THE INSPECTION OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN BEFORE COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE

NURSERY REPORT ON:

Llanfyllin Playgroup
Llanfyllin
Powys

Registered Inspector: Huw Davies
Date of inspection: 13th & 16th June 2007
Contract number: T/094/06N

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REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF NURSERY SETTINGS IN THE NON-MAINTAINED SECTOR

Name of nursery setting: Llanfyllin Pre-School Playgroup
Address: Youth and Community Centre
          Llanfyllin
          Powys
Postcode: SY22 5AA
Telephone: 07814 903502
Person responsible for the day-to-day management: Debie Richardson
Position: Play Leader

About the inspection
This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents and carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five-point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

Grade 1: good with outstanding features;
Grade 2: good features with no important shortcomings;
Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings;
Grade 4: some good features, but shortcomings in important areas;
Grade 5: many important shortcomings.
1.0 CONTEXT OF THE SETTING

Llanfyllin Pre-school Playgroup is situated in Llanfyllin, Powys and was first opened over thirty years ago. The Playgroup is a registered charity run by a committee of parents of past and present Playgroup children. The Playgroup is open for three morning sessions a week and for thirty-eight weeks a year. Twenty-three children are registered at the Playgroup, of these, eighteen are three years old [all are funded], four are aged four [3 are funded] and other children are younger.

The vast majority of children who attend the Playgroup speak English as their first language, though there are a small minority from Welsh and Polish speaking backgrounds. There are three children with learning difficulties. The majority of children who attend the Playgroup live in Llanfyllin and come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. There is no social deprivation in the area served by the Playgroup.

Five staff are employed at the Playgroup and are all appropriately qualified, holding NVQ Level 3 in Early Years Care. Additionally, two members of staff possess certificates of Higher Education in Welsh and Bilingualism in the Early Years. The Playgroup is jointly managed and run by three Play Leaders who work directly with the children.

Llanfyllin Pre-school Playgroup is based on the ground floor Club Room of the Youth and Community Centre, which is in close proximity to the local primary and high schools. The indoor accommodation consists of one large and comfortable room. The Playgroup’s outdoor area is at the rear of the building and is used as an extension of the indoor area. The Playgroup shares all its accommodation with other organisations; as a result, staff have to clear equipment and apparatus away each day.

Llanfyllin Pre-School Playgroup is a pilot setting for the Welsh Assembly Government’s Foundation Phase.

2.0 MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

2.1 The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the goals for learning.

2.2 Standards achieved by the children in the seven areas of learning

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3.0 THE STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY CHILDREN IN THE SIX AREAS OF LEARNING
Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds

3.1 Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity

**Good Features**
Children are making very good progress in their personal and social development. Children enjoy being at Llanfyllin Pre-School Playgroup where they find their learning experiences intrinsically rewarding. Through well-planned activities suited to their needs and interests, children are motivated to learn. Individually and in small group situations, they concentrate independently of adults for lengthening periods. Relationships between children are excellent; they relate well to each other and demonstrate sensitivity, respect, care and affection. They play happily alone and alongside others, displaying very good behaviour and self-control. Children are confident in the company of adults and enjoy helping them clear away activities. Children are developing their independence, for example, they enjoy initiating some of their own activities.

Children’s emotional and physical well-being is successfully promoted at the Playgroup where children are secure in the knowledge that they are highly valued by both their peers and adults. All children have a positive self-image and clear sense of belonging. They are aware of healthy eating and can make a distinction between foods that are healthy and those that are not.

Children are becoming increasingly aware of the similarities and differences between themselves and others and are beginning to recognise cultural differences and diversity. They enjoy caring for living things, such as looking after plants in their outdoor area. They know they are Welsh, are developing an awareness of the cultural heritage of Wales and are beginning to speak Welsh.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.
3.2 Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

Good Features
Children are making very good progress in the development of their language, literacy and communication skills. Most children possess very good speaking and listening skills and speak clearly in both long sentences and full phrases. Adults use carefully considered language which engages children in discussions, thus allowing them to develop their thinking and understanding of the experiences. Children respond positively to adults’ questions, taking turns to speak when talking about their play. Children express opinions and make choices, for example, when tasting different breads they stated their preferences. In all activities, children play both individually and collaboratively, creating solutions, sharing ideas and experiences. They enjoy listening to and joining in with action songs and rhymes in both Welsh and English and are developing very good recall of these.

Literacy skills are promoted successfully. Children enjoy spending time in the reading area, learning to handle books and discuss their content. They enjoy sharing stories and rhymes with adults, can relate the broad thrust of a story and explain events in pictures. Children know that stories have a beginning and an end and are familiar with the main characters. Many children understand that letters have sound and words have meaning and are beginning to identify left to right orientation. There are daily opportunities for children to recognise their name, such as at self-registration time.

Children enjoy making marks and there is a wide range of tools and materials available for this, including: shaving foam; sand; chalks; paint; crayons; pencils and brushes. Some children can write their own name.

Shortcomings
No shortcomings were observed.

3.3 Bilingualism

Good features
Children are making very good progress in the development of their Welsh language skills. Through repetition and reinforcement of language and pattern, children are developing their understanding of a growing range of Welsh vocabulary, many speaking with clear pronunciation to phrases such as, ‘Ble mae’r,’ Pwy sy’n hoffi?’ and ‘Beth sy yn y tywod?’ Children recite words correctly to a repertoire of Welsh rhymes, including ‘Dau Dderyn Bach ar Ben y to’ and ‘Pryf Copyn Incey Wincey.’ Children enjoy sharing Welsh books with adults, such as ‘Tedi Twt ar y Fferr’ and show an interest in their content. Some children are becoming familiar with Welsh names of letters and their shapes and sounds. Children use a range of mark-making materials through which they are beginning to communicate using symbols and pictures.

Shortcomings
No shortcomings were observed.
3.4 Mathematical Development

**Good features**
Through many rich learning opportunities to explore both the indoor and outdoor environments, children are making very good progress in their mathematical development.

A real strength of Llanfyllin Pre-School Playgroup is the emphasis it places on children thinking and working out solutions for themselves through a wide range of problem-solving activities, such as: discovering gradients using balls and drainpipes; how to move water through tubes and how to move toy boats down a gentle incline. All children are confident in predicting outcomes and can talk about and recount how they solved the problems; their progress in this area of learning is exceptional.

Children are developing a very good understanding of number. All can join in rote, counting numbers to ten; some go beyond this and are familiar with larger numbers. Some children show an awareness of number operations such as addition and subtraction. Children have very good recall of number rhymes, stories and action songs. Through first hand experiences using everyday objects and materials, children are learning to sort, compare, contrast, order, match and sequence.

Children use mathematical language in a wide range of relevant contexts, for example, using construction apparatus to build higher, taller and shorter towers and when making food in the context of role-play to describe quantity. Through activities such as exploring large cardboard boxes, children are beginning to develop their positional vocabulary, such as, indoors, outdoors, over, under, above, below, in front, behind, on top of and underneath.

Children are developing their knowledge and understanding of volume and capacity; they enjoy filling and pouring wet and dry materials into containers and bottles of different sizes and shapes. Children are learning to identify and name some basic two and three-dimensional shapes. Through role-play, for example, in ‘The Bakery,’ children are developing their understanding of the concept of money.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.
3.5 Knowledge and Understanding of the World

**Good features**

Through the Playgroup’s provision of a wide range of stimulating and appropriately challenging activities, children are making very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children talk about home and where they live. Through visits both locally and further afield, they find out about particular features of the environment, such as the local river and Park Hall Farm.

Children use their senses to discriminate between different sounds, tastes, smells, and textures in a wide range of foods and materials. They make food, talk about the ingredients, their origins and describe any changes that occur, for example, when chocolate is heated. In creative play children are discovering that some materials can be stretched, squashed, bent or twisted into different shapes.

They demonstrate an understanding of time through sequencing personal experiences, such as everyday routines in the Playgroup and looking at images of past events that are on the computer. Children use a variety of other information sources to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world around them, including books. Children are learning the days of the week, months of the year, seasons and their weather features. A significant amount of children’s learning occurs outdoors, thus each day they talk about the weather when deciding on what type of clothing to wear.

Through role-play, visitors to the Playgroup and visits within the locality, children are beginning to understand about workplaces and roles of people in their locality. Other excellent learning opportunities, such as making birds nests from hay and mud, working with compost and water and experimenting with ice, allow children to appreciate both differences in and uses of a wide range of materials.

Through activities such as digging, planting seeds and observing growth, children are learning that plants are living things and need water. They also look at the differences between dead and alive plants. They observe animals, such as crabs, newts and worms and are discovering that these creatures move and need food and water to grow and reproduce. In their physical play with large and small wheeled toys children are beginning to learn that pushing or pulling can make something speed up, slow down or change direction.

**Shortcomings**

No shortcomings were observed.
3.6 Physical Development

**Good features**
Children are making very good progress in their physical development. Staff ensure that children are provided with a visually stimulating environment and an abundance of opportunities to explore and talk about the wide range of resources and materials. They colour, paint, print, cut and stick with increasing control and accuracy. When mark-making and making pictures, children use crayons, pencils, pens and paintbrushes of varying sizes, demonstrating good development of their fine manipulative skills and hand/eye co-ordination.

Children enjoy being physically active, moving confidently on large equipment, apparatus and toys. They are developing their ability to perform a wide range of actions, including: walking; running; climbing; stopping; balancing; hopping; jumping and sliding. They move freely when using pedal toys and those that are pushed and pulled. They respond well to adults’ suggestions about spatial relationships and are developing an understanding of their own bodies and of growth.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.

3.7 Creative Development

**Good features**
Through the Playgroup's provision for active, experiential learning through a wide range of carefully planned and appropriately engaging creative activities, children are making very good progress in this area of their development. They confidently explore colour using different processes, such as mixing colours and by watering down powder paints both with watering cans and water-filled balloons being burst onto the paint. Children also enjoy exploring different textures, paper and food for creative purposes. They are confident in applying media using a range of techniques, including hands, feet and a variety of tools and objects, such as bottles, balls and marbles. Children enjoy handling new materials, finding out about their properties and exploring their potential. Outdoors, children enjoy playing co-operatively, for example, to create large scale constructions using both natural and recycled materials. They demonstrate good imagination in role-play activities and much child-initiated learning occurs from this.

The Playgroup places very good emphasis on imaginative movement, for example, children danced with the dragon they made for Chinese New Year. Children sing nursery rhymes and action songs in both Welsh and English and are developing control of their voices. Children respond well to suggestions for imitative movement and they enjoy creating sounds by playing percussion instruments, including those they have made themselves.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.
4.0 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds

4.1 The quality of provision for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

**Good features**
Provision for children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The Playgroup has clear aims, values and principles; both the curriculum and the day-to-day life positively promote respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes, social and cultural traditions. Staff provide very good role models and children respond positively to them. Children demonstrate care, respect and affection both for each other and for adults; they play amicably, know right from wrong and behave well. The book area provides space for reflection where children enjoy spending time both individually and with adults. Children are developing an awareness of their own culture and traditions and are beginning to understand about diversity in the world, respecting all people equally. They celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and St David’s Day and are beginning to converse in Welsh.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.

4.2 The quality of planning for children’s learning

**Good features**
The quality of planning is very good, providing continuity and progression in learning as well as breadth and balance across the seven areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Planning at the Playgroup is firmly based upon the developmental needs of all children and the excellent knowledge and understanding by staff of the requirements of the curriculum. Planning occurs in themes with a new one is introduced around every six weeks; weekly plans identify relevant, stimulating and exciting learning activities. Planning is flexible and well-informed using information gained from careful evaluation of activities. It also evolves from child initiated activities; staff encourage children to be active partners in planning their learning. Planning for children with additional needs is effective and play plans with regularly reviewed targets have been developed. All children have equality of access and opportunity to make progress within the Foundation Phase curriculum.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.
4.3 The quality of teaching

**Good features**
The quality of teaching at the Playgroup is very good. Staff possess a very good knowledge and understanding of child development and pedagogy, along with the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum; they know the specific purpose of activities and inspire and challenge children’s potential for learning. High expectations are set for achievement and progress and staff use a range of effective strategies to encourage, motivate and develop children’s attitudes towards learning. They engage children in discussions to develop thinking and understanding of their experiences using wide and varied vocabulary, well-focused open questions, praise and encouragement.

Teaching at Llanfyllin Pre-School Playgroup is based upon the specific needs of all children. There is a very good balance between structured learning through child-initiated activities and those directed by adults; adults have a clear understanding of when it is appropriate to intervene to extend children’s learning and when to allow them to reach conclusions by themselves. The Playgroup is effectively managed and organised; children move confidently from the indoor to the outdoor learning environments which provide a range of appropriately challenging and differentiated play experiences.

Teaching of children with additional needs is very good with staff ensuring they are fully integrated into all activities. Teaching successfully promotes racial equality and respect for diversity. Methods of grouping and use of resources help promote high standards and quality provision. Children’s transition to their next stage of education is very good.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.

4.4 The quality of assessment, recording of children’s progress and reports to parents and carers

**Good features**
The quality of assessment, recording of children’s progress and reporting to parents and carers is very good. The Playgroup uses a range of assessment information to ensure that future planning is based both on children’s prior attainment and current achievements. Each week staff make critical and reflective evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, thus ensuring that the quality of planning is continually evolving. Staff also plan time to observe, monitor and assess children during their play and their progress is recorded in all seven areas of development. Parents and carers make a significant contribution to the assessment of their children, spending time in the Playgroup at the start of sessions, enjoying the learning experiences of the children and talking informally with staff. Parents and carers are fully informed about the progress their children are making; they receive records of progress, along with a written report which is closely linked to requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.
4.5 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community

**Good features**
The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community is very good. Parents and carers receive regular information about the curriculum children receive and are encouraged to contribute to their children’s learning. There is a display board at the entrance to the Playgroup containing information about the curriculum. The Playgroup has excellent links with parents, carers and members of the community, all of whom make a significant contribution to children’s progress, including: staff from the local primary school; fire-fighters; paramedics; mother and baby; health visitor and vicars from local churches. Regular visits are made in the local area to places associated with particular themes, including: Park Hall Farm, local church; dentist; post office and local walks. Additionally, a local dance and movement group has been visiting the Playgroup to develop children’s creative movement skills.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.

4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children’s wellbeing

**Good features**
The premises are extremely welcoming to children and parents. Considerable thought is given to the presentation and organisation of the Playgroup to ensure children’s needs are fully met. The secure outdoor play area presents a safe, exciting and stimulating environment for children to play in. Children play with a good range of high quality toys and materials which are interesting and appropriately challenging. Equipment is maintained in very good condition and supports children’s care and learning. Staff have a high regard for children’s safety and take appropriate steps to ensure all risks are minimised. Children move around freely and safely and staff are pro-active with regards to issues of health and safety; they demonstrate a thorough understanding of how to keep children safe. There are comprehensive written risk assessments in place which are regularly reviewed and updated. Children also learn how to play safely as staff provide gentle reminders and clear explanations to children. Staff maintain accident records which are collated and reviewed by the Proprietor. There is an up-to-date child protection policy in place and all staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities as they undertake training in this area.

**Shortcomings**
No shortcomings were observed.
4.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting

Good features
The quality of leadership and management is very good. Since becoming a pilot setting for the Foundation Phase in September 2004, the Playgroup has fully embraced the opportunity to develop the new curriculum. The Play Leaders have a critical and reflective approach to their work and continually explore ways in which the setting’s educational provision and standards children achieve can improve, with appropriate and realistic targets set for future development. For example, as a pilot setting, the Playgroup receives additional funding which has been well-used to improve the quality of its provision; this includes employing a Welsh speaking member of staff. Communication between adults at the Playgroup is excellent and all staff are aware of future plans. Staff receive an annual appraisal through which targets are set for their ongoing professional development. Training courses are attended and evaluated as to their effectiveness on raising standards and quality of provision. Partnership with the Powys Early Years support team is well-established and impacts positively upon the setting’s educational provision. Links with the local primary school are effective, with regular and valuable support provided from an early years teacher, particularly in the development of bilingualism. The Playgroup has received the Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association’s [Wales PPA] ‘Quality Assurance Accreditation’ as recognition of its quality of care, education and management practice. Relevant policies and procedures are in place.

Shortcomings
No shortcomings were observed.

4.8 Progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report.

There has not been a previous Estyn inspection.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1. Continue to provide children with a high quality education.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to Estyn. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.