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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on
Guilsfield Pre-School Playgroup**

**Guilsfield School
Guilsfield
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 9ND**

Date of inspection: December 2010

by

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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:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Context

Guilsfield Pre-School Playgroup is an English-medium setting. It serves the rural village of Guilsfield near the town of Welshpool in Powys. It meets in the Community Centre that is attached to Guilsfield Primary School. The playgroup is a co-opted body of the school.

The children who attend are considered to come mainly from advantaged backgrounds. Almost all children have English as their home language. None of the children speak Welsh at home. One child has English as an additional language. None of the children have additional learning needs.

The setting is open four mornings each week during school terms. It is registered for 20 children between the ages of two and a half and four years old. At the time of the inspection all the places were filled. The local authority (LA) funds sixteen children.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in October 2010. It is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting is good because:

- the children achieve well;
- a wide range of learning experiences is provided;
- there is strong emphasis on promoting wellbeing; and
- there are warm, caring relationships between children and practitioners.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- it is well led and practitioners work as an enthusiastic and effective team;
- leadership is reflective and strives to tailor provision closely to children's needs;
- self-evaluation is impacting positively on the quality of provision; and
- there is evidence of progress towards goals set for improvement.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, Guilsfield Pre-school Playgroup needs to ensure:

- R1 a continued focus on improving standards in Welsh language development;
- R2 the sharing of good practice in teaching and the effective use of planning to help practitioners challenge children's learning;
- R3 greater flexibility in the setting's use of space to engage all children in the full range of activities.

What happens next?

The setting 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

Nearly all children begin playgroup with well-developed skills in relation to their age and stage of development. Most make good progress across the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning as they acquire new knowledge and enhance their skills. They enjoy the stimulus and challenge of varied activities. Nearly all are confident learners who readily explore their surroundings and try out new experiences.

All children apply their skills well to a wide range of structured play activities. Most have excellent communication skills. They listen attentively to instructions and use a wide vocabulary and varied sentence structures to express themselves. Most older children are inquisitive and eagerly initiate simple conversations and ask questions. Most children join in with songs enthusiastically and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. Older children show awareness that text and pictures convey the story. Many are interested in writing, such as when playing in the 'post office area.' Most recognise their name on their placemat at 'snack time' and many older ones form letters when mark-making and write their first names. Children use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently, such as in the use of CD players, a programmable toy and using a laptop.

Most children count objects correctly to at least five and many name and recognise common shapes. They use mathematical language and skills correctly when sequencing objects and describing their position. Many show a good understanding of money as they role-play buying cards and sending parcels in the 'post office.'

Almost all children show very good levels of independence. They confidently choose tools or materials themselves, visit the toilet unaided and share resources well. They concentrate for long periods, such as when building in the 'construction area,' making Christmas decorations and wrapping presents. Most only ask for help when it is genuinely needed.

Many children make very good progress in creative development. They eagerly explore and experiment with a variety of techniques and materials including paint, sand, water, icing and dough. Their co-ordination skills are very good as they mix, cut, shape, arrange and combine materials to create pictures and decorations. Most show imagination in role-play and they enjoy listening to and 'making' music.

Children's progress in Welsh language is adequate. A majority show increasing understanding of familiar phrases, they count to five and name colours, although their understanding of simple instructions and use of individual words in Welsh are at an early stage.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are well motivated and enjoy their learning. They enter the setting

with confidence, settle quickly into activities and show positive attitudes to keeping healthy and safe. They show appropriate respect and care for each other and respond well to the positive role models for relationships set by adults. Most children co-operate well during play activities and actively encourage others to take part in games when using apparatus in the hall.

The overall standard of behaviour is very good. Nearly all children are polite and courteous. They are keen to talk to adults about what they do. Most take turns and share toys and resources readily. The children take care of resources and develop responsibility by enthusiastically joining in tidy-up sessions.

Nearly all children are aware of the need for personal hygiene such as washing their hands after visiting the toilet and before 'snack time.' They develop good social skills. Most name fruits and understand that eating a range of food and doing physical activities helps them to keep healthy. They also contribute effectively to planning activities, such as dressing up for charity, and making decisions about which indoor and outdoor activities they like best.

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

The setting is successful in engaging children in a wide range of varied and stimulating learning experiences that meet the range of needs well. Planning is clearly based on Foundation Phase principles and incorporates activities linked closely to the expected areas of learning. Practitioners work very well together to plan a broad range of activities that engage and challenge most children to learn effectively. This planning helps to ensure appropriate balance across the different areas and builds well on children's prior knowledge and skills. There is a strong focus on promoting skills in literacy, numeracy and communication, and the provision for creative skills is a particular feature.

Medium term thematic plans and detailed weekly planning reflect a good understanding of the Foundation Phase Outcomes and provide a good basis to ensure the progressive development of children's skills. A good feature is the identification of key vocabulary and prompts for questions. Practitioners show appropriate awareness of key points in this planning, but make too little reference to weekly plans in order to focus activities on a day-to-day basis.

Over time practitioners plan many opportunities for children to solve problems, become independent, encounter new experiences and encourage them to think for themselves. They know the children very well and increasingly tailor focused activities to their varying needs and abilities. The learning experiences foster positive relationships, nurture respect and tolerance and promote awareness of other cultures, such as through celebrating festivals. There is an appropriate balance between indoor and outdoor activities and visits and visitors encourage wider understanding of the world and of the need to care for all living things.

There is good provision to promote awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales,

but the extent to which practitioners promote use of the Welsh language is variable.

The setting provides appropriate opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, recycling and the impact we have on the world.

Teaching: Good

The overall quality of teaching is good. Most practitioners are aware of the learning objectives for activities, have a sound understanding of the Foundation Phase and use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning. They make learning fun, such as by modeling role-play, and the children respond very well to this. The children are given plenty of time to complete or develop a task and in the best practice practitioners intervene skillfully and appropriately when needed. These practitioners use open-ended questioning particularly well to extend and challenge children's thinking. Teaching is most effective when practitioners challenge children effectively and provide them with helpful oral feedback as they learn. However, the focus on key vocabulary and the skills to be developed is less secure when the objectives in planning are not fully developed.

The arrangements for the assessment of learning are a strong feature. Day-to-day observations are recorded and used well to praise children's achievements. The setting leader skillfully tailors procedures to match the needs of the setting and involve all practitioners. Day-to-day observations and the periodic implementation of focused assessments are used well to evaluate individual progress and plan children's next steps of learning. Practitioners make time before and after sessions to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress. The setting also provides a detailed report of progress when children leave the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. This provision contributes well to children's overall development. It promotes a sense of curiosity about the world, fosters values such as honesty and fairness, encourages good behaviour and provides opportunities for children to engage with a range of community and cultural activities.

There are effective induction and transition arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting. Links with the partner primary school are effective.

Arrangements to provide children with personal and specialist support when required are well established, with the school and the relevant LA services. This includes arrangements to support and integrate children with identified additional learning needs. The provision to support more able children is sound, but opportunities to tailor provision to their particular needs are not always fully developed.

The procedures to ensure the setting is safe and secure are effective. Appropriate up-to-date risk assessments are in place and members of staff and regular volunteers have valid CRB checks. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting provides a welcoming environment and has an inclusive ethos. The adults value children as individuals and nurture sensitivity and understanding towards others. The children have equal access to all areas of provision and the setting meets its duties under the Race Relations and Disability Discrimination Acts.

Photographic evidence and discussions with practitioners and children confirms that good use is made of the local environment and also of visitors to the setting. A good range of learning resources is available to promote all areas of learning.

The accommodation is sufficient, but its layout imposes constraints. All members of staff work hard to maintain a good range of provision and do so with success. The indoor and outdoor space is divided into separate areas that are not all interlinked. This limits the extent to which children can move between 'focused' and 'continuous' activities. Space for storage and the display of children's work is also very limited. Furthermore, access to the setting is via steps that limit disability access.

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

The setting has a clear sense of purpose and its leader creates a very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. Parents are provided with a clear statement of purpose that includes a summary of the provision offered.

Leadership is reflective, sets high expectations and communicates a clear vision for improvement. This ensures practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and of the setting's direction and purpose. The developing culture of self-reflection and self-improvement amongst practitioners is a strong feature that helps to develop and maintain the good work of the setting. Regular staff meetings ensure that practitioners contribute to long-term planning.

The setting is well led and managed and there are plans to formalise arrangements for staff appraisal. Close liaison with the school's head teacher is beneficial and the work of link governors is supportive. Practitioners respond positively to relevant national and local priorities. In particular the provision embraces the Foundation Phase principles very well.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has good procedures to evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement and its leader has made good use of Foundation Phase training to improve curriculum planning and organisation. There is a clear commitment to valuing the views of parents, carers and children about initiatives.

The setting's self-evaluation report was of very good quality. All practitioners contribute well to the self-evaluation process. An excellent feature is the established annual audit of provision that identifies key areas for improvement. Concise, well-focused action plans guide their implementation and there is, for example, evidence

of improvement with a stronger focus on Welsh language development and in focusing observations of children's progress.

Liaison with the LA is effective in improving quality. Visits by an advisory teacher help to promote 'best practice' and encourages practitioners to reflect on how the setting is organised. Practitioners value the support they receive and are keen to respond to advice and guidance. They benefit from attending training organised by the LA. The setting has close links with a nearby setting, but such networking with other settings to share good practice is at an early stage of development.

Partnership working: Good

A good range of partnership working contributes to children's progress and wellbeing. Practitioners create positive relationships with parents and carers that have a significant impact on children's welfare. Newsletters and the parents' notice board keep them up to date with important dates and information.

Partnership working between practitioners within the setting is purposeful and established links with the primary school help to ensure a smooth transition from playgroup to school. The setting enriches provision through its uses of visitors from the community, such as fire fighters. It also provides placements for students undertaking vocational courses and benefits from information provided by the Welsh Pre-school Playgroup Providers Association.

Resource management: Good

There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced practitioners to meet the needs of children and the curriculum. They are well deployed and daily routines ensure the good range of resources available is set up to provide an appropriate range of activities. Photographic evidence and discussions indicate that good use is made of the outdoor area, but opportunities to integrate the use of indoor and outdoor spaces, such as with more flexible routines and groupings, are not always fully developed.

There is careful management of the available funding and the school's governing body, in partnership with the LA, ensures appropriate oversight of income and expenditure. Taking account of the effective deployment of resources and the good standards children achieve, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirteen parents and carers completed the questionnaire. These parents indicate that induction arrangements are very good and their children settle quickly in playgroup sessions and feel happy and safe. The vast majority of responses were positive, confirming the setting is well run and that teaching and behaviour is good. A very few indicate concerns about meeting individual needs, information about progress, approaching the setting and procedures for dealing with complaints. There were no written comments. Brief discussions with parents bringing children to the setting confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the provision and several commented on the good range of activities, especially the creative tasks.

Responses to discussions with children

Observations of the children showed that both older and younger ones settle happily in the setting. They have positive relationships with their peers and with the adults. A positive ethos helps to ensure children feel safe. This was particularly evident in children's confidence to initiate conversations, ask questions and make their needs known. All children demonstrate a strong sense of trust and know that members of staff provide them with effective care and guidance.

Appendix 2

Reporting inspector

Michael T. Ridout	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)

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