



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Berriew Playgroup  
Community Centre  
Berriew  
Welshpool  
Powys  
SY21 8TB**

**Date of inspection: March 2012**

**by**

**Mr Peter Mathias  
Reporting Inspector**

**for**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

| <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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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## Context

Berriw Playgroup is an English medium setting registered in 2002 for 24 children aged between two and a half and four years. It provides nursery education for children from the local rural area, generally for two terms prior to their transfer to other settings, usually to the nursery at Berriw CP School which is close to the large community hall in which the playgroup is based. The setting currently provides for nine children for four mornings per week for two and a half hours per session (9:15 – 11:45).

Children attending come from a wide range of social and economic circumstances. Generally they are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.

All children are from white, British backgrounds. No child has Welsh as a first language.

The setting was last inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in October 2010, which did not make any recommendations. The setting was previously inspected by Estyn in October 2005.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The quality and standards of educational provision are appropriate and successfully promote the Foundation Phase outcomes for children's learning because of the good:

- standards in communication in English, mathematical development, information and communications skills and very good Welsh development;
- behaviour and positive attitudes of all children;
- outgoing supportive relationships;
- opportunities for children to be independent and resourceful; and
- consistently good teaching.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the maintenance of good standards,
- successful progress in addressing recommendations of the last inspection by Estyn;
- commitment of all practitioners to continue professional development;
- a realistic plan for improvement based on accurate self-evaluation; and
- close and productive links with the local authority.

## Recommendations

The inspector has agreed with the setting the following recommendations for improvement:

- R1 extend and complete arrangements to assess and record children's attainment on entry to the setting and their progress; and
- R2 strengthen the roles of the management committee and the responsible person as critical yet supportive friends of the setting's staff.

### What happens next?

*The provider will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.*

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

**Good**

#### Standards: **Good**

All children achieve well, making good progress in the short time many have in the setting, in all areas of learning for the Foundation Phase. They are active and interested learners and take part in all activities eagerly. They enjoy the wide range of challenges and experiences provided for them to explore and learn at first hand.

Bearing in mind that they are very young, the children are developing their communication skills in English well. A particularly strong feature is the progress they are making and the standards reached in early Welsh language development. They talk confidently and clearly in English to adults and to each other. In Welsh they recognise and use phrases to describe the weather, to say how they feel and to name correctly farm animals and the primary colours. They are beginning to build up a range of Welsh rhymes and songs and to listen to Welsh stories told in English with some Welsh used.

All are interested in finding out more about the world. Each morning they learn something new about a country and where it is on the globe. They know where Wales is and that England and Scotland are parts of Great Britain. They notice the changes in the world around them, looking at treasures left under the trees and regularly visit a field to see how the corn grows in it from seed, until it is harvested.

All recognise that words carry meaning. A minority recognise the sounds which letters make and read the names of other children as well as their own. They practice making large round shapes with painting brushes and hold them correctly to do so. They listen intently to stories and follow the sequence of the story they know well.

All count confidently and enthusiastically to 20 in English and to 10 in Welsh. They are beginning to relate numbers in array to numerical symbols. They investigate shapes and how to fit them together. They know the names of some simple shapes and how to 'shop' using money to pay for their purchases. All know that some of their treasures are heavy and sink, while others such as feathers are light and float.

All of these young children are beginning to use information and communications technology confidently. With their helpers, they navigate through simple sequence programmes, pressing the cursor accurately. They pretend to take pictures and to use electronic equipment in their role-play.

Nearly all children in the setting are beginning to develop good skills in their creative work. They carefully choose a wide range of materials and media to make prints and to design and produce collages and artefacts such as Chinese lanterns.

**Wellbeing: Good**

All children understand the importance of hygiene and wash their hands thoroughly before eating or making food. They have a growing understanding of healthy and unhealthy foods. A particular strength is the independence they show when making choices for themselves. They confidently share their ideas with all adults and with each other. They are beginning to look after their personal needs and do so without any unnecessary disturbances.

All thoroughly enjoy being in the setting, beginning the day happily and looking forward to coming back again when they leave. They share their ideas and equipment generously. They are developing good eating habits and manners, all asking politely when they wish to leave their table at snack time. They enjoy taking on responsibilities in the setting for putting things away and at home 'while giving the cows their breakfast' which is a regular priority for some.

All know and follow the basic and important rules of behaviour and what is expected of them. They are all anxious to please and to be kind to each other.

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

Despite the need to set out and pack away resources at the beginning and end of each session, the setting is attractive and provides well for all children. The learning experiences are very carefully planned to involve all children and to provide them with a wide range of choices to develop all of the skills appropriate for their age. The curriculum is rigorously organised so that skills are developed systematically. The challenges are carefully matched to the different needs of each child. All practitioners co-operate closely to exchange ideas and to modify activities to respond to how children are learning. The setting very effectively encourages all children to explore for themselves and to be active, independent learners in their outdoor and indoor experiences.

All practitioners plan thoroughly to develop children's literacy and communication skills, numeracy and Welsh language skills. Planning in these areas identifies what the objectives are and indicates what should be organised next.

The planning to address all areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum is detailed so that all receive an interesting and well balanced range of experiences in the shorter and longer term. These plans ensure that all children learn about other cultures and lifestyles. For example, children recently took an active interest in celebrating the Chinese New Year.

The setting plans very effectively to develop confidence to use Welsh in daily life. Planning also gives emphasis to providing experiences to learn about the rich local environment and to begin to understand the diversity of modern society. Daily activities successfully promote children's awareness of the wider world and their place in it.

**Teaching: Good**

All practitioners have a thorough understanding of how to encourage and foster children's interest in learning and how to develop children's abilities to make informed choices. They question cleverly to promote children's thinking skills. They very rarely give instructions and regularly ask children to make decisions for themselves. They have high expectations of what can be achieved.

Practitioners work very successfully with other children to promote their confidence and to make all feel important and successful learners. They regularly reinforce children's use of incidental Welsh and encourage children to use it in informal conversations.

There are well established procedures to assess individual children's progress in the task which they undertake. However, the school is at an early point in the process of building up a reliable and detailed picture of children's individual starting points.

Practitioners discuss and evaluate individual children's progress regularly. They know each child very well and use that knowledge effectively to plan ahead to meet the next steps children need to take. Parents are informally made aware of their children's progress.

In the best examples in the setting, practitioners discuss with children how they are enjoying their activities and what they are doing well. They often encourage individuals to say how they might change what they have made in order for it to be better. However, most children are only at an early stage of becoming self-critical.

**Care, support and guidance: Good**

There are effective arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing which contributes successfully to children's development. There are many opportunities for children to experience the world about them and to explore in the outdoors. They show a real sense of wonder when examining buttercups in the field. They know some of the people and places nearby and further away which they regularly visit.

A particular strength is the provision for all children to learn to be co-operative and outgoing individuals. The setting ensures that they know what is right and wrong and are aware of the needs and rights of other children.

There are very good arrangements to provide children with personal and specialist support. Children with additional learning needs are quickly identified and given appropriate help. Links with parents in this area are strong and mutually supportive. Parents are kept fully informed and involved in their children's progress and all children feel safe in the setting and come to it and leave it happily.

The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

**Learning environment: Good**

The setting is a vibrant and interesting place for children. It is well-organised and skilfully planned to develop children's curiosity and independence. All practitioners consistently and successfully promote a family atmosphere where all children are treated equally and made to feel valued and held in affection.

There is a very good ratio of practitioners to children. All practitioners are appropriately qualified and relate very well to all children in their care. Their training needs are carefully reviewed and appropriate courses and meetings arranged.

The internal accommodation is suitable, comprising a large community hall and a smaller base facility. The setting has very good access to the adjacent primary school's outdoor facilities, which include very attractive grassed and wooden areas.

Resources are of a good quality and quantity. They are appropriate for children of this age and meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

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

All those involved in organising and running the setting are very committed to its success and actively support it. The setting leader is highly motivated and works closely with an experienced and able team to provide well for all children in the setting and to ensure that it has a very positive atmosphere where children are encouraged to thrive. She works very conscientiously to determine the future needs of practitioners and children and to address them.

There are regular informal links with the Person Responsible who is knowledgeable and experienced in provision for these younger children. However, both she and the management committee do not actively question leadership of the setting sufficiently to ensure that, for example the setting improvement plan is correctly focused and based upon rigorous self-evaluation. Their roles as critical yet supportive friends of the school are under developed.

The setting meets local and national priorities well. Very good progress has been made in putting the requirements of the Foundation Phase into practice. There has been significant success in introducing the children to Welsh and in making it a strong feature in the day-to-day experiences of all children. There are close and mutually beneficial links with the nearby primary school. Much has been achieved in establishing the initial skills children will need to develop good, all round skills in literacy and numeracy. All children have a growing awareness of their locality and of their place in the wider world.

**Improving quality: Good**

The leader and other practitioners have together thoroughly discussed the strengths and areas of relative weakness across the setting. Parents' views have been carefully considered. The subsequent self-evaluation document is sufficiently detailed and is accurate. However, the person responsible and the committees' involvement in it, has been limited. There are strong links with the local authority in judging the setting's future needs and a positive history of working closely and successfully to adapt practices to the changing needs.

**Partnership working: Good**

There are strong links with the nearby primary school's Foundation Phase to which most children move. There are detailed arrangements to ensure a smooth transition. All staff attend and often contribute to professional discussions and developments involving other local settings.

Links with individual parents are strong and the setting attempts, with mixed success, to encourage parental involvement through regular newsletters and fundraising events.

The local authority advisory service works closely and effectively with the setting as do visitors from the local community.

**Resource management: Good**

The professional staff are effectively deployed so that children receive much individual support and encouragement. The setting has a good range of high quality resources and equipment which are well used.

Despite the need to pack away at the end of each day and to reconstruct the learning areas the next day, all resources are readily accessible and well used during the sessions. There is good access to outdoor requires and facilities. Funds are well used.

The setting gives good value for money.

## **Appendix 1**

### **PARENTS**

As there were very few replies to the parents' questionnaire it is not appropriate to comment upon the views of those parents who did respond.

### **PUPILS**

All children in the setting were enthusiastic and confident. They all like coming to the setting and were happy to play with their friends. They all knew what was expected of them and responded readily when asked to take on responsibilities. They knew that the staff were always ready to help them and cared for them as individuals.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

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|------------------|---------------------|
| Mr Peter Mathias | Reporting Inspector |
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### Copies of the report

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

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

## Glossary of terms

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| <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 partnership's 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>   |

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| <b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</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 (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.  |