



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

A report on

**Aberporth Playgroup (WPPA)
Y Festri
Ty Capel
Aberporth
Ceredigion
SA43 2DA**

Date of inspection: September 2015

by

**Mr Eifion R Morgan
Reporting Inspector**

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

Aberporth Playgroup is a bilingual setting established in 1961. It moved to its current location, which is a chapel vestry, in 2008. Aberporth is a small village on the Cardiganshire coast, some 5 miles from Cardigan. Children attending the playgroup are aged between two and four years and the setting operates on five mornings a week during school terms.

The children are drawn from a wide geographical area and are from English speaking homes. None are from a minority ethnic background.

The playgroup is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to take up to 21 children per session. At present there are 16 children on role including 9 three year olds, all of whom are funded for early years education.

There are six full-time staff and leadership roles are shared by two of the staff. One playgroup leader has been in post for 25 years and her colleague has had leadership responsibilities for the last eight years. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children.

The setting was last inspected by CSSIW in September 2013 and by Estyn in May 2012.

Summary

The Setting's current performance	Good
The Setting's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- most children make good progress and achieve well during their time in the setting;
- learning experiences are of good quality and successfully motivate the children to learn;
- practitioners provide stimulating learning experiences for the children;
- children's wellbeing is outstanding, and all children enjoy their time in the setting;
- nearly all children recognise what foods are healthy and know how to keep clean and healthy;
- the quality of relationships between the staff and children is very good and based on mutual respect and affection;
- the setting is a caring, supportive community where all children are treated equally;
- the setting provides outstanding support for children with additional learning needs;
- an outstanding partnership has been established with the parents and is highly effective in supporting children's development;
- children have a good range of visits, both locally and further afield.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospect for improvement is excellent because:

- the leaders have a clear vision for developing the playgroup;
- the leadership is firmly committed in ensuring that all children achieve their full potential;
- the practitioners work together well with a clear sense of purpose;
- the setting is self-critical and seeks every opportunity to improve its provision;
- the self-evaluation system and strategic planning are effective;
- the management committee is effective and supportive of staff's professional development;
- it acts positively on advice and suggestions provided by the local authority support teachers;
- it provides good value for money.

Recommendations

R1. Refine assessment so as to identify children's skill development.

R2. Use assessment results when planning learning opportunities to ensure that tasks are well matched to children's needs and challenges them.

R3. Ensure that parents are aware of their children's progress and what they can do to support their learning.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting 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

Most children make good progress during their time in the setting with a minority making very good progress. A few children require additional support, particularly in speech and language and these children make realistic progress. Most children recall previous learning well, such as recalling stories they have heard. Nearly all children concentrate for sustained periods of time and persevere on tasks. All children show interest in their work, make choices and overall most children achieve well.

Most children's listening skills are well developed; they respond positively to instructions and are enthusiastic to answer questions about stories read to them. Many children have well developed speaking skills in their first language, which is English. They are happy to discuss what they are doing and many are willing to perform individually, as when singing familiar songs and nursery rhymes. The majority handle small tools and writing instruments competently and confidently and understand the purpose of writing, such as making a shopping list.

Many children show an interest in books and several were happy to select their favourite book and talk about it with the Inspector. These children hold their books appropriately, turning pages and describing the story. These children spoke about the characters in the story and their feelings. Most children recognised their names as presented on cards during registration.

Most children count accurately and confidently to nine, as when counting the number of children present during registration. Many children are developing a worthwhile mathematical vocabulary such as identifying large and small apples. Most children recognise basic two-dimensional shapes, including triangles, circle and square and the more able children recognise such shapes in the outside world when on visits to the local shops. The majority know the purpose of money.

Children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing well. Several children show worthwhile computer skills, such as when handling the computer mouse. A few children are beginning to be able to program a digital toy when assisted by an adult.

All children enjoy developmental movement play on the soft mat and take an active part in activities out of doors. They show good physical skills and appropriate hand-eye co-ordination. Children are confident when painting and during craft activities and display some skilful work, such as during finger painting. Children's thinking and

problem solving skills are well developed and most children are able to make choices, such as selecting activities during free play.

In this bilingual setting, children's Welsh language skills are developing well enabling them to attend the local Welsh medium primary school for the next phase of their education. All children understand more of the language than they can speak. Most respond promptly to instruction and many are beginning to use simple Welsh words and phrases, such as during registration and circle time. These children count in Welsh, know basic colours and aspects of the weather, such as "mae yn gymylog heddiw". Nearly all children sing Welsh songs and nursery rhymes with great enjoyment.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Children's wellbeing is outstanding. All children are happy, are enthusiastic to attend and leave their parent or carer "without a care in the world". They are immediately participating in activities set out for them and are eager to meet their friends. All enjoy partaking and are highly motivated. They show very good personal and social skills and show care and concern for each other. As a result the setting is a calm, well-ordered community where children understand daily routines and exhibit exceptionally good behaviour. No incidents were observed where a child had to be admonished for any antisocial behaviour. Children have outstanding attitudes to work and share and take turns when using play equipment.

Children choose when to have their snack and need little reminding of the need to wash their hands prior to eating. They are well mannered and select their food sensibly. They take their time over their snack and talk with an adult who supervises them. Most children make good efforts to put on their coats and are perfectly willing to wait whilst others are helped.

All children enjoy physical exercise, such as riding their tricycles and engage positively in developmental movement play.

Children, by their attitudes, show that they feel safe and secure and know where to seek help if required, such as when using digital toys or the computer. They take a full part in all activities, such as during their role play in "radio Aberporth" and listen to each other. There is a strong sense of community and all children are actively involved in local events, such as the local carnival.

An outstanding aspect of children's wellbeing is their understanding of different emotions. Many children are able to recognise feelings, such as when observing characters in a story showing a sad face. Children, in discussion, indicated why a person may be sad and what makes them happy. They also recognise such emotions in their friends. Several children are able to suggest to the Inspector what makes them happy and what they might do if one of their friends was sad.

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

Learning experiences provide children with a suitably wide range of interesting opportunities that stimulate and motivate them. The curriculum is broad and balanced and fully meets the requirements of the Foundation Phase. There is an appropriate emphasis on children learning through play and an appropriate balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities.

The setting makes a highly effective use of mind maps developed with the children and this ensures that all are actively involved in planning the learning experiences. Another good and notable feature of the planning is the holistic approach to learning adopted. Topics comprise of appropriately linked activities. When the topic of autumn was the learning focus, learning incorporated language (both English and Welsh), numeracy (counting apples on the ground), mathematical language (large/small apples), healthy eating, recycling and composting waste. Opportunities to develop children's skills are incorporated including their thinking skills, such as how animals prepare for winter. Planning focuses on developing children's skills but is not always sufficiently focused on challenging children and on matching the work to their individual ability.

The setting provides children with worthwhile opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Circle time and morning registration are well used to develop children's listening and speaking skills. Story time and singing are also used successfully to promote such skills. Children learn to recognise their names during registration and they have easy access to books in their comfortable book corner. There are suitable opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills, such as making shopping lists in their toy shop.

Practitioners encourage children's numeracy skills well through regular opportunities to count, sort and match objects, such as on visits to the shops, counting sausages in the butcher shop and sorting them into groups after cooking. A trip to the sandy seashore provides interesting and worthwhile opportunities for children to consolidate their counting skills and to sort and match objects found by size.

Children have very good opportunities to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They have free access to a computer and regular support from a member of staff. Children are familiar with programmable toys and digital recording equipment and have access to listening devices.

Planning includes opportunities for children to develop their physical skills through "Developmental Movement Play" and robust exercises on tricycles outside. The development of children's fine motor skills are given appropriate emphasis, such as cutting using scissors, sticking and gluing and when painting, such as finger painting.

The development of children's Welsh language is given prominence through using the language during circle time and registration and through the use of incidental Welsh by the staff. There is a strong focus on Welsh traditions and culture. Children celebrate St. David's day through dressing appropriately, making foods, such as Welsh cakes, and with drawing and painting. The setting celebrates Santes Dwynwen day and is involved in a number of community activities, such as village concerts.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners work very well together as a team, making highly effective use of their individual strengths and expertise. This is well illustrated when a member of staff took an excellent story telling session and children listened spell-bound.

Practitioners provide an exciting and stimulating learning environment that actively promotes children's involvement, participation and enjoyment. Practitioners enjoy working with the children; know the children well and respect them as individuals. They actively encourage them to persevere, and to become independent learners. The staff have established a purposeful routine which children understand, and this ensures that children settle quickly, feel safe and secure and know how to seek help when necessary. Staff use praise sparingly but to good effect to manage children's behaviour in a positive way and this contributes well to provide for a happy and purposeful learning environment.

Practitioners plan together and make imaginative use of each other's ideas. Staff note ideas as they occur to them in a "staff ideas book" and this provides a useful "aide memoire" when planning future activities. The planning provides worthwhile opportunities for children to learn through play and firsthand experiences. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-directed play and practitioners know when to involve themselves in children's play activities.

Practitioners encourage children to be independent but are always willing to support individuals, such as when children sing with a microphone. Practitioners are effective language models and this helps children to develop their speaking skills and their understanding in the Welsh language.

All practitioners are involved in regular and comprehensive assessment of children's learning. Practitioners know the children well and are aware of their needs and ability. Individual records of achievement are noted under the Foundation Phase areas of learning. Assessment records however, are too generalised and are insufficiently focused on skill development. Consequently they are of limited use in planning future learning experiences to ensure that tasks are well matched to individual children's needs and to suitably challenge them.

Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through informal meetings and written reports. Parents are made aware of activities that their child has taken part in during the morning sessions, but are not given enough information as to what they can do to help them improve.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The setting has excellent provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The setting provides a very caring, supportive environment where all children are valued and respected as individuals. Important values such as honesty, tolerance and respect for one another feature prominently in the daily life of the setting. Children understand these values very well and behave accordingly. Children respect adults and value their friendship. The highly effective interaction between adults and children is very successful in developing children's confidence, their independence and their feeling of self worth. Practitioners make time to listen to children; their achievements are celebrated and shared with the class.

Children chose when to take their snack and what to eat. They are well aware of cleanliness and many wash their hands before food without prompting. They are respectful using "please" and "thank you" appropriately and recognise healthy foods. Snack times are outstanding social occasions.

Children learn about recycling by collecting waste food for composting and using compost for growing plants and seeds.

Arrangements for the transfer of children to the primary school are well established.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children fully meets requirements and are not a cause for concern. The setting offers a safe environment. Doors are locked and no-one can enter or leave unannounced. The outdoor area is clearly identified and staff are vigilant in ensuring children's safety when playing outside. Appropriate arrangements are in place to receive children in the morning and to ensure that they are in the care of their parents or a known carer, when they leave.

Provision for supporting children with additional learning needs is excellent. Early identification by experienced staff ensure prompt intervention. Skilled well qualified members of staff deliver support of high quality; all such children have individual education plans setting out appropriate targets. Children's progress is regularly reviewed and parents are involved at each stage. All children make very good progress towards meeting, and often exceeding, targets set for them. The good links with the reception class teacher in the primary school ensures that there is continuity in the support children receive. The setting makes very good use of specialist services working in partnership with parents and agencies, such as speech and language, and when necessary, the local authority Referral Scheme.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides a happy, welcoming environment for the children. Children are respected as individuals and this encourages them to treat each other with respect and concern. There is a strong emphasis on recognising diversity. Tolerant attitudes are encouraged and achieved in practice. Children recognise and celebrate diversity, such as celebrating different festivals, including the Chinese New Year and Divali.

The setting generously staffed with well qualified experienced practitioners. Resources are age specific and accessible to the children. Activity areas are well set out and provide attractive learning opportunities for the children. Space is very well used and children take advantage of this. Internally this is an attractive learning environment where best use is made of all available space.

The building is well maintained, safe and secure. The outdoor area however does not allow for free access for children due to the overall structure of the building. Whilst this is a drawback that has no solution, the setting compensates children through visits locally and further afield. Visits are very well planned and make a very worthwhile contribution to children's learning in that they are well integrated into the curriculum. The setting also benefits from being able to use facilities at the local primary school.

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

The setting benefits from highly effective leadership undertaken by two well qualified and experienced practitioners. This arrangement has been in place for the last 8 years and their contributions complement each other imaginatively in what they offer. They are very well supported by the Chairperson and the Management Committee.

A clear vision for the setting has been established focusing on high standards of achievement and the wellbeing of the children. The exceptionally good relationship with the parents has underpinned the setting's successful achievements over the years.

Staff work very effectively as a team and all contribute constructively to the work of the setting. The leadership ensures that staff expertise is well used and all show a strong commitment to providing the best possible experiences for the children. Staff meet regularly to discuss issues that arise and to plan future learning activities.

Performance management is well established and all staff are appraised annually. Training needs are identified and staff records show that they have engaged in a wide variety of relevant training courses within the authority. This is having a

significant effect on the setting's provision and a noticeable effect on children's achievement and wellbeing.

The Chair of the Management Committee is a regular visitor and provides good support for the setting. She has been in post for the last six years and this has provided good continuity and expertise. The management committee meet regularly and kept informed of developments at the setting. They are very supportive of staff, particularly in supporting their professional development. In one instance a member of staff has focused on developing her expertise to support children with additional learning needs. This has proved particularly successful so that children with such needs are identified early on, a programme developed to meet their needs and external agencies used when necessary. This has proved to be a highly effective initiative.

The setting has consistently implemented national priorities, such as implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum. It has also been at the forefront in establishing Healthy Eating initiatives and this has been recognised by the local authority.

The setting is a member of the Welsh Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA) and was in receipt of their Quality Assurance mark of excellence in 2012. This raised staff morale and gave them recognition of the quality of provision.

The leader and staff have established an excellent and innovative partnership with the parents. In recent years the setting has organised courses for parents and carers that have included Welsh language courses, storytelling, art and craft at home and how to involve children in activities, such as shopping. The response from parents has been very positive with reference in particular to the improved parent-child relationships at home. Staff have also responded positively where parents need help and support.

Improving quality: Excellent

Practitioners know their setting well and a positive culture of self-evaluation pervades the work of the setting. Practitioners have worked together for some time and are open to new ideas and different ways of working. They share their expertise and through discussion at the weekly staff meetings, their ideas are positively used in planning the future direction of the setting. There is a strong commitment to providing the best possible experiences for the children and maximising their potential. Self-evaluation takes good account of the views of children, their parents and carers, the management committee and local authority advisory staff.

The self-evaluation documents are very thorough and successfully identify the strengths of the setting and areas for development. Targets for improvement are clearly identified and sound strategies are in place to bring about the desired improvement. Funding is allocated appropriately.

Overall, the setting has benefited from regular and ongoing self-evaluation and actions taken have had a positive effect on the provision and resulted in improvements in standards of achievement and wellbeing.

An outstanding aspect of the self-evaluation procedure is the focus on children's progress and achievement and the way all staff have played a part in achieving these aims.

Partnership working: Excellent

The setting has an outstanding range of partnerships that contribute very effectively to the quality of provision and outcomes for the children.

Partnership with the parents is sector leading. Parents value the care and concern shown by practitioners, including all aspects of life at the setting. Useful information is provided for parents in an information booklet and they visit the setting before their child begins formally. Parents are very pleased with the progress their children make both in terms of their achievement and social skills. An outstanding feature is the provision provided by the setting through courses and other initiatives to help parents develop parenting skills. A number of parents have benefited through helping voluntarily in the setting and several have proceeded to achieve professional qualifications in areas such as child care. Parent's response has been outstanding and they are very appreciative of such initiatives. Parents with children recognised as having additional learning needs are very appreciative of the setting's arrangement for supporting such children. There are strong and effective links with the Social Services and the speech and language support and the local authority Referral Scheme.

Parent's suggestions for improvement are used constructively and they reported that they feel valued. Very good links are in place with the local primary school and this facilitates the transfer of children to the next phase of their education.

There are strong links with the local community with numerous visitors to the school and children's visits to the community. There are also links with the local Cylch Meithrin, such as combining for Christmas concerts.

The constructive partnership with the local authority advisory teacher is very effective and helps to raise standards by providing the setting with advice and suggestions.

Resource management: Good

Resources are well managed to support learning. The setting is generously staffed with well qualified and experienced staff who regularly attend relevant training courses. Staff are very effective communicators and deliver a good quality curriculum to support children's learning. Staff work together effectively as a team to ensure a very good quality provision for the children. Practitioners take responsibility for aspects of teaching and this makes best use of their individual skills. Resources are good, of good quality and accessible to the children. Activity areas provide attractive places for children to work and play and successfully stimulate and motivate them.

The leaders and current management committee have a clear understanding of the budget and expenditure decisions are prioritised in line with the needs of the setting. Considering the efficient use of funds, the quality of provision and the achievement of the children, the setting 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 reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R Morgan	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.