



*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**

**Wrexham Early Years Centre  
Prince Charles Road  
Wrexham  
LL13 8TH**

**Date of inspection: March 2015**

**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 school'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

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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## Context

The nursery school is located in Wrexham Early Years Centre in the Queensway area of Wrexham. The centre has a resourced provision, providing assessment places for a number of children with identified additional learning needs. There are currently 51 pupils on role between two and four years of age, of which 28 children attend the nursery. This inspection report refers to the 28 nursery aged children only. The school admits children into the nursery at the beginning of the term following their third birthday. Children attend the nursery school for five mornings per week from 9.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.

The school identifies around 64% of children as having additional learning needs. Most children speak English as their first language and no children are from homes where Welsh is spoken as their first language. There are no children who are looked after by the local authority.

Estyn last inspected the nursery school in February 2009, as Caia Park Nursery. The headteacher has been in post since September 2007. In total three full-time teachers, including the headteacher, work at the centre, with six full-time and six part-time support assistants.

The 2014-2015 individual school budget per pupil for Wrexham Early Years Centre is £8,360, which compares with a national average of £5,890 for all maintained nursery schools in Wales.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The school is good because:

- Most children make at least expected and often good progress from their different starting points
- Children who need extra support with their learning achieve well in relation to their abilities and children who are more able make strong progress
- Most children make good progress in developing their communication skills
- Many children write and mark-make for a variety of purposes
- Most children's Welsh oracy skills are good
- The school plans high quality and often innovative learning experiences that match the needs of children well
- Working relationships between practitioners and children are excellent and mutual respect and care underpin their work; as a result, most children are confident and engage well in their learning
- An outstanding ethos of care and respect creates a very positive learning environment
- Most children behave very well and show consideration for and co-operate well with their peers

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- The headteacher provides inspirational and inclusive leadership and is highly successful in creating a shared vision for improvement
- Senior leaders provide clear strategic direction based on a solid understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement
- All practitioners are keen to improve, learn from each other and work highly effectively as a team
- Provision for children with additional learning needs is outstanding
- The senior management team play a key role in modelling and promoting a very effective, professional learning culture
- Leadership roles and responsibilities are shared well and all practitioners participate fully in decision-making
- The school takes account of a useful range of information to support improving quality and there is a positive culture of self-evaluation
- Partnership work is strong, and partnerships with parents are exemplary
- The school has many strengths and examples of sector leading practice

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's problem solving skills
- R2 Develop opportunities for children to use and apply their numeracy skills across all areas of learning and in the outdoor environment
- R3 Improve monitoring procedures and make better use of data to evaluate the impact of initiatives on children's outcomes

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

A majority of children enter Wrexham Early Years Centre with skills well below those normally expected for their age. Most children make at least expected and often good progress from their different starting points. Children who need extra support with their learning achieve well in relation to their abilities and starting points. Children who are more able make strong progress.

Most children make good progress in developing their communication skills. Nearly all listen well to adults and each other. Many listen with interest and enjoyment to stories and respond appropriately to questions. Most children follow instructions carefully, for example when joining in the good morning dance routine and song. A majority of children handle books with care independently. They show interest in the content, talking with appropriate confidence about the pictures and the characters. A few children that are more able make sensible predictions about what comes next.

Many children talk or sign confidently to adults, including visitors, and to other children. A majority ask sensible questions and children that are more able use complete sentences to communicate, for example when talking about their interests, stories and school. Many children can identify their own name in print accurately and a minority are able to point out a few familiar words correctly.

Children's early writing and mark-making skills are developing well. Many write and mark-make for a range of purposes and a majority of children write the initial sounds of their name and other letter sounds successfully. A few children who are more able write their whole name legibly, with reasonable control over letter formation. Most children enjoy using a variety of media and tools, including paint, chalk, pencils, crayons and their fingers to draw or colour pictures and to develop their emergent writing skills. Many children handle a range of writing implements confidently, make marks and understand the purpose of writing, for example when making shopping lists in the role-play shop.

Many children make good progress in developing their numeracy skills. They are beginning to apply these skills appropriately across a few areas of learning. For example, children count the grapes and cubes of cheese at snack time and use suitable comparative language when discussing which jungle animals are the tallest, shortest or longest. Many children count, sort and match objects to at least 10 and a few more able children count to 20 and beyond. A majority know the names of simple shapes, and can repeat simple patterns and sequences. Overall, children do not apply their numeracy skills as well in other areas of learning as they do in specific mathematics activities. Children's oracy skills in Welsh are generally good. Most children respond appropriately to the register in Welsh and many answer questions correctly about the weather and days of the week, and can name colours. Many follow simple commands and instructions accurately.

## **Wellbeing: Good**

All children enjoy coming to nursery school and show high levels of enjoyment and engagement in learning. They feel safe and demonstrate high levels of wellbeing. Many children maintain suitable levels of concentration to complete tasks successfully and to the best of their ability. Nearly all children's behaviour is very good and most are courteous and polite to visitors and show consideration and concern for each other. Most children settle quickly into daily routines and work well together in pairs and small groups. They take turns and share resources well. Children have great confidence in practitioners that care for them and, as a result, develop high levels of self-esteem and suitable levels of independence. Many children accept responsibility readily, for example during 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions and when collecting and tidying away resources such as the 'treasure box' at circle time.

Many children have an appropriate knowledge of how to be active and healthy. They develop good attitudes to trying healthy foods. Most are confident at trying a range of activities that promote physical development regularly. For example, they enthusiastically join in with the daily dance session and use the outdoor adventure area well.

Many children attend the nursery regularly and are punctual.

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

Practitioners have a very good knowledge and understanding of what the children know and how they learn best. This enables them to plan innovative activities that are both flexible and responsive to children's varied needs and interests. For example, the use of a super hero theme to encourage boys' writing was very effective.

Practitioners monitor how well children engage in learning activities then alter their planning and practice accordingly. This allows children to sustain their interest and to make the best possible progress and is a particularly strong feature of provision. Practitioners plan learning activities that enable the children to acquire and develop their communication, mathematical development, information and communication technology (ICT) and creative skills at an individual level. This flexibility of approach is outstanding practice and enables children with additional learning needs to make good progress from their differing starting points and children who are more able to make strong progress. However, opportunities for children to use and apply their numeracy and problem solving skills are less well developed.

The school plans high quality and stimulating 'play based' learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, and takes very good account of effective Foundation Phase practice. This promotes independent learning, highly effectively. Planning is imaginative and builds on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills successfully.

The school provides good opportunities for the children to gain a sound understanding of Welsh. It promotes their knowledge and understanding of their Welsh heritage well. For example, pupils from a local Welsh-medium primary school sing traditional Welsh songs to the children and hold conversations in Welsh with them. This inspires the nursery children to use more Welsh.

Musical workshops make a valuable contribution to developing children's creative skills as they learn songs and play instruments together. During the inspection, a majority of children enjoyed using the African drums and other instruments purposefully in the outdoor music making area.

The school plans worthwhile opportunities for children to learn about sustainability through recycling projects. They learn to grow flowers and to care for a community garden. Practitioners foster children's understanding of the wider world well, and regularly greet them in a range of languages. The study of other continents, such as Africa, as part of topic work, enables children to celebrate other customs, dances and food.

### **Teaching: Excellent**

All practitioners have a very secure knowledge and understanding Foundation Phase practice and expertise in supporting the many and varied additional learning needs that children at the school have. They ensure that children learn through first-hand experiences of high quality, often delivered at an individual level according to a child's needs, for example using super hero magic gloves to support reluctant boy writers.

Working relationships between practitioners and children are excellent. Mutual respect and care underpin their work and, as a result, most children are confident and engaged in their learning. A positive learning environment encourages children to be inquisitive and keen to experience new things. In nearly all lessons, practitioners keep learning moving along at a brisk pace. For example, during free choice sessions, practitioners engage enthusiastically in role-play and in sorting or mark making activities with the children, encouraging their 'play' but not directing it.

An outstanding feature of teaching is the way all practitioners use questioning to support and challenge all children to achieve their best. Practitioners are very good models of high quality language and use oral communication and sign language well to check children's understanding. All practitioners manage behaviour very well and praise children regularly for good sitting, listening, sharing and manners. This contributes to the high levels of wellbeing and self-worth that all children demonstrate successfully.

The school has its own assessment tool to monitor and to track children's progress in learning and wellbeing. Practitioners use on-going observational evidence of children and session observations to assess children's learning and the progress they make. This, together with their thorough knowledge of children's individual needs, enables them to track individual children's progress well, set clear next steps for learning and inform future planning effectively.

Leaders transfer information from regular review meetings and assessments onto an electronic tracking system. This enables them to measure the progress of all children over time appropriately. The tracking and assessment profiles for children with additional learning needs are very detailed and informative and contain many examples of excellent practice. Each term, the school prepares detailed 'learning stories', which capture significant events in the children's learning. Practitioners use these very effectively to celebrate and to share learning experiences with the children and their parents. This provides parents with a clear picture of their child's progress and achievement and an understanding of the next steps they need to take in learning.

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

The school provides superb levels of care support and guidance for children and parents. There is a clear focus on developing children's wellbeing across the school and this ensures that nearly all children are happy and are developing into confident learners.

Suitable arrangements are in place to promote children's healthy eating and drinking. The school promotes children's physical development very effectively. For example, the daily use of the mini gym equipment contributes well to developing children's understanding of the benefits of exercise. Interesting learning experiences support children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The end of day thank you routine is highly beneficial in developing children's self-esteem and enables them to celebrate each other achievements well. Visits to the local church and times for quiet reflection and prayer support children's sense of awe and wonder successfully. In addition, the celebration of Chinese New Year enables children to develop their understanding of other customs and beliefs.

The school has an inclusive ethos and welcomes children with diverse and often complex additional learning needs. Timely and well-targeted support from knowledgeable and highly experienced practitioners results in significant improvements for these children, particularly in developing their personal and social and communication skills. Highly beneficial links with specialist services, such the educational psychologist and speech and language services, offer useful additional advice. The quality of care, support and guidance for children with additional learning needs is an outstanding feature of the school and individual learning plans are exemplary.

The school keeps parents very well informed about their children's progress and offers a range of excellent support programmes, including a weekly drop in session, and advice on children's toilet training.

The school promotes regular attendance effectively and has robust procedures in place to follow up absences. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

## **Learning environment: Good**

The school provides an extremely inclusive, caring and welcoming environment for children. All practitioners work closely together to celebrate children's talents and differences and to enhance their learning. This means that children feel valued and have high levels of wellbeing. The school treats all children fairly and with respect and they have access to all aspects of the curriculum. Equality of opportunity is evident both in policy and in practice.

The accommodation and outside space are of good quality and the site is safe and secure. Practitioners make very good use of all available space, including the attractive outdoor area. The school uses the 'Dandelion Room' effectively as a multi-sensory base to support children with specific learning needs, and as a quiet space to work and relax. Resources are plentiful and of a high quality. They support the very varied learning needs and interests of the children successfully.

Displays are a good mix of children's work and teaching aids and enhance the learning environment well. The school is vibrant and has a 'family atmosphere'. This enables these very young children to settle quickly and happily. Role-play areas both indoors and outdoors contribute significantly to the quality of children's learning, particularly their communication and physical development skills.

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

The inspirational and inclusive leadership by the headteacher is highly successful in establishing a common vision. She strives for continuous improvement whilst maintaining a caring and happy learning environment where all achievements are celebrated and all are welcome. She provides clear strategic direction based on a solid understanding of the strengths of the school and its priorities for development. The headteacher succeeds in developing reflective practitioners, who are keen to improve and learn from each other and from other schools and settings. The wellbeing of staff is a high priority for the school and contributes to the strong sense of teamwork and shared ownership at all levels.

A high level of openness, trust and respect among senior leaders, support staff and governors successfully fosters a strong culture of support, challenge and shared professional development. All staff share a commitment to attain or exceed targets for improvement. The senior management team work exceptionally well together. They play a key role in promoting a very effective, professional learning culture throughout the school. This supports a consistent approach to teaching and learning throughout the school, resulting in notable examples of excellent practice.

The school shares leadership roles and staff responsibilities well across all areas of learning and in developing wider aspects of the school's life, for example home-school and community partnerships. All staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and undertake these conscientiously and purposefully, making a significant contribution to moving the school forward. All meetings focus well on school improvement priorities. Leaders monitor the impact of decisions made at these meetings and analyse a range of data as appropriate.

All practitioners share good practice, work well as a team and participate fully in decision-making in order to take the school forward. The school has highly effective systems for performance management for all practitioners. This process challenges them to achieve highly and sets personal targets that relate directly to the school's main priorities. For example, practitioners improved their expertise in developing children's communication skills and in behaviour management techniques. This is highly beneficial in supporting children with differing and often complex additional learning needs. Targeted training enables the school to provide outstanding support for these children. The school shares this sector leading practice well with other local schools and settings.

The school takes good account of local and national priorities, resulting in the successful promotion of healthy eating and drinking, and a high profile being given to developing children's Welsh oracy skills.

Governors have a very clear understanding of the current performance of the school and ensure that it meets its statutory obligations well. Members of the governing body have a range of useful skills and expertise. These skills help them to act effectively as a critical friend to support the school in moving forward.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school takes suitable account of a useful range of information to support improving quality and there is a culture of using self-evaluation to improve performance. All practitioners and governors are involved in self-evaluation and have a clear understanding of the school's priorities. This informs actions in the school improvement plan appropriately. Leaders use information from observations on teaching, monitor how well children engage in activities and analyse daily routines to identify areas for development successfully. For example, they identify that girls are regularly outperforming boys on entry to the nursery in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical skills. Suitable targets are in place in the school improvement plan to address this. However, results are not always analysed clearly enough at a group or whole school level to allow leaders to analyse the impact of initiatives fully.

Leaders value the views of parents and consult them regularly. In response to parents' suggestions, practitioners post a regular diary outlining skills and activities that children undertake on the school's web site. This allows parents to understand what their child is learning about and to provide extra support at home if they wish.

Practitioners at all levels work together appropriately in teams that have responsibility for developing areas of learning. Each year, they report on actions taken to improve their area and any follow-up action required. Regular monitoring of children's engagement and class routines last year identified that children were not as involved or interested in mathematical activities as in other activities. As a result, practitioners established a network of professional practice with another local school to share ideas and to plan for a broader range of mathematical development opportunities across areas of learning.

Findings from self-evaluation link closely to priorities for improvement and the school improvement plan covers all aspects of the school's work. The improvement plan is a detailed document and includes relevant objectives, allocates responsibilities and identifies timescales and costings appropriately. It makes suitable use of data to identify priorities, but it is less successful in using data to evaluate the effectiveness of each priority in terms of its impact on children's outcomes.

### **Partnership working: Excellent**

Partnership working is an exemplary feature of the school. The school makes extensive use of a number of partnerships to improve children's wellbeing and personal and social development highly effectively. The school's partnership with parents is strong and includes many examples of sector leading practice. Parents have many valuable opportunities to visit the school. Practitioners share children's learning with parents effectively, through the extensive use of 'learning stories'. Numerous initiatives, such as the school's 'Hand in Hand' programme, offer tailored support and advice on many aspects of parenting, including bedtime routines. Weekly drop in sessions give parents highly beneficial advice on a range of medical and wellbeing issues, for example advice on how to encourage fussy eaters to eat a healthy diet. The school offers advice for parents on how they can support their child's learning at home. The 'number library' allows parents to take home resources and games and provides interesting ideas on how to develop their children's mathematics skills at home. The 'home school book' gives parents regular bespoke individual advice on how to support their children and clearly identifies next steps for learning. This is outstanding practice.

The school makes very good use of the valuable advice and guidance about supporting children with additional learning needs, from a range of specialist professionals. These include educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and other agencies. This advice feeds into children's individual development plans highly effectively and allows these children to make beneficial progress from their differing starting points. These plans demonstrate numerous examples of excellent practice.

Transition arrangements are extensive. Strong links with Flying Start services support early identification of children's needs and this eases their transfer into nursery school. Practitioners prepare children well for their move into full-time school. Children have many opportunities to meet their new teachers who visit the nursery school. An outstanding feature is the way practitioners then visit the new schools to demonstrate behaviour and learning strategies to support these children. Follow up phone calls to check on how well children are settling and to provide advice and support help children through a time of change successfully and enable them to settle into their new schools quickly and happily.

The school makes highly effective use of links with other primary schools to share teaching practices. Practitioners observe each other's lessons and suggest ways to improve and to develop provision. The nursery school also shares their extensive expertise on managing behaviour and providing for children with additional complex needs.

The school has good links with the community, through taking part in a community garden project. A celebratory visit from the local mayor enabled children to feel proud of their contributions and raised their self-esteem.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school has a generous level of staffing and leaders deploy practitioners effectively to make the best use of their expertise. The school uses its performance management procedures well to identify and meet the professional development needs of teaching and support staff. The professional development of all is high on the agenda. Leaders encourage staff to attend training, to make visits to other providers to share good practice, and to make effective use of research to improve their knowledge and performance.

Training focuses well on relevant issues, such as child protection training, Welsh language development and training for practitioners to work with children who need extra help with their learning. This improves practitioners' skills and makes a positive difference to the standards children achieve and their wellbeing.

There are suitable arrangements for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time and senior leaders have appropriate additional time to undertake their leadership roles when required. The headteacher and governors manage the budget carefully and monitor spending decisions appropriately. They identify and allocate resources suitably to meet the priorities in the school improvement plan. The school has many strengths and examples of outstanding practice and, in view of the good progress children make, often from low starting points, the school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Mrs Susan Davies	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sue Roberts	Team Inspector
Mr Peter Duncan Haworth	Lay Inspector
Mr Michael Fryer	Peer Inspector
Rhian Hughes (HeadTeacher)	Nominee

## Copies of the report

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

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.