



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

A report on

**Ysgol Ardwyn Playgroups Ltd
Ardwyn Nursery and Infant School
Red Bank
Welshpool
SY21 7PW**

Date of inspection: October 2016

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:

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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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Publication date: 21/12/2016

Context

Ysgol Ardwyn Playgroups Limited is located in Ardwyn Nursery and Infants School, Welshpool, in the Powys local authority. Since September 2016, the language of the setting is Welsh. The setting opens for five mornings a week and it has four practitioners.

The setting's registration allows it to take up to 22 children at any one time. The setting accepts children from two to four years old. At the time of inspection, nine children attended, whom the local authority funds. Flying Start supports a few younger children at the setting.

Nearly all children are of white British origin and most children speak English as their first language. Currently, there are no children with additional learning needs.

A volunteer board of trustees manages the setting and it is a charitable limited company. The day-to-day manager began her post in September 2009. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in November 2015 and Estyn inspected the setting in May 2013.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Most children make positive progress in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- Nearly all children are enthusiastic and eager learners
- Nearly all children behave responsibly and care about other children's feelings
- Learning experiences are planned effectively
- Effective teaching challenges nearly all children to improve their work
- Assessments move children on to the next steps in their learning efficiently
- Practitioners work well together and focus on improving children's standards diligently
- The provision of Welsh is beneficial for the children
- Practitioners' diligent and tender care creates a purposeful learning environment
- Stimulating indoor and outdoor areas engage the children successfully

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The manager has a clear strategic direction to the work of the setting
- Regular and rigorous evaluation systems exist that consider the views of everyone involved with the setting
- Practitioners are keen to develop professionally and training is effective
- Purposeful use of support services support children, managers and practitioners
- Strong relationships with parents and the school maintain continuity and reinforce the next steps in children's learning well
- Stimulating resources are available to each child
- Sensible use of funds ensure improvements in the provision, both indoors and in the outdoor areas
- Active support and challenge from the board of trustees sustains effective provision, robust financial regulation and purposeful leadership practices

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the children's use of Welsh
- R2 Ensure that the planning of early writing activities challenges the more able children to perform at their best

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

The setting became a Welsh medium setting in September 2016; therefore, the standard of nearly all children's Welsh language skills are low on entry. However, in a short period, many children demonstrate a basic and sound understanding of the language. Most children understand what to do when directed in Welsh and a minority use Welsh words and occasional phrases without adult prompting. This demonstrates suitable progress. The children's early understanding and use of the language is developing well.

Most children demonstrate positive progress in the development of their skills across all areas of learning, especially their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They talk about how they feel about themselves and others sensibly during water activities involving funnels, tubes and containers and when riding bikes around marked trails in the outdoor area. Nearly all children sustain lively discussions with adults and each other when organising dinosaurs in the small world area and during the planting of hyacinth bulbs in pots as Christmas presents for their parents. They also co-operate well during group activities when deciding upon which musical instruments to play and the utensils needed to roll and cut dough.

Most children speak clearly and make sure that others understand them when responding to adult questioning in Welsh during tasks. They listen to instructions and act on them promptly, demonstrating an increasing awareness of the language. This is particularly evident when they cook in the mud kitchen and when they discuss capacity when filling and emptying buckets of sand.

Nearly all children show interest in books. They understand the purpose of the illustrations and discuss the appearance of specific characters effectively. Most children handle the books in the indoor and outdoor reading areas as confident, early readers. They are keen to share the books with their parents through the home link book scheme, which the setting monitors effectively.

A minority of children use language patterns and phrases purposefully in informal and focused play activities, when arranging vehicles in the outdoor parking bays and deciding upon the materials that need loading into the portable re-cycling cart. When role-playing in the construction area, they identify whether planks of wood are 'long' or 'short' and whether equipment, such as a cement mixer is likely to be 'heavy' or 'light'.

Most children experiment with mark making effectively. This is a prominent feature at the setting and children enjoy writing experiences using a variety of media. Examples include painting on small paper sheets using paint brushes, scribbling and circling with chalks on large outdoor boards and helping adults form big letters on the floor of the yard.

Very few children begin to form letters of the alphabet and numbers in reasonably recognisable forms when handling pencils and crayons. The majority of children explain the purpose of writing in the correct context and a few children recognise their own and other's names during registration at the start of every session.

Most children use mathematical language purposefully and in everyday contexts. Many children count, recognise and name numbers to five independently and a few count to 10 and beyond accurately, when seated in a circle at the start of every session. A few children demonstrate an accurate understanding of how to bond numbers to five through arranging objects and toys in the small world area. Many children choose relevant equipment and materials to solve practical problems effectively. For example, as they pour soapy water in turn into a funnel, they count the amount of containers used and they measure 'full', 'half-full' and 'empty' buckets of sand during outdoor focus tasks.

Most children understand clearly the differences in height when climbing the numbered ladder that leads to the slide. They explain with accuracy if large objects are 'taller' or 'shorter' than them and when they stand 'above' or 'below' different objects and structures.

Nearly all children use a good range of mathematical language when co-operating together in spontaneous play, for example when comparing the length, height, weight or capacity of different objects. They also use numbers well in practical activities when comparing two and three-dimensional shapes as flat or round, and when counting in sequence the amount of nails nailed into a piece of wood using a hammer. Nearly all children group different types of objects by colour, size and shape correctly.

Nearly all children listen to music with enjoyment and respond enthusiastically to nursery rhymes and familiar songs in Welsh. They play instruments with great enthusiasm during orchestral activities and sing melodiously, understanding clearly that certain musical phrases are louder or softer than each other.

Most children develop good thinking skills, which has a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve. For example, they work with others intelligently as they make hand shapes with different coloured paints, use sand paper to shape wooden key rings and participate in yoga to create animal shapes.

Most children use technology effectively when using cameras, electronic toys and tablets and in everyday activities such as using phones and tills in the role-play areas. Most children use educational software in Welsh well to develop their early ICT skills and to learn the language.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children, in relation to their age, have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy. This is particularly evident during the preparation and eating of snacks, when they discuss the different tastes and textures of fruits and explain that drinking water is good for their health.

Following outdoor activities, nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly, without too much adult prompting, before eating their snacks and drinking milk or water. They have a secure understanding that a healthy diet includes fruits and vegetables. They explain sensibly that exercise keeps you fit and that running or riding a bike quickly makes your heart beat faster. Nearly all children behave well. They are polite and respond with respect to adults and each other. Nearly all children listen carefully to adults, for example when getting into a line near the re-cycling cart and when dressing into overalls and wellingtons for outside activities.

Nearly all children show motivation and interest in their learning. They enjoy the activities in the areas of learning and share and work sensibly with other children. Most children demonstrate positive attitudes to new experiences, such as performing on stage in the outdoor performance area. Nearly all children relate well to adults and visitors when they arrive at the setting and when they leave. Many children are confident and independent learners. This is especially evident when many of them explain intelligently why they enjoy their time at the setting and as they note thoughtfully the areas of learning that include their favourite activities.

Most children understand that they have rights as individuals and that they have the option to express opinions, for example when deciding to remain or persevere at specific tasks. As a result, most children show positive levels of engagement in most tasks.

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

The manager and practitioners provide a comprehensive curriculum, which reflects the ethos of the Foundation Phase successfully. The learning experiences target the needs and interests of children purposefully and provide them with positive opportunities to develop as independent learners. The practitioners work together effectively to deliver flexible and exciting activities, which stimulate and motivate children to learn through practical and creative experiences.

The manager's weekly planning focuses effectively on improving children's literacy and numeracy skills. It also concentrates sensibly on developing the physical skills and creative thinking of children. For example, practitioners allow children to measure water into funnels and pipes independently, encourage them to ride bikes vigorously on trails that weave through and around different learning areas and promote the climbing of adventurous equipment and balancing on stepping-stones.

The practitioners plan learning experiences thoroughly. They discuss assessments of individual children at morning meetings, and organise the theme's activities on this basis. Practitioners consider the children's individual interests that derive from daily assessments to enrich activities further. This contributes significantly to the children's daily enthusiasm as they learn through play and stimulating experiences both inside the building and out of doors. However, the planning of early writing activities for the more able children does not challenge them sufficiently to develop better skills when forming letters and numbers.

The setting plans in detail to develop children's literacy, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills. Literacy and numeracy tasks are evident in all areas of learning and practitioners challenge most children to perform at their best consistently. Practitioners provide children with stimulating opportunities to role-play in construction areas and in bamboo tents, to estimate how much mud will fill a saucepan and to experiment with paints when creating portraits. Activities of this nature build systematically on the existing children's knowledge, understanding and skills. The provision of learning experiences is stimulating and it offers continuity to children's learning sensibly. Such activities include challenges to solve problems with water pipes and playing instruments sensibly to keep to a beat in an orchestra.

The setting's provision for Welsh language development is beneficial to the children. Nearly all practitioners model the language effectively and support the children who are beginning to learn the language successfully. They encourage children to use the language as much as possible through stimulating activities with specific groups of children led by key workers. This is purposeful, as key workers challenge and question children well in response to a wide range of activities in the indoor and outdoor areas of learning.

The setting promotes the children's awareness of the traditions, celebrations and culture of Wales successfully. These activities include celebrating Saint David's Day and Saint Dwynwen's Day, reading Welsh folk tales together, making cawl from garden produce and baking Welsh cakes and bread.

The provision for ICT development offers opportunities to use a computer, cameras, tills, electronic toys and tablets in role-play areas. All practitioners challenge children effectively, using educational software in Welsh to develop their early ICT skills and to learn the language using visual technology.

The setting makes beneficial use of visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. For example, the emergency services, mothers and babies, the road safety officer and dental hygienists educate children purposefully about people's roles in their community. Practitioners use the library, the local museum, a pet shop and local parks to feed the ducks to promote the children's understanding of their local community successfully.

Practitioners provide interesting learning opportunities that encourage children to show respect and tolerance for people of all cultural backgrounds. This includes celebrating Diwali, Hanukkah and the Chinese New Year annually. The well-planned experiences develop a better understanding of the world for the children.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners are up to date with information about child development. They are knowledgeable about the requirements of the Foundation Phase and they collaborate effectively. Practitioners greet the children warmly and enthusiastically as they arrive and they continue with this enthusiasm throughout the session. Practitioners manage children's behaviour positively and safely. This encourages the children's successful participation and enjoyment in all activities.

The practitioners have high expectations for all children and challenge children consistently in every focus task. They intervene sensibly in children's play, stimulating and motivating children to perform at their best. The manager and practitioners demonstrate a sensible balance between activities that are chosen by children and those that are led by adults. They understand the importance of providing wide opportunities to learn through play, especially in the outdoor area.

Practitioners encourage children to participate in purposeful activities. This includes moving freely between the inside and outside of the building to experience the areas of learning in different contexts. They encourage collaboration with others in different types of challenges involving water and sand and in lively, physical tasks. Practitioners use questioning purposefully to develop thinking and communication skills. This is apparent when discussing the correct position of a bulb during its planting in soil and how to spread jam evenly on rolls during snack times.

The setting's key worker system is effective. Specifically, it targets Welsh vocabulary and language patterns consistently by reinforcing them regularly throughout the sessions' activities. As a result, children's standards in Welsh show rapid progress in a short period.

All practitioners complete daily assessments regularly and consistently and encourage the children to assess their own learning well. They then discuss sensibly with the children what they need to do to improve their work. Practitioners record evaluations and discussions daily on effective recording sheets and in the children's link books. This leads directly towards the planning of tasks and it targets the next steps in children's learning efficiently. As a result, the procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are diligent. All the evidence is matched accurately to the outcomes of individual children as they mature at the setting.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements at the end of the session. At the end of their time at the setting, practitioners present a detailed booklet of photographs, children's work with annotations and reports on the child's progress to parents.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Efficient arrangements exist to support the health and wellbeing of children. These arrangements contribute well to their overall development and wellbeing, which supports their learning successfully. The setting operates effective procedures to promote healthy eating and drinking. As a result, the children understand that fruit and vegetables contribute to a sensible diet.

The setting offers positive opportunities to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children. For example, practitioners use group discussions to consider each other's feelings. As a result, they foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect and reinforce their importance purposefully every day.

Practitioners provide rewarding opportunities daily for children to reflect, discuss feelings, say thank you and pray. This creates a quiet environment, when children sit to listen to adults and say thank you for their food. As a result, the children take turns

politely while eating snacks and serving milk and water around the dining tables. A dedicated helper of the day has the opportunity to assist on rota in the sharing of plates, cups and cutlery, which helps in promoting independent responsibilities for every child in their turn.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to re-cycle paper, cardboard, plastics and food. They also compost peelings and uneaten fruit in the composting bins in the outdoor area. This develops the children's understanding of sustainability effectively.

The setting uses positive behaviour strategies, which eliminate any form of harassment or oppressive actions. The children are happy and safe in the company of adults and they often ask for help and support without concern.

The setting is a safe environment and the practitioners take good care of the children when they arrive and when they are collected. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The setting records children's learning needs accurately when they join and during their time at the setting. Practitioners review children's progress regularly and identify their starting points thoroughly by following the guidelines of the Foundation Phase profile. Therefore, the setting targets children with additional support effectively when it is required. Practitioners discuss these children with the appropriate agencies in order to provide assistance as soon as possible to target their needs. The additional learning needs co-ordinator understands the necessary procedures to support children and she uses them efficiently.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal opportunities to all the areas of learning and its resources. Practitioners have a thorough knowledge of all children and their individuality is recognised successfully. Practitioners challenge children daily in a gentle, careful and sensitive manner.

The setting promotes a positive ethos through its daily activities and the approach adopted by the practitioners. Everyone has a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. The setting achieves this effectively by celebrating different festivals from around the world each year, such as the Chinese New Year, Hanukkah and Diwali.

The setting uses its resources well to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase and children's needs. The beneficial resources are accessible to all children, which promotes their sense of responsibility purposefully. For example, this is especially evident when allowing children to role-play in different contexts and by investigating different types of animals and birds in the various wildlife areas around the outdoor areas. The continuous activities, the focus tasks and the opportunities to enrich the learning share the resources effectively. Their use by the children has a positive effect on their learning, especially when mark making on large chalk boards and when sorting vehicles to match the numbers in the parking area.

The outdoor area consists of interesting growing and planting areas, climbing apparatus and stimulating challenges in the construction area and mud kitchen. The setting also uses its outdoor areas for environmental investigations, such as hunting for insects and investigating reptiles. Practitioners use the local community sensibly to enhance children's learning.

The building is of a suitable quality; it is well-maintained and safe.

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

The manager promotes and sustains improvements successfully. She manages the planning, teaching and learning effectively and ensures that practitioners have high expectations of nearly all children. The strategic objectives, plans and policies focus directly on effective provision, target children's needs well and consistently promote children's achievements. The manager leads a secure team of committed practitioners sensibly and provides a positive strategic direction to the daily and long-term practices of the setting.

The caring leadership practices motivate the practitioners towards improvements in positive, sensible and supportive ways. The manager uses relevant information about the setting constantly to bring about improvements to the provision. Examples include developing the outdoor areas of learning, decorating the setting using volunteer support and using numerous funding streams and fundraising to support staffing ratios and to improve the quality of the resources.

The leadership, which includes the supportive board of trustees, ensures that the provision for the children is interesting and purposeful. They ensure that practitioners fully understand their roles and work as a motivated team, through regular supervision and appraisal practices. This system ensures the best use of practitioners' expertise. It defines different roles of responsibility well to promote successes within the setting. Practitioners receive relevant and informative training and this has a positive impact on the quality of provision.

The board of trustees meets regularly and it receives information about the setting's day-to-day practices regularly from the manager. The trustees provide effective support and secure financial regulation. They challenge the setting robustly to sustain good practices and to further develop the areas that require improvements.

Improving quality: Good

A positive culture of self-evaluation pervades the work of the setting. The manager and her colleagues have established consistent arrangements to monitor children's standards and provision. The effective collaboration and information collated on a daily basis, along with staff meetings and the local authority's evaluation toolkit contribute to this successful practice.

The self-evaluation takes account of the views of the dedicated practitioners, parents and carers, the local authority, the Wales Pre-school Providers Association and

Mudiad Meithrin. All of this information is beneficial to the setting in order to obtain a broad understanding of its provision. As a result, the self-evaluation report, derived from these processes, identifies the strengths of the setting well. It identifies the areas of development and the reasons behind them in detail, with clarity and honesty. This includes improving the children's use of Welsh, which is as an area of development from the previous inspection.

The manager takes appropriate steps to maintain effective practices and implements change through efficient action plans. Both the manager and the board of trustees understand the budget clearly and prioritise spending in line with the actions identified for improvement. The managers improve provision by adopting different strategies, including the Foundation Phase profile and a new planning system. They receive valuable advice from others to support this. This includes allocating key workers to specific groups of children during the sessions to record their developments, which affects children's skills purposefully.

The manager, practitioners and trustees are open to new ideas and willing to experiment with different ways of working. They are very receptive to new ideas, suggested by the local authority's advisory teacher, Mudiad Meithrin and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association. For example, the advice on how to improve planning has positively affected the quality of teaching and learning experiences. This has a positive effect on learning and children's wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

The setting works well with partners to improve the provision and the standards and wellbeing of children. The impact of the strategic partnerships is effective, especially the very strong link with the school that shares the building. This includes successful links with the school staff. The nursery class teacher visits the setting and the children visit the nursery. This supports children's transition arrangements extremely well. Arrangements for the transfer of personal information and assessments are effective and beneficial to the children as they settle into school.

The setting works sensibly with outside agencies, such as the local authority, the Wales Pre-school Providers Association and Mudiad Meithrin. This reinforces the positive relationships that exist and these organisations actively support training and management documentation purposefully.

The setting's community links support children's learning well. This includes successful fundraising events that include half-termly bingo nights and fun days for the children. In addition, the setting works diligently to support local and national charities and this fosters tenderness and care among the children.

Practitioners work and connect with a broad range of other partners, which makes an important contribution to improving the provision. These include agencies that support the setting with training in first aid, food hygiene courses, risk assessments, manual handling advice, business support, Foundation Phase developments and child protection training.

Practitioners take active steps to involve parents and carers in the life of the setting. The setting informs parents and carers regularly on all aspects of the setting's work. They are also encouraged to offer their own opinions on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions. The setting listens to their ideas and implements changes sensibly.

Resource management: Good

The manager focuses directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work by leading practitioners intelligently and allocating resources effectively. The manager and the board of trustees ensure that the setting has enough qualified practitioners with relevant training to meet the needs of the children.

Performance management systems are thorough and the preparation of interesting learning experiences lead to sound teaching practices. They also enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge purposefully. As a result, a strong learning community exists, which has a culture of effective collaboration between practitioners and other partners.

The setting manages resources creatively to support learning. This includes changing the room layout regularly to support different themes and utilising everyday objects in the outdoor music and construction areas to stimulate and engage the children.

Both the manager and the board of trustees have a clear understanding of the budget and prioritise spending against set timelines and responsibilities sensibly. This creates purposeful, regular and consistent improvements through beneficial negotiations and well-financed improvement plans. Currently, they plan to improve the provision further in the outdoor area. The setting ensures that the use of funds have a direct impact on the provision and the standards and wellbeing of children. The setting provides good value for money due to the effective provision and purposeful leadership.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Derbyniwyd llai na 10 ymateb. Ni chaiff unrhyw ddata ei ddangos.

Appendix 2

Reporting inspector

Mr Nicholas Jones	Arolygydd Cofnodol
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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.