



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

A report on

**Sunbeams Playgroup
The Community Centre
Ysgol Y Waun
Gwernaffield
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 5DP**

Date of inspection: May 2017

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

Sunbeams Playgroup is in the village of Gwernaffield near Mold, in Flintshire local authority. The setting is based in a Community Room within Ysgol Y Waun Primary. Nearly all of the children attending come from the local area. The setting is managed by a voluntary committee and is open four mornings a week during school term time.

The setting is registered for up to 20 children between two and four years of age. At the time of the inspection there were nine children on roll, including four three-year-olds, of which very few are funded by the local authority. All children speak English as their first language. The setting has identified that there are currently no children with additional learning needs attending.

From January 2017 there have been a number of changes at the setting. This includes changes to the committee, leadership and staffing. Two new members of staff have been appointed and the roles and responsibilities of practitioners restructured.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in October 2016 and Estyn in July 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- The setting provides a happy and purposeful learning environment
- An interesting range of learning activities engages children's interest well
- Provision for children's healthy development and wellbeing is effective
- Practitioners have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Phase
- The quality of practitioners' interactions with children is a strong feature
- The use and organisation of learning resources are developing well

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Leaders are enthusiastic and skilfully promote effective teamwork
- The setting has a clear direction and a shared sense of purpose
- The key elements of self-evaluation are in place
- Recent improvements impact well on teaching and learning
- Targets identified by the setting provide a sound basis for further improvement
- Partnerships with parents, the school and supporting agencies are effective

Recommendations

- R1 Develop planning to identify the learning focus more clearly in guided and free choice activities
- R2 Ensure that assessments are used to plan the next steps in children's learning effectively
- R3 Embed self-evaluation processes and secure the implementation of the priorities identified in subsequent action plans
- R4 Formalise planning for future resource needs and training

What happens next?

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

Main findings

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| Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? | N/A |
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Standards:

Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards and their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

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

The setting provides an appropriate range of learning activities that engage children's interest successfully. Practitioners implement the Foundation Phase with increasing success and plan for all areas of learning well. The provision of well-organised and resourced learning activities provides good opportunities for children to learn through play.

The setting is developing its planning to ensure imaginative learning opportunities are provided in different contexts. Practitioners implement fortnightly plans flexibly to take account of children's interests. Main activities link to broad themes, such as 'People who help us', and practitioners adapt them to match children's needs skilfully. For example, there are worthwhile opportunities for children to practise numeracy, oracy and pre-writing skills, through activities with building blocks, toy animals and through role-play.

Practitioners are beginning to plan more systematically and to focus clearly on developing specific skills. This is starting to ensure many children's skills in literacy and numeracy are being consolidated effectively. However, practitioners do not always focus on the learning intention well enough during adult led, enhanced and free choice activities. As a result, they do not always use observations to inform future planning well enough.

Provision to promote children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills is at an early stage. Children readily follow instructions to program the movements of a controllable toy, however the overall range of skills promoted is narrow.

Learning activities promote independence and creativity suitably, and most children choose tools and materials with confidence, for example when painting. The setting uses the school grounds and outdoor classroom imaginatively in order to develop children's respect for the environment. For example, they explore changes across the seasons and find mini-beasts on a 'bug hunt'.

Provision for the development of children's Welsh language skills is sound. Practitioners model simple Welsh phrases, ask questions and use Welsh vocabulary regularly around the setting. As a result, a few children are beginning to use simple words and phrases during structured sessions. Practitioners promote children's awareness of Welsh history and culture appropriately, for example when celebrating St David's Day and reading Welsh stories regularly.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners manage learning well. Their approach is purposeful and enthusiastic, and learning activities are fun. The quality of practitioner's interaction with children is a strong feature. They have high expectations and a sound knowledge of the Foundation Phase. All are good language models in English and Welsh. This improves children's oracy skills and extends their vocabulary successfully.

Practitioners understand the purpose of activities and engage children's interest successfully, such as when reading stories or supporting an activity. They give plenty of time for children to complete tasks and use questioning and praise well to encourage perseverance. Practitioners maintain a steady pace and skilfully promote opportunities for incidental learning. For example, they encourage children to sort toy animals by size and to use appropriate vocabulary. Practitioners are reflective and review the impact of activities well. For instance, when children could only identify two or three shapes, they added extra two and three-dimensional shapes across the different areas of learning to help consolidate children's understanding.

Appropriate procedures for assessment are in place. Practitioners compile detailed records for each child and regularly record individual achievements. These observations provide a good basis to help plan children's next steps in learning. However, the use of ongoing assessments to guide future planning is at an early stage.

Parents value informal communication with practitioners about their child's progress and the information discussed before their child transfers to school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides good quality, care, support and guidance and has successful arrangements to develop children's understanding of keeping healthy. For example, practitioners promote energetic outdoor play regularly and children enjoy parachute games in the school hall.

Practitioners encourage children's sense of curiosity about the world effectively. They foster positive values, including respect for others, honesty and fairness, successfully. As a result, most children show consideration for others, share resources, and take turns readily. Practitioners promote good behaviour and involve children in a range of cultural activities enthusiastically. For example, the setting celebrates festivals from other countries, such as Chinese New Year.

The setting fosters children's spiritual development well. For instance, children explore the school grounds and a nearby park across the seasons. Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities for them to marvel at a wide range of fauna and

flora. These experiences enhance their sense of awe and wonder in a beneficial manner. The setting provides suitable opportunities for children to develop their understanding of energy saving and recycling.

The setting has well-established procedures to support children who need extra help and liaise with the school to use a network of contacts to provide extra support and advice when needed.

Practitioners implement appropriate procedures to ensure that the setting is safe and risk assessments are undertaken regularly. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a friendly and inclusive family ethos. All children have equal access to the curriculum. This family atmosphere contributes significantly to children's high levels of wellbeing and self-esteem. Practitioners take good account of children's individual needs, which helps to ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety. They use positive strategies to manage behaviour and encourage understanding and tolerance towards others sensitively. The setting places an appropriate emphasis on promoting and respecting diversity. For example, practitioners read stories from other cultures regularly.

The setting has enough qualified and experienced practitioners for the number of children that attend the setting. A sufficient range of age appropriate resources is available across the Foundation Phase areas of learning. The setting benefits from access to facilities in the school, including the hall, a well-resourced outdoor area and extensive grounds. Although the absence of free flow access between indoor and outdoor activities is a constraint, daily routines ensure regular access to outdoor provision.

The setting uses expertise in the community regularly to enrich children's experiences and the well-maintained accommodation provides a safe and secure learning environment.

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

The setting is well led, managed and organised. Practitioners are enthusiastic and there is a strong sense of teamwork. In particular, leaders provide clear direction and demonstrate a shared sense of purpose in developing the setting's provision. Leaders have high expectations for children's learning and communicate this well with parents. Systematic managerial procedures are established, but longer term plans to develop the setting are not yet formalised.

Practitioners have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities within the setting. An appropriate range of policies is in place and they implement these consistently well. Administrative procedures are effective and the day-to-day work of the setting is monitored informally. Leaders place good emphasis on updating practitioners' professional expertise through regular training and development opportunities, and suitable arrangements are in place for appraisal.

The voluntary management committee is strongly supportive of the setting. It monitors the setting's development informally, but its involvement in long-term strategic planning is limited.

The setting takes forward national and local priorities well. It enthusiastically embraces the Foundation Phase philosophy and approach. There is strong emphasis on equality and improving children's learning outcomes.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting implements appropriate procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Practitioners make effective use of the 'frameworks for review' from the local authority. Leaders are developing a culture of self-improvement successfully. Practitioners actively seek the views of parents and stakeholders, such as when implementing an annual review of the quality of care it provides.

The self-evaluation report accurately identifies strengths and areas in need of improvement. The setting's action plan links to identified areas well. However, planning for improvement does not indicate how these plans will be implemented resourced or monitored clearly enough.

Practitioners work closely with the local authority to improve provision. This results in significant improvements in how well practitioners organise learning and the use they make of resources. However, due to notable changes in staffing the setting has not had time to fully embed all of these positive changes.

Although improvement since the last inspection is variable, there is strong evidence of significant improvement since the current leaders were appointed. This includes improvements in the provision for Welsh, ICT, the quality of planning and the overall organisation of learning activities.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has well-established partnerships with parents, the school and community organisations that enhance children's wellbeing and learning effectively. Practitioners encourage the involvement of parents in their child's education, and give regular opportunities for them to participate in activities with their children. Parents receive a good range of information via notices, newsletters and day-to-day contact with practitioners. This helps parents to feel comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns and keeps them informed about daily activities successfully.

There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to the school. Practitioners share relevant information about children's progress effectively, enabling them to settle in quickly. The setting has positive links with a range of community organisations. They receive occasional visitors such as a dental nurse, and make effective use of visits to the park to enrich children's learning experiences. The setting has beneficial links with nearby training institutions and provides placements for students undertaking courses in childcare. This impacts positively on the quality of learning and play.

Practitioners regularly share good practice with other settings through training events. For example, they learn about strategies to promote learning through play.

The setting has a constructive relationship with the local authority advisory teacher. Practitioners benefit from guidance in implementing the Foundation Phase and the use and organisation of learning resources.

Resource management: Good

Leaders deploy practitioners efficiently and they are well supported. They regularly attend professional development courses and meetings, to share good practice with other settings. Practitioners reflect on the good practice shared and implement strategies to improve provision in the setting thoughtfully. In particular, the recent reorganisation of provision has led to well-planned and resourced activities across the areas of learning. As a result, children are well motivated and develop a range of skills confidently.

The committee review the impact of resources informally. The treasurer monitors income and expenditure systematically and accounts are independently audited. However, planning for future resource needs and training is not formalised or always clear.

The setting is resourceful in ensuring the efficient use of all available funding and learning resources. This has a positive impact on children's outcomes and represents 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

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| Michael Thomas 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.wales)

Glossary of terms

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| 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 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 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> |

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| 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 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 |