



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

A report on
Highway Playdays
Highway Methodist Community Rooms
The Highway
Ewloe
CH5 3DN

Date of inspection: March 2018

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

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

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Context

Highway Playdays Playgroup is an English medium setting for three to four-year-olds in Ewloe in Flintshire. It is registered as part of a larger service which includes wrap around care, day care and holiday club provision. The setting is registered to take up to 20 children per session, and nearly all come from the local area. At the time of the inspection there were 10 children in receipt of funded education. The setting meets for 2 sessions each day from 9am to 11am and 1pm to 3:30pm.

The setting is based in a church building with access to an outdoor area. Currently, there are no children identified as having additional learning needs attending the setting. Very few children speak Welsh at home and a very few children speak English as an additional language. The present lead practitioner was appointed in May 2000 and is supported by four additional practitioners.

The setting was last inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales in May 2017. It was last inspected by Estyn in September 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Nearly all children's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Almost all children co-operate successfully with each other and share toys and equipment readily
- Practitioners provide a good range of interesting learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage almost all children successfully
- Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of foundation phase practice
- Practitioners' caring approach creates a positive learning environment
- Arrangements for care, support and guidance are comprehensive
- The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of its provision

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting's arrangements for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective
- All practitioners are committed to improving quality
- Practitioners work together effectively and understand their roles and responsibilities
- Practitioners use information from training well to improve the provision
- Partnerships with parents, feeder schools and supporting agencies are worthwhile
- The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning successfully

Recommendations

- R1 Develop practitioners' skills in supporting children to explore, try things out, think creatively and solve problems in the outdoor area.
- R2 Ensure that improvements made in priority areas for development are embedded into practice.
- R3 Provide effective opportunities for children to learn about writing for different purposes consistently.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

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

Nearly all children enter the setting with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. During their time at the setting nearly all children make good progress, particularly in the development of their personal and social skills. A few children make very good progress.

Almost all children listen attentively. They pay good attention when others are talking and allow other children to speak without interrupting them. Almost all children understand and follow instructions successfully such as putting their coats on before they go outside or sitting on the mat ready for together time. Most children speak clearly and are happy to share information about what they are doing with adults. Many children talk confidently about past experiences such as going to the seaside.

Almost all children show enthusiasm for books, stories and rhymes and many look at books independently. A majority choose to spend time in the inviting book area and select favourite stories for practitioners to share with them. Most children enjoy mark making with a range of equipment and a very few children write for a purpose. For example, when they write their brother's name on a painting they have created for him.

Almost all children's numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points. Many children develop skills beyond those expected for their age, for example, they count objects accurately to 10. Most children apply their numeracy skills in different situations when encouraged by an adult. For example, they count how many skittles they have knocked over with a ball. Almost all children can name simple shapes and most make good use of mathematical vocabulary for example, describing a tower as being the 'tallest'.

Almost all children's physical skills are developing well. Most children cope with fine motor tasks appropriately. For example, they touch icons on the tablet to play a familiar song and make models with simple construction sets. They use a range of tools such as brushes, scoops, and rakes independently. Almost all children develop good gross motor skills such as negotiating space on trikes and taking part in large scale digging in the garden. A few are making good progress with their ball skills and enjoy playing skittles.

Almost all children regularly make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they will use. Almost all explore their environment confidently and a few are developing their problem-solving skills successfully. For example, children persist and try different approaches when trying to move compost from the wheelbarrow to the raised bed.

Most children access and use information, communication and technology (ICT) equipment confidently. For example, they play with a battery-operated alphabet game or sing into a toy microphone. A few children use a digital camera successfully to take their own photographs independently.

Most children are developing their Welsh skills well in relation to their starting points. Many join in with a range of Welsh songs and rhymes confidently and a few are beginning to sing Welsh songs independently. Almost all children respond positively to simple commands given in Welsh during daily routines and use single words regularly. For example, they say whether they want milk or water during snack time. A few children are beginning to use Welsh spontaneously for example, making 'tôst' in the role-play area and singing Welsh songs at home to their family.

Wellbeing: Good

Almost all children enter the setting happily and readily engage in the activities available. Most co-operate well with one another, sharing toys and equipment independently. A majority of children play collaboratively for example, they work together to make up their own pouring game in the water area.

Almost all children behave well. They look after the setting's resources appropriately and treat adults and children respectfully. Most children are courteous and show good manners when encouraged by practitioners. Most follow instructions given by an adult and respond to requests successfully. For example, they wash their hands and sit at the table ready for snack time. Many children help to tidy up with encouragement.

Children listen carefully and begin to respond appropriately when adults explain why they need to look after each other and how to look after the toys. A few are beginning to show concern for others when they are hurt or unhappy. For example, they give a toy ice-cream to a friend who is upset. Many children are developing their independence well. They put on their own apron and place their wet painting in the drying rack without any help.

Most children sustain interest in activities and move confidently to another activity when ready. Nearly all children make independent choices about what they want to play with from activities offered and all children can do this when supported by an adult. All children show interest in the activities offered outside and particularly enjoy the opportunity to dig in the raised bed.

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

Practitioners provide a good range of interesting learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage almost all children successfully. Long term plans cover all areas of the foundation phase curriculum effectively. Short-term plans focus well on developing children's literacy, numeracy, Welsh and ICT skills. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning through play and first-hand experiences.

The setting uses visitors effectively to enhance the curriculum, including a local vet, a new baby and a tarantula spider. They make particularly good use of visits from Isla the dog, who first came to the setting as a puppy. Practitioners use Isla's experiences to promote children's language development very well. Children have suitable opportunities to go on autumn walks and visit the local pond. However, overall, practitioners do not plan enough visits in the local area.

Practitioners provide very good opportunities for children to learn to care for living things. They support children to grow and look after a wide range of fruit and vegetables which they eat at snack time. They grow a variety of bulbs throughout the year, and there are meaningful opportunities for children to look after local wild life through feeding birds with seeds harvested from the sunflowers grown in the setting.

The indoor environment provides useful opportunities for children to develop their physical skills such as through using brushes, glue sticks and scissors. The newly developed outdoor physical play area provides opportunities for pedalling, balancing and ball skills. It presents children with appropriate challenge and enables them to develop their confidence successfully.

The setting's provision to develop children's numeracy skills is effective. Almost all practitioners provide children with useful opportunities to match, count and recognise shapes and patterns. For example, they encourage children to recognise the shape of their toast and cucumber at snack time. Resources available, such as measuring tubs, balance scales, shape puzzles and a telephone provide children with a wide range of experiences which develop mathematical concepts and language well.

Practitioners provide a range of opportunities for children to develop their communication skills effectively. They support children to join in with conversations and ask appropriate questions. The environment is full of examples of written language with many captions and labels written in both English and Welsh. The cosy book area is well resourced with a range of appropriate books, puppets and soft toys. Practitioners provide sound opportunities for children to take part in mark making activities. These include using chalks, white board markers and painting with water. However, there are very few opportunities for children to develop their understanding of writing for different purposes.

Provision for developing children's ICT skills is evident throughout the setting and supports children's learning in other areas well. There is a good range of equipment available, including programmable toys, a digital photo frame and a tablet which children access with interest.

Practitioners support children's Welsh language development successfully. They model Welsh through singing songs, reading stories, counting and using Welsh words and phrases throughout the session. They use Welsh to greet children on arrival and during other routines such as snack time. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage. For example, they dress in traditional costume, make Welsh cakes and draw daffodils as part of their recent St David's Day celebrations.

Teaching: Good

Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of foundation phase practice. They use a worthwhile range of strategies to encourage and to motivate children to learn. They combine focused tasks with children's free play effectively. As a result, children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning. Practitioners' interactions with children are sensitive, respectful and caring.

Practitioners observe how well children engage with activities and adapt the provision in response to their observations, this builds on children's interests successfully. The setting is beginning to involve children in planning; for example, practitioners ask them to bring in favourite toys and stories and use these as a starting point for learning. Practitioners use resources creatively such as when setting up an imaginative area relating to a traditional story.

A few practitioners use open ended questions well to extend children's thinking and encourage children to try and work things out for themselves. However, overall, they do not give children sufficient time to think about a question or to solve problems independently. This is particularly evident in the outdoor area. For example, practitioners fill the children's watering cans for them rather than helping them work out how to do it for themselves.

The setting has developed a good range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and children respond to these well. All practitioners have clear expectations and explain rules to children appropriately. This ensures a team approach and consistency for the children.

The setting has a worthwhile range of assessment procedures. Practitioners observe children and identify what they can already do during their first few weeks in the setting. At regular intervals, they update these records to show children's progress over time appropriately. There is a useful system to record how well children's skills are developing in response to the learning activities available each week. This helps identify next steps in children's learning. Practitioners share information with parents about their children's progress effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has worthwhile arrangements to support children's healthy eating and drinking. There are regular opportunities for children to choose what they would like to eat and to try new food at snack time. This includes healthy food that they have grown themselves, such as tomatoes and courgettes. The setting provides valuable opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise.

Practitioners are good role-models and support children to develop respect for others and a sense of right and wrong successfully. They encourage children to share equipment and to take care of resources effectively. As a result, children learn to share toys such as the digital camera happily.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Practitioners develop children's sense of awe and wonder successfully. For example, they encourage children to observe blossom in the trees turn into apples over time. Children have appropriate opportunities to find out about other cultures such as through making a dragon when learning about Chinese New Year.

Practitioners provide meaningful opportunities for children to learn about sustainability. They encourage children to put left over food into designated bins ready for composting and to recycle waste paper.

There are effective processes to support children with additional learning needs. These include strong links with a range of support agencies that help meet children's individual needs appropriately.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and do not give cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is very welcoming, and practitioners are friendly and approachable. They create a strong and inclusive community ethos. All children are encouraged to take part and have equal access to each area of the setting's provision. Practitioners lead by example in encouraging children to show tolerance towards one another and respect for the setting's equipment. As a result, all children play and learn happily.

The setting's accommodation is secure and well maintained. There are plenty of good quality resources across the areas of learning, which meet the needs of the children well. The setting has suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the foundation phase.

The lead practitioner makes creative use of the space indoors which is attractive and welcoming. Resources and furniture are generally of good quality and appropriate. Well organised learning areas make resources easily accessible for children.

The popular outdoor area has been developed successfully into a valuable learning environment. It supports the development of children's literacy, numeracy and physical skills appropriately.

The accommodation is well maintained and secure.

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

The lead practitioner has a clear vision to provide a happy, relaxed and secure place where children are ready to learn. She works effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children and manages practitioners and children well to ensure that the setting runs smoothly, following established routines. Practitioners work well together and understand their roles and responsibilities.

The setting has effective arrangements for managing staff performance. Almost all staff have good opportunities to discuss and reflect on the quality of their work. They take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development which link appropriately to the setting's priorities for improvement. Recently, this has helped improve the quality of the provision for children's Welsh language development.

The voluntary management committee supports the setting well. It monitors the setting's development and contributes actively to long term strategic planning, such as to maintain and improve attendance and viability.

There are a range of beneficial policies and procedures to support the organisation of the setting, and staff review these appropriately. The lead practitioner pays valuable attention to local and national priorities and as a result, there is a successful focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

Improving quality: Good

The setting's arrangements for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective and all practitioners are committed to improving quality. The lead practitioner makes effective use of information from a range of sources to inform the self-evaluation process. Practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to improve. They explain clearly what they have identified as priorities in order to raise standards.

The self-evaluation document successfully identifies well considered areas for improvement. It identifies what the children can do well and what they need more help with. Improvement plans set out clearly what the setting needs to develop. The targets come directly from the self-evaluation process and form suitable priorities for the setting. The improvement plan is a well-organised document that sets out appropriate actions, staff responsibilities, time-scales and monitoring arrangements.

Practitioners are open to new ideas and respond to support from a range of sources. This results in improvements to the quality of learning experiences. For example, the successful development of provision for ICT.

The setting has made appropriate progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection. However, the setting does not have strong enough procedures for ensuring that improvements made are maintained and embedded fully over time.

Partnership working: Good

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

Parents receive a good range of information through notices, regular meetings, social media 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. For example, the setting displays Welsh words that the children are currently learning on the notice boards so that parents are aware of these.

There are well-established arrangements for children's induction into the setting and smooth transition to the school. For example, the lead practitioner invites teachers from feeder schools into the setting to meet the children. Leaders have developed beneficial links with nearby training institutions and provide placements for students undertaking courses in childcare. This helps connect the setting with the local community effectively.

The setting has useful links with the local authority and receives regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. This has led to regular improvements in standards and provision. It makes suitable use of its connections with professional organisations and other external agencies.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning well. Leaders and managers make sure that the setting has enough suitably qualified and well-trained practitioners to support the effective delivery of the foundation phase curriculum. Resources are plentiful and of good quality for example, the wide range of equipment to support role-play.

The setting ensures that most staff access training based on needs identified through the appraisal process. Many practitioners also make good use of training to improve provision provided by the local authority, for example this has supported them to improve provision for developing Welsh language skills. Most practitioners reflect on their practice and are aware of personal strengths and areas to develop. They share ideas and support each other's professional development appropriately.

The committee manages the setting's budget suitably and has appropriate systems for keeping spending under review. The chair person is proactive in securing grants and fundraising to improve provision for example, raising funds for the refurbishment of the outdoor area. Due to the good quality of teaching, the quality of provision and the progress children make, the setting provides good value for money.

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CIW	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh</p>
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education