



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

A report on

**Mitchel Troy Playgroup
Mitchel Troy Village Hall
Mitchel Troy
Monmouthshire
NP25 4HZ**

Date of inspection: February 2016

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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Context

Mitchel Troy Playgroup is a registered setting for children under the age of five. It is located in the village of Mitchel Troy and serves a wide area on the outskirts of Monmouth in the Monmouthshire local authority.

The setting is based in the village hall and is registered to take a maximum of 24 children in each session. It provides morning sessions, on weekdays, for 38 weeks of the year. At the time of the inspection, there were a total of 28 children on roll, of whom 18 are three and four years old, and are funded by the local authority. All children are of white British ethnicity. No child speaks English as an additional language or speaks Welsh at home. The setting has not identified any children as having additional learning needs.

There are five practitioners working at the setting, including the playgroup supervisor. Estyn last inspected the setting in June 2009. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in September 2015.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting is good because:

- Most children make good progress from their differing starting points in their time at the setting
- Most children listen well and speak confidently to adults and to each other
- Most children develop their early writing skills effectively
- Most children are developing worthwhile numeracy skills and use mathematical language in their everyday activities confidently
- A majority of children demonstrate suitable information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- Nearly all the children enter the setting happily and enthusiastically
- All children have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to engage in play activities
- All children have good relationships with practitioners at the setting
- All practitioners interact with children skilfully and use most opportunities to extend their learning successfully

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting's leader provides effective leadership that focuses strongly on the wellbeing of all the children
- Practitioners share leadership roles effectively
- All practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and contribute effectively to a supportive, enthusiastic team
- The setting's leader organises individual and team training suitably
- The management committee focuses suitably on the organisation and running of the setting
- All practitioners reflect regularly on the success of the sessions and note when activities have been effective or where they need to improve
- The setting takes account of the views of parents efficiently
- The setting's improvement plan identifies suitable activities to develop provision

Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's Welsh language skills
- R2 Develop planning and practices to ensure that children develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills more systematically across all areas of learning
- R3 Develop stronger processes for ensuring the quality of teaching
- R4 Ensure that self-evaluation and improvement processes are organised more systematically and focus better on outcomes for children

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan, which shows 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

Standards: Good

Most children make good progress from their differing starting points in their time at the setting. They develop new skills effectively across most areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Most children are developing effective literacy skills. They listen well and speak confidently to adults and to each other. They talk about their own experiences clearly, such as what they have done with their families outside of the setting. Most children enjoy singing songs as a group and listening to stories linked to their topic of 'Space'. A majority of older children can recall the main events in stories they have listened to well. A very few children who are more able use the pictures from a story they have heard to retell the story in their own words skilfully. Most children develop their early writing skills effectively. For example, they make marks to set down their own ideas in a mind-map usefully. Most children attempt mark making confidently, forming letter shapes with a range of materials, such as paintbrushes, pens and pencils. A few older children can write a range of letters, including their names, well.

Most children are developing worthwhile numeracy skills. They use mathematical language in their everyday activities confidently, for example when identifying larger and smaller pancakes. Many children touch count objects reliably below 10 and a majority can count back from five confidently. Most children are beginning to anticipate events related to their own daily routines and use appropriate terms, such as 'later' and 'before', accurately. Nearly all children use words that describe temperature during their play activities correctly, for example describing the weather as 'cold' on a wintry day.

A majority of children demonstrate suitable ICT skills. They understand that portable devices need batteries and can turn on and turn off a range of simple devices, such as cameras, well. Most children use the equipment on offer to them, such as cameras, remote control cars and recording equipment, suitably.

A minority of children's Welsh language skills are developing satisfactorily. They join in with Welsh songs and understand a few basic words and phrases, such as a few colours and numbers. However too few children use Welsh independently during their play activities and most use only a limited range of Welsh vocabulary.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all the children enter the setting happily and enthusiastically. They have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to engage in play activities. Nearly all the children are well mannered and polite to each other and adults at the setting. They take turns carefully and play with each other willingly.

All children have good relationships with practitioners at the setting. They respond well to practitioners' instructions during focused activities and take turns in group activities successfully. They are able to make choices about their independent learning activities confidently, for example, when choosing a musical instrument to play.

Most children are developing a beneficial understanding of health and hygiene. For example, they are beginning to understand the importance of washing their hands after messy activities and before eating. During snack time, nearly all children sit calmly and eat together sensibly. They demonstrate good social skills that are appropriate to their age.

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

Practitioners plan well to provide a worthwhile range of stimulating learning activities, many of which they base on the children's own ideas. For example, many children contribute a relevant range of ideas linked to the current topic of 'Space'. As a result, nearly all children engage in learning activities well and most make good progress across the Foundation Phase areas of learning. Practitioners plan a useful balance between group, focused activities and more independent child initiated activities. Careful planning provides children with beneficial learning opportunities to develop their understanding and skills.

Practitioners are beginning to recognise the importance of ensuring that activities help to develop important skills, such as children's communication, numeracy and ICT skills. As a result, a few daily activities are beginning to contain opportunities for children to develop these wider skills. For example, practitioners provide a good range of books in the reading corner and numeracy activities on the maths mat. However, they do not ensure that these skills take a high enough priority in planned and independent daily activities across all areas of learning. Similarly, on a few occasions, practitioners help children to develop their thinking skills through skilful questioning. However, they do not plan these opportunities systematically or often enough.

The setting's provision for Welsh is appropriate. A majority of staff use incidental Welsh satisfactorily throughout the session. For example, they greet children in Welsh and sing Welsh songs each day. The setting has a basic range of Welsh storybooks that children can access independently. Throughout the setting, both indoors and out, a good range of signs in Welsh allows children to see print in the Welsh language. However, a minority of practitioners do not use the language well enough or frequently enough. The setting provides suitable opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the culture of Wales. For example, they celebrate St. David's Day, including cooking their own Welsh cakes, and make and send cards for Santes Dwynwen.

The setting makes suitable use of the locality to support children's understanding of the world around them, for example through visits to the local church. These experiences impact positively on children's learning.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have very good working relationships with the children in the setting. They know the children well and have a good awareness of their personal needs. Nearly all practitioners have an effective understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. They are enthusiastic and are good role models for the children. All practitioners engage fully with children throughout the session. They interact with children skilfully and use many opportunities to extend their learning successfully. They intervene in children's play appropriately, asking questions effectively to extend their learning. However, a minority of practitioners do not take steps to develop children's Welsh language learning effectively enough. On a very few occasions, practitioners do not take steps to enhance children's development robustly enough, such as when they hold mark-making equipment or scissors incorrectly.

Practitioners have recently introduced new procedures for assessing children when they begin at the setting and throughout their time there. This provides a useful range of information on each child and allows practitioners to track children's progress against the Foundation Phase outcomes efficiently. Practitioners carry out a worthwhile range of observations of the children's learning and are beginning to use this information appropriately when planning learning to ensure that they challenge all suitably. However, this is at an early stage of development. The setting does not always analyse the information it holds on children's achievements robustly enough to help it improve its provision.

The setting provides relevant information about children's progress for parents at the end of their time at the setting and through regular face-to-face meetings.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision for developing children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, children find out about a worthwhile range of different cultures and religions through learning about religious festivals, such as Divali.

The setting has effective policies and practices to promote children's awareness of healthy living and for ensuring children's emotional and physical wellbeing. For example, the setting provides access to a beneficial range of physical activities outdoors on most days. This encourages the children to use and develop their physical skills confidently.

Practitioners have well organised daily routines that ensure that nearly all children settle quickly into the setting and this contributes to children's wellbeing effectively. Practitioners help children to become responsible for their personal hygiene, for example by ensuring that children wash their hands before eating food.

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

The setting has clear and effective policies and procedures to support children with additional learning needs when needed. They have established a suitable range of

contacts, such as those with health services, in order to provide extra support and advice, as and when required. Children who need extra support make strong progress against targets set for them by the setting and support agencies.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a very friendly, caring ethos. Practitioners ensure that all children are valued and have equal access to all learning activities. There is a suitable emphasis on celebrating diversity. For example, children undertake activities, such as celebrating Chinese New Year. All practitioners deal with children considerately and children's views are valued. For example, children complete useful mind-maps to show what they would like to learn at the beginning of a new theme.

The setting has suitably qualified staff to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase. The accommodation is safe and secure. Although the setting shares its accommodation with the local village, practitioners ensure that indoor space is stimulating and inviting. Children's work is displayed throughout the setting suitably. The setting has immediate access to a well-resourced outdoor area and practitioners make good use of the available space. There are beneficial opportunities for children to learn outdoors. For example, the nature area allows children to learn about mini-beasts and to develop a suitable sense of awe and wonder effectively. However, children do not have free access to the outside and practitioners do not use the outdoors well enough to plan focused learning activities to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills.

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

The lead practitioner manages the day-to-day organisation of the setting capably. She provides effective leadership and has a clear vision for the setting that focuses strongly on the wellbeing of all children and on providing effective education. As a result, all practitioners at the setting have a clear sense of direction. There are a worthwhile range of policies and procedures in place to support the running of the setting, and practitioners implement these consistently. The setting's leader ensures that practitioners share leadership roles effectively. For example, one person takes the lead in planning learning activities, but all practitioners meet regularly to share these plans. As a result, all have a solid understanding of their roles and responsibilities and contribute beneficially to a supportive, enthusiastic team.

The setting's leader organises individual and team training suitably. As a result, nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of the Foundation Phase. Leaders have satisfactory arrangements in place for an annual appraisal meeting for all staff. However, this does not include regular observations of teaching, nor sufficiently focused targets to help practitioners improve their practice.

The management committee meet regularly. They are very supportive of the setting. Their meetings are thorough and focus suitably on the organisation and running of the setting. However, these do not always focus well enough on children's standards and the progress they make. The setting takes account of national priorities, such as the Foundation Phase, appropriately.

Improving quality: Adequate

All practitioners at the setting show a willingness to improve their practice. They reflect regularly on the success of the sessions and note suitably when activities have been successful or where they need to improve them. The setting takes account of the views of parents and acts appropriately. This has led to improvements in the settings provision. For example, it has led to more helpful arrangements for the start and the end times of the sessions. However, leaders do not timetable the setting's self-evaluation activities systematically enough. Leaders do not analyse carefully enough the progress that children make in order to identify areas for improvement. Similarly, as leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching they are not able to identify well enough where this may need to improve.

The setting's improvement plan identifies suitable activities that the setting needs to undertake to develop its provision. It takes appropriate account of external reports, such as those from the local authority, and leaders take actions when asked to do so quickly and successfully. However, overall the setting's improvement plan does not focus well enough on improving outcomes for children.

Partnership working: Good

The setting makes use of a worthwhile range of partnerships to enhance its provision well. For example, links with the local church provide children with suitable opportunities to visit a religious setting and put on their nativity play in an appropriate setting.

Practitioners have effective partnership with parents. It provides them with a useful range of information about the setting and the children's learning through the daily notice board bulletins and occasional newsletters. The setting makes all parents welcome and practitioners liaise with them to discuss their child regularly. As a result, all practitioners have a good understanding of children's individual needs. However, parents do not have strong opportunities to be involved in influencing their children's learning. The setting works diligently to ensure that it prepares children well for their move to primary school.

The setting has good working relationships with advisory staff from the local authority. This provides valuable support and guidance to the setting, such as on ways to develop children's mathematical skills. This affects children's learning experiences positively.

The setting makes good use of resources within the community to enhance its provision. For example, a local supermarket provides funds that allow practitioners to supplement play resources beneficially.

Resource management: Good

The setting had a good level of well-qualified practitioners to teach and care for the children at the setting. All practitioners attend relevant training opportunities that develop their skills and knowledge suitably. However, their training is not always linked to their individual needs strongly enough.

The setting has an appropriate range of resources to support all children's learning. All resources are accessible to the children and this encourages their independence well. The outdoor learning area offers children a good range of opportunities to learn in line with the ethos of the Foundation Phase.

The setting's leader and management committee have a comprehensive understanding of the setting's budget and prioritise spending efficiently. Overall, the setting offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

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

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Andrew Thorne	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.wales)

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
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) 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 3 to 7 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 which 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)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation which 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.