



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

A report on

**Leeswood Playgroup
Youth Hall
Ysgol Derwenfa
Leeswood
Flintshire
CH7 4RQ**

Date of inspection: July 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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Publication date: 11/09/2018

Context

Leeswood Playgroup is an English-medium setting in Flintshire local authority. The setting is registered for up to 24 children from the ages of two to four years. It offers early years education sessions from 9.15am to 11.45am during school term time from January to July, for four days each week and is closed on Fridays. At the time of the inspection, there were six children in receipt of funded early education.

The setting has identified no children as having additional learning needs. All speak English as their home language and no children speak Welsh at home.

There are two full-time members of staff who have worked closely together as joint supervisors since February 2005. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in December 2015 and Estyn last inspected it in March 2013.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- Nearly all children's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Practitioners provide a good range of learning experiences, which engage children successfully
- Nearly all children engage positively with their chosen activities and sustain interest and concentration well
- Relationships between practitioners and children are strong and positive and, as a result, children are happy and relaxed in the setting
- The learning environment is well organised and resourced
- Practitioners carry out careful assessments that enable them to identify the next steps in individual children's learning successfully

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Practitioners know the setting well and are committed to ensuring high quality provision
- Practitioners work together successfully as a strong and mutually supportive team
- There are effective systems for identifying the setting's areas for improvement
- Practitioners make positive steps towards meeting the areas for development
- The setting has effective partnerships with parents and the local primary school
- Practitioners take advantage of training opportunities to extend and improve their practice effectively

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that numeracy experiences provide appropriate challenge in order to meet the needs of all abilities, especially the more able
- R2 Plan and provide regular opportunities for children to develop the full range of skills outdoors
- R3 Improve children's knowledge and use of the Welsh language
- R4 Provide planned opportunities for children to develop their problem solving and thinking skills systematically

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Most children make good progress in developing their skills and understanding during their time in the setting. Many speak clearly in sentences and are happy to talk to visitors about what they are doing. During story time nearly all sit quietly and listen attentively with genuine enjoyment. They show their interest and understanding through the comments they make and anticipate eagerly what is going to happen next. A few children choose to look at books during free play. They hold them correctly and turn pages carefully, sharing favourite pictures with their friends. Most children enjoy making marks in different ways such as making handprints with paint and chalking on the tree trunks in the outdoor area. Many children make meaningful marks as part of their play, for example when they write 'notes' about their patient in the role play hospital.

Most children have strong numeracy skills. They count confidently together by rote to ten and many are able to do this individually. Most three year olds count objects up to at least five accurately, and a very few count objects to ten in both Welsh and English. Many children use mathematical language regularly during their play. For example, when playing with water they talk about their containers being full or empty. Most identify simple shapes such as circles, triangles and squares correctly. However, more able children do not move on to extend their numeracy skills well enough.

Most children are developing their confidence in using a range of information and communication technology (ICT) with increasing skill and understanding. They control a remote control toy, press buttons on a calculator carefully and use the setting's camera to take photographs of their activities. Practitioners put these onto an electronic photo frame and many children take great delight in watching their photographs and those of their friends on display.

Children's Welsh language skills are progressing appropriately. Most children are keen to join in with the simple Welsh songs that they sing together at group times and ask for llaeth or dŵr when they go to pour their drink at snack time. However, very few children practise and extend their Welsh language skills at other times during the sessions.

Most children develop good physical skills. They snip paper and thin card carefully and handle a range of equipment such as pencils, brushes, rolling pins and cutters with good levels of co-ordination. Outdoors they show good body control as they run and jump, handle large bouncy balls and ride wheeled vehicles.

Many children are beginning to use their thinking skills successfully during group times when practitioners ask questions such as 'who is wearing something with stripes?' or 'I am thinking of someone with a blue bow in their hair'. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children come into the setting happy and eager to see what they will be doing. They settle quickly to their chosen activities, share resources readily and take turns when painting at the easel or playing in the water tray. Most children sustain their interest well. For example, when playing in the home corner they take turns 'cutting up' the wooden fruit and vegetables to cook and serve dinner to one another. However, they do not help make choices about what they learn or about the sort of activities practitioners will plan.

Nearly all children are familiar with daily routines. When it is time to tidy up, they respond immediately to the sound of a tambourine and form a group around the supervisor who gives them specific jobs to do. Nearly all carry out their jobs conscientiously before sitting down on the mat ready for singing and snack time. Standards of behaviour are very good. Children treat equipment with respect and are kind and caring towards one another. Most children develop their independence, self-confidence and social skills well. For example, they choose the activities they would like to take part in confidently and understand that if there are too many they need to wait and take their turn. They pour their own drinks at snack time from a small jug and then carry their cup to their seat carefully.

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

Practitioners plan carefully to provide a good range of learning experiences indoors that engage almost all children successfully. They ensure that over time planned activities cover all areas of the foundation phase curriculum effectively. Short-term plans focus appropriately on developing children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Practitioners evaluate children's progress against these skills well. In most cases, they use these evaluations effectively to plan the next steps in learning for individual children. Practitioners have benefited from training from the local authority to help them begin to provide suitable activities outdoors. However, this is still at a very early stage of development. Use of the outdoors is not a consistent part of the setting's year-round routine yet and practitioners do not plan effectively to develop the full range of children's skills outside.

Planned activities provide children with stimulating and interesting experiences across all foundation phase areas of learning. However, planning for numeracy does not always consider children's differing abilities or challenge individual children, including the more able, well enough. Practitioners take good account of children's interests when planning suitable activities. For example, when they noticed that children were pretending to be pilots in an aeroplane, they developed a 'Holiday Shop' in the role play area to enable them to further investigate the concept of travel. However, practitioners do not consult children about what they would like to learn.

Practitioners use every day Welsh during group times effectively, such as counting, reading stories about Ticw the bear and through singing Welsh songs. This is successful in encouraging children to use the language but is not sustained throughout the sessions. As a result, children's skills in this area are underdeveloped. Opportunities for children to develop their awareness of Welsh

culture and traditions are appropriate. For example, they display photographs of Welsh landmarks and celebrate St David's Day by providing opportunities to sing in Welsh, dress up, make daffodils and taste Welsh foods.

The setting uses the local environment successfully to enhance the curriculum. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about the world around them and the changing seasons from their regular walks around the school grounds and visits to see the ducks in a neighbouring garden. Visits to the shop and post office offer further insight into the real world when they help to shop for their snacks or buy stamps to post the Christmas cards they have made.

Practitioners provide appropriate opportunities for children to understand the importance of caring for living things by ensuring that they plant flowers in pots to decorate the fence around their outdoor learning area. They discover at first hand that the flowers need to be watered regularly, especially in very warm weather.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a sound knowledge of the foundation phase curriculum and a clear understanding of how young children learn. They use the foundation phase assessment profile effectively. They work well together and share ideas to provide a range of interesting opportunities for children to learn through first hand experiences. These engage children's interest and enthusiasm and support their learning positively. For example, a recent visit to the village Community Café enabled children to choose their drink from the menu and understand that they needed to pay for what they had.

Practitioners maintain a suitable balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities and practitioners respond positively to children's interests. However, practitioners do not provide challenging enough opportunities for children to develop their thinking and problem solving skills systematically.

Practitioners create a busy and happy working environment. They know when to intervene and when to take a step back and allow children to explore and investigate for themselves. Practitioners set high expectations and make sure that children understand the setting's routines well. As a result, behaviour is good throughout the sessions.

The setting has effective procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress. They use the information from observations and evaluations of focused activities to identify individual children's next steps in learning and to plan appropriately to support future progress. Practitioners keep parents well informed about their child's achievements and wellbeing. They share information regularly through informal daily contacts, and provide useful opportunities during the year to discuss more formally their child's progress and their next steps in learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing successfully. It has a worthwhile range of procedures and policies to promote this aim. Children enjoy a

good selection of healthy foods at snack time and practitioners ensure that they understand the need to wash their hands before eating food.

Well-established daily routines ensure that children settle quickly into each session. During play activities, practitioners discuss with children the importance of taking care of equipment, being kind and of sharing. This contributes well to developing their personal and social skills. The positive relationships and good behaviour seen in the setting are good examples of how these routines are working well.

Practitioners plan a useful range of activities and maintain a suitable variety of resources to help children develop their spiritual, moral, and cultural understanding. Children learn about the diversity of their world through a wide range of books, puzzles and posters on display that depict different cultures and disabilities.

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

Practitioners are very experienced, know the children well and readily identify children that may need extra help. There are sound processes in place to support these children when necessary.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where children feel valued and cared for. A happy and caring ethos ensures that children feel welcome. All children have equal access to the curriculum and to all activities. Practitioners are good role models and encourage children to care for equipment and to treat each other with respect and kindness.

The setting does not have sole use of the room and there are restrictions around use of resources, such as sand, in the hall. Within these constraints, practitioners provide a stimulating learning environment that covers most areas of learning well. Practitioners display interesting posters and information charts daily, which create an attractive and welcoming environment for both the children and visitors. They provide plenty of good quality resources and use these well to support children's learning.

The setting is beginning to use the outdoor area to provide a wider range of worthwhile learning experiences, such as the recently installed mud kitchen, planting flowers and hunting for treasure in the sand tray.

The indoor accommodation and outdoor area are secure and well maintained. The setting uses the local environment well to extend children's learning experiences. For example, children recently benefited from a visit to the local cafe.

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

The joint supervisors have worked closely in the setting for several years. They have established a clear vision for the setting that focuses on ensuring that all children are happy and make successful progress within a caring environment. They have

detailed, up-to-date job descriptions and they understand their individual roles and responsibilities clearly. As a result, practitioners work together as a very effective team. Although they do not have formal staff meetings, they talk together at the beginning and end of sessions to evaluate children's progress and discuss what needs to be done next.

The setting has found it difficult to recruit parents to the management committee and practitioners have worked conscientiously without this support for a few years. A new committee has been established very recently, providing a named treasurer and committee member. This arrangement is beginning to provide the setting with valuable support in moving forward.

A range of beneficial policies supports the organisation of the setting and practitioners review and update these annually. Practitioners pay good attention to local and national priorities such as promoting healthy eating and regular exercise and developing children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Practitioners fully understand the areas in which the setting needs to improve and they seek support and advice from outside agencies if necessary. Leaders have developed suitable annual appraisals to identify individual targets for improvement.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and practitioners conduct an efficient annual self-evaluation of the work of the setting. They discuss together the progress made over the past year and seek advice from professionals to support identifying future priorities. The priorities for improvement arise clearly from the setting's self-evaluation and define timescales and costings. The documentation is detailed and shows clearly the steps taken to meet the targets and the reasons why.

Meeting the settings priorities results in regular improvements to the provision for the children. For example, practitioners identified the need to develop the outdoor area further to provide more opportunities for the children to develop their skills. As a result, they have recently introduced new equipment including a simple mud kitchen where children develop their physical, mathematical and communication skills while having fun. However, this development is not yet embedded well enough in the setting's planning.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a good range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children.

Parents receive useful information through daily informal contact with practitioners, newsletters, parent's meetings and social media. This helps parents to feel informed about daily activities and comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns.

There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to the school. For example, when the nursery class go out on trips, the playgroup are able to use their classroom and facilities. This helps the children to become familiar with the environment to which most of them move on.

The setting has valuable links with the local authority and receives regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. This has led to regular improvements in standards and provision. The Wales Pre-school Providers Association officer provides beneficial administrative support that also enhances the provision and children's standards.

Practitioners make beneficial use of links with the local community to enhance and enrich the curriculum. For example, children visit the shop and walk around the village to look at the different houses and at where they live. The setting also takes part in community activities, such as the annual carnival when they dress up and join the parade.

Resource management: Good

The setting has sufficient practitioners with appropriate qualifications and a wealth of experience of working with young children. Practitioners deploy themselves effectively and make good use of their individual interests and expertise. Practitioners access helpful training opportunities to improve their knowledge and the children's learning opportunities. For example, recent training has successfully helped practitioners to enhance their use of the outdoor learning area and increased the range of activities available for the children to explore and investigate.

In the absence of a management committee over the past few years, practitioners have managed the finances efficiently and ensured that they follow good accounting and audit procedures. There is very little money available after meeting standing costs and the setting has benefited from additional support from outside agencies to acquire essential new equipment to support the delivery of the foundation phase.

In view of the positive outcomes for children and the quality of the provision, 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	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh</p>
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

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