



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

A report on

**Castleton Playgroup
Grounds of Marshfield Primary School
Marshfield Rd
Castleton
CF3 2UW**

Date of inspection: November 2018

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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Context

Castleton Playgroup is an English-medium nursery in Castleton in Newport local authority. The setting is registered for 19 children from the ages of two to six years. It offers early years education sessions from Monday to Friday from 9 am until 11.30 am and 1 pm until 3.30 pm during school term time, between September and July. At the time of the inspection, there were seven children in receipt of funded early education.

The setting has identified a few children as having additional learning needs. There are a few children from ethnic minority backgrounds and a few children have English as an additional language. No children have Welsh as their home language.

There are six members of staff including the management team. All members of staff work with the three and four-year-old children. The lead practitioner has been in post since September 2016.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in July 2018 and Estyn last inspected it in December 2012.

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's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Most children co-operate successfully with each other and share toys and equipment readily
- Nearly all practitioners provide a good range of interesting learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage nearly all children successfully
- Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of foundation phase practice
- Nearly all practitioners' interactions with children are sensitive, respectful and caring

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The lead practitioner is strongly committed to improving quality
- Nearly all practitioners work together effectively and understand their roles and responsibilities
- The setting's arrangements for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective
- Most practitioners use information from training well to improve provision
- The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning successfully

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all children develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively and progressively
- R2 Improve provision for developing children's understanding of writing for different purposes across the curriculum
- R3 Ensure that monitoring procedures are applied systematically, to ensure that identified priority areas for improvement reflect the setting fully

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

Many children enter the setting with skills and knowledge in line or above those expected for their age. During their time at the setting, nearly all children make good progress, particularly in the development of their personal and social skills.

Most children listen attentively. They pay good attention when others are talking and allow them to speak without interrupting. Most children understand and follow instructions successfully, such as collecting a mat and sitting down when joining the group for a story. Many children speak clearly with confidence, and a minority give simple verbal instructions, such as 'tip it over... give it a big pat', when making sandcastles with a friend.

During group time, many children pay close attention to a story and a few are able to answer simple questions about the storyline with confidence. Around half of the children select books independently and talk about the pictures enthusiastically. Most readily take part in mark making activities with a range of equipment such as dry wipe pens, paint and chalk. A few children show an understanding of writing for a purpose and use recognisable letters independently. For example, they write their name on a picture they have drawn for a friend.

Most children's numeracy skills are developing effectively from their starting points. Many children count objects accurately to five and a few count objects beyond ten. A minority of children are beginning to write numbers accurately. For example, they write number three and excitedly say 'I did a number three', after looking at a range of birthday cards. A few use mathematical vocabulary spontaneously such as 'it's a hundred sleeps til my birthday', and 'we're making a big, big cake' when pretending to bake with play dough. Most children explore simple shapes in their play and a minority name common 2d shapes when filling shape moulds in the sand pit.

Most children's physical skills are developing well. Nearly all children handle and use small tools and equipment such as pens, spoons and brushes successfully. For example, they scoop coloured sand into their 'potion bottle' or use dabbers to create pictures with confidence. A majority of children develop good gross motor skills, such as co-ordination and balance when performing a Diwali stick dance or negotiating space as they run energetically up and down a grassy hill.

Nearly all children make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they want to use. Many explore their environment confidently and develop their problem-solving skills successfully. For example, they persist and try different approaches when trying to create dough from flour, salt and water.

Around half of children access and use a few familiar ICT resources effectively. For example, they explore shapes on the light box and play pre-recorded messages on 'sound clipboards'. Many children swipe images on a tablet computer when looking at Rangoli patterns, with support. However, children's ICT skills are generally underdeveloped.

Children's Welsh language skills are developing well. Nearly all children respond to a range of Welsh words and phrases positively and many join in with a range of simple Welsh songs at group time. Most children respond positively to a few simple questions given in Welsh during daily routines and many repeat single words or phrases such as the weather, confidently. Many children are able to name a few colour names and numbers in Welsh.

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 successfully. Most children take good notice of instructions given by an adult and respond to requests enthusiastically. For example, they enjoy washing their bowl and cup after snack.

Most children look after the setting's resources well and treat adults and children respectfully. They are courteous and show good manners when encouraged. A few children display very good manners such as introducing their friends to an unfamiliar adult.

Nearly all children make confident choices about what they want to play with from activities offered, and all children can do this when supported by an adult. Most sustain interest in activities and move confidently to another activity when ready. They particularly enjoy the experiences offered outdoors such as large scale digging in the sandpit.

A few children are beginning to show concern for others when they are hurt or upset. For example, they stop playing to ask a friend who has fallen over if they are okay. Most children are developing their independence well, such as selecting fruit and pouring their drink at snack time.

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

The setting provides a good range of learning experiences both indoors and outdoors, that engage nearly all children successfully across all areas of learning. Nearly all practitioners focus well on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. They reflect upon and adapt the learning environment to take account of children's needs effectively. For example, they reorganise snack time to increase children's choice and independence.

Nearly all practitioners provide effective opportunities for children to learn to care for living things. For example, they support children to grow and look after, beetroot and plant herbs. Practitioners encourage children to show kindness to creatures when observing minibeasts in the outdoor area and petting farm animals visiting the setting.

The setting provides worthwhile opportunities for children to go on local visits to enrich their learning. For example, they join a local community group in the village hall for Christmas crafts and visit a church to role-play the royal wedding. The children have also benefited from taking part in a yoga workshop, which supported the development of their balance and flexibility.

Most practitioners provide a range of opportunities for children to develop their communication skills successfully. They support children to join in with conversations and ask questions, effectively. The cosy book area is inviting and resourced well with a range of appropriate books, cushions and soft toys. The setting provides a wide range of opportunities for children to take part in mark making activities. These include large chalks, paintbrushes and dabbers. Practitioners provide a few opportunities for children to develop their understanding of writing for different purposes. For example, they provide a to do list in the role-play area. However, opportunities for children to develop their understanding of writing for different purposes is limited.

The setting's provision to develop children's numeracy skills both indoors and outdoors is effective. Nearly all practitioners provide children with useful opportunities to match, count and recognise shapes and patterns. For example, they encourage children to observe and create shapes and patterns when painting Rangoli patterns. Resources available, such as clocks, shape tiles and calculators, provide children with a wide range of experiences that develop mathematical concepts and language well.

The indoor environment provides useful opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, such as small construction, cutting and painting. There is a wide range of equipment to support the development of children's physical skills in the outdoor area such as tyres, balls, a tunnel and a comprehensive range of wheeled vehicles.

Provision for developing children's thinking and problem-solving skills is effective. For example, the lead practitioner challenges children to think about how they can create a space big enough for their large-scale painting activity. Additional resources such as planks, pine cones, sticks and leaves stimulate children's curiosity and creativity successfully.

Provision for developing children's ICT skills is evident throughout the setting and supports children's learning appropriately. There is a comprehensive range of equipment available, including digital cameras, walkie talkies and tablet computers. However, children do not have sufficient opportunities to access this equipment in order to develop their skills progressively.

Practitioners support children's Welsh language development effectively during large group time. They model Welsh well through singing songs, counting and using a range of Welsh words and phrases. Practitioners use Welsh language throughout the session to support routines and introduce simple vocabulary well. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage. For example, they make Welsh cakes and paint daffodils as part of their St David's Day celebrations.

Teaching: Good

Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of foundation phase practice. They use a range of strategies skilfully to encourage and to motivate children to learn. Nearly all practitioners explain things clearly, model activities and question children effectively. They use resources imaginatively to capture children's interests. For example, they provide opportunities for children to explore mixing coloured sand

with water to create their own 'potions'. They combine focused tasks with children's free play effectively. As a result, almost all children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning.

Activities build appropriately on children's interests as practitioners observe how well children have engaged with different resources and activities. For example, practitioners plan a wet chalk activity after a child showed a particular interest in using chalks.

The setting has an effective range of assessment procedures. For example, practitioners observe children during their first few weeks at the setting and identify what they can already do. They also record useful observations to show children's progress and responses to provision. Practitioners keep parents informed about children's progress through daily updates and an end of year report which summarises their learning effectively.

Practitioners have developed a useful range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and most children respond to these well. Nearly all practitioners have clear expectations and explain rules to children appropriately. For example, they explain why the children should share spades in the sand area. This ensures a team approach and consistency for children.

The setting keeps parents and carers informed about the topics covered and what their child is learning effectively. For example, they share information about the current theme and activities on a useful parent's notice board and provide regular newsletters.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has successful arrangements to support children's healthy eating and drinking. Practitioners encourage children to bring healthy snacks from home and provide a choice of milk or water to drink. Nearly all children's food choices are healthy. Practitioners encourage children to try new foods such as plums and raspberries. The setting provides valuable opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise both indoors and outdoors. This develops children's co-ordination successfully and encourages them to adopt a healthy life-style.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. 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 effectively. As a result, many children learn to cooperate with each other well. For example, they collaborate as they make 'soup' in the role-play house.

Practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children successfully, for example, through encouraging them to plant daffodil bulbs and observe them grow. The setting provides worthwhile opportunities to develop children's cultural awareness, such as regular singing sessions, providing a range of instruments in the outdoor area and a visit from an African drumming group.

The setting provides meaningful opportunities for children to learn about sustainability such as recycling their food waste. Practitioners act as positive role models through using many recycled resources in the learning environment. The setting encourages children to use natural and recycled materials in their play such as logs, straw and milk cartons.

There are beneficial processes to support children with additional learning needs. These include effective links with a range of support agencies that help meet children's individual needs effectively.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is very welcoming and nearly all practitioners' interactions with children are sensitive, respectful and caring. They encourage all children to take part and have equal access to each area 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. As a result, many children play and learn happily.

The setting's accommodation is secure and appropriately maintained. There are enough good quality resources across the areas of learning, which meet the needs of the children well. The setting has suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the foundation phase successfully.

Practitioners make creative use of the space indoors, which is attractive and engaging. Designated learning areas make resources easily accessible for children which supports their independence well. The popular outdoor area has been developed successfully into a valuable learning environment, which promotes the development of children's literacy, numeracy and physical skills effectively.

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

Leaders manage practitioners and children effectively to ensure that the setting runs smoothly, following well-established routines. Practitioners work together effectively and understand their roles and responsibilities well. The lead practitioner has a clear vision to ensure that all children thoroughly enjoy their learning and thrive. She works effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children.

The setting has effective arrangements for managing staff performance. Nearly all staff have useful opportunities to discuss and reflect on the quality of their work. The lead practitioner supports staff effectively in developing their knowledge of the foundation phase and improving their skills in delivering it. They take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development that link appropriately to the setting's priorities for improvement. Recently, this has helped improve the quality of observations and assessment of children's learning.

There are a range of beneficial policies and procedures to support the organisation of the setting, and staff review these effectively. Leaders pay good attention to local and national priorities and, as a result, there is a successful focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

The management committee plays an active role in the life of the setting and communication between the lead practitioner and committee members is effective. They provide valuable support, particularly with managing the setting's finances.

Improving quality: Good

The setting's arrangements for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective and all practitioners are committed to improving quality. The lead practitioner makes beneficial use of information from a range of sources to inform the self-evaluation process. For example, she identifies children's fine motor skills as an area for development in response to observations of children's play.

Many practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to improve. They can explain what they have identified as priorities to raise standards. All staff are eager to take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development and strive to improve their performance. This has a positive impact on the quality of provision, for example by improving provision for communication and language.

Through purposeful self-evaluation processes, practitioners identify the setting's strengths and areas to develop effectively. They identify what the children do well and what they need more help with successfully. The improvement plan sets out clearly what the setting needs to develop. It is an organised document that identifies appropriate actions, timescales and responsibilities. The targets in the plan come directly from the monitoring and self-evaluation process and form useful priorities for the setting. However, a few important areas are not identified clearly enough through monitoring procedures, such as the need to develop children's ICT skills.

The setting has made good progress in addressing recommendations from the previous inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has an effective range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Parents receive a good range of information, for example, through social media and day-to-day updates. Practitioners invite parents to join celebrations and events such as a dragon dance when children are learning about Chinese New Year. This helps parents keep informed about daily activities and feel comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns.

The setting has well-established links with the local school in which it is situated. Children attend regular events and celebrations, such as class assemblies and May pole dancing. There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to the school. Children become familiar with the school building and staff through for example, visits from the nursery and reception teachers. This prepares them well for the move on to the next stage in their education.

The setting has beneficial links with the local authority and acts on the advice it receives. This has led to positive improvements in standards and provision. Practitioners make suitable use of links with the community to enhance the curriculum. For example, a local reverend visits the setting to share the nativity story with children.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning successfully. Leaders and managers make sure that the setting has enough suitably qualified and well-trained practitioners to support the effective delivery of the foundation phase curriculum well. Resources are plentiful and of good quality, such as the wide range of equipment to support physical development.

The setting ensures that most staff access training based on needs identified through the appraisal process. Most practitioners also make good use of training to improve provision. This has supported them to improve aspects, such as the use of large-scale resources to develop children's mark-making skills and provision for maths in the outdoor area.

Leaders plan effectively to resource identified priorities. For example, the setting recently purchased numerous resources to support the development of children's language and communication skills.

The committee manages the setting's budget suitably and has appropriate systems for keeping spending under review. The setting is proactive in organising fundraising events which support the setting's budget well. Due to the good quality of teaching, the quality of provision and the progress children make, the setting provides good value for money.

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
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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
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 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