooth transition for children from the playgroup to the next stage in their education. The setting has beneficial use of the school's facilities, such as the library, forest area and media suite.

The setting makes good use of links with the local community to enhance its curriculum. For example, children visited a local garden to purchase plants for their planting area and the local supermarket recycling area to find out more about what could be recycled.

### **Resource management: Good**

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning well. Leaders and managers make sure that the setting has enough suitably qualified and well-trained practitioners. Resources are plentiful, of good quality and used well to support children's learning.

The setting ensures that staff can access training based on needs identified through the appraisal process. Practitioners make good use of training to improve provision, for example to develop systems to deal with behaviour issues and to improve children's mathematical skills.

The management committee manages the setting's budget effectively and has suitable systems for keeping spending under review.

Due to the good progress that children make and the quality of provision, 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 inspection team

Amanda Hilton	Reporting Inspector
Jane Rees	Team Inspector

### Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<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>

<b>Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<b>National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)</b>	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
<b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.