



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Dôlafon Pre-school Group  
Dol-y-Coed Road  
Llanwrtyd Wells  
Powys  
LD5 4RA**

**Date of inspection: May 2011**

**By**

**Mrs Bev Jenkins**

**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 school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

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

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

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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## Context

Dôlafon pre-school group is an English-medium setting located in Ysgol Dôlafon, a dual stream community primary school, situated in Llanwrtyd Wells in Powys local authority. Children join the pre-school group at the beginning of the term immediately after their third birthday. On the first morning of the inspection there were nine three-year-old children present, six of whom joined the setting in May 2011. On the second morning of the inspection, six of the nine children attended. Powys Early Years Childcare and Development Partnership currently fund ten three-year-olds in the setting.

Most children who attend the setting come from the town of Llanwrtyd Wells and the surrounding area of Tirabad, Cefn Gorwydd, Llanafan and Abergwesyn and transfer into Ysgol Dôlafon at the beginning of the term in which they turn four. The setting serves an area described as being neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged.

The setting is managed on a day-to-day basis by a senior practitioner who is supported by an additional practitioner. The headteacher of Ysgol Dôlafon is the registered person and, in conjunction with governors, is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the pre-school group.

Dôlafon pre-school group was registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in October 2010. The setting is registered for up to twelve children aged between two and a half and four-years of age and is open for five days a week from 9.05am to 11.15am. Sessions are conducted through the medium of English. The majority of the children come from English speaking homes. No children are from Welsh speaking homes and two children have English as an additional language. The pre-school group welcomes children with additional learning needs although there are no children with additional needs at present in the setting.

The setting is awaiting its first inspection by CSSIW. This is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

### Current performance

The setting's current performance has strengths that outweigh areas for improvement:

- all children feel safe in the setting, behave well and have secure relationships with adults;
- there is a strong culture of care and nurturing that successfully develops children's self-esteem;
- practitioners work well together as a team; and
- children's speaking and listening skills in English are supported well and encouraged at every opportunity by practitioners that act as good language role models

However:

- provision for developing children's early reading and writing, Welsh and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills is underdeveloped;
- planning and assessment is not yet used well enough to identify children's next steps in learning or to provide sufficient challenge for more able and mature children; and
- the quality of outdoors provision means that the outdoors is not used enough as a learning tool.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvements have strengths that outweigh areas for improvement:

- there is a very strong team ethos and a culture of support;
- the headteacher, governors and practitioners are committed to improving standards and provision and act swiftly on advice;
- governors have a better understanding of their role in providing strategic direction for the setting and their role as critical friend; and
- practitioners know what they need to do to improve.

However:

- self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures are not yet fully embedded and planning does not always focus enough on improving

children's standards;

- monitoring of the setting is mainly informal and does not focus enough as yet on children's standards and wellbeing; and
- lack of professional development means that practitioners are not as secure in delivering high-quality experiences as they should be.

## Recommendations

- R1 improve provision for developing children's early reading and writing, information and communications technology\* and Welsh skills\*;
- R2 make better use of assessment to plan more effectively for children's next steps in learning so that all children are challenged appropriately;
- R3 continue to develop the outdoors as a learning environment\*;
- R4 further develop and refine self-evaluation procedures to make sure that the quality of learning is regularly evaluated and improvements are properly planned for\*; and
- R5 ensure that staff are well-trained to effectively deliver all aspects the Foundation Phase curriculum.

\*The setting identified the need to improve provision in these areas within its self-evaluation review.

### **What happens next?**

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

N/A

#### Standards: N/A

In line with Estyn guidance, there is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because at the time of the inspection only three children had been in the setting longer than three weeks. Reporting on these children would have identified individual children.

### Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

#### Learning experiences: Adequate

The setting provides children with a suitable range of activities across almost all areas of learning. Children's learning experiences are enhanced by visitors into the setting and visits into the community.

Practitioners know their children well and generally respond appropriately to their varying abilities and needs. However, planning is not yet specific enough to systematically meet the needs of individual children and this means that a few more mature and able children are not challenged enough.

The provision for developing children's speaking and listening skills is appropriate. Practitioners take every opportunity to promote good language skills and they act as good language models. For instance, they encourage children to describe how salad vegetables taste when they are making sandwiches. Opportunities for children to develop their early reading and writing skills are not as well developed. Practitioners do not always use the opportunities that activities offer to extend children's early reading and writing skills. Generally, practitioners use play and focused tasks appropriately to promote children's counting skills in English and Welsh. For instance, children are encouraged to count the gold coins that Jack left from his visit to the Giant's Castle when he climbed the beanstalk.

The provision for developing children's skills in information and communication technology is at an early stage of development. Children do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology to reinforce and enrich their learning across the seven areas of learning.

While practitioners use Welsh for whole group activities such as singing sessions, incidental Welsh is not used regularly enough with the children. Children are not often encouraged to use Welsh. There are appropriate opportunities for the children to learn about the traditions and celebrations of Wales.

Children are developing an appropriate understanding of the world in which they live through celebrations such as Chinese New Year. Good opportunities are provided for children to learn about recycling. Children are encouraged to collect their fruit peelings after snack time for composting.

## **Teaching: Adequate**

Practitioners have a reasonable understanding of the Foundation Phase and use an acceptable range of approaches that engage and motivate most children to learn. Practitioners show high levels of empathy and understanding of how to care for young children but are less secure in their understanding of how young children develop and learn.

Practitioners work effectively as a team, which ensures consistency in approaches, for example, in managing children's behaviour. Rules and routines are well established and, as a result, all children feel safe, secure and well cared for.

Generally, practitioners interact and engage with children appropriately, although the questions they ask do not always encourage children to think for themselves. Occasionally, the pace of sessions is too leisurely and valuable learning time is lost.

Children are often observed during play activities and practitioners make notes of what children say and do. This information helps practitioners gain an awareness of how individual children are progressing but does not, as yet, ensure that activities meet the learning needs of individual children. Recently, practitioners have begun to evaluate children's progress against planned learning outcomes. However, planned learning outcomes are often too general to be measured with any degree of accuracy. This makes planning for children's next steps difficult to achieve.

Parents are kept reasonably well informed about their children's progress through formal meetings in the autumn and summer terms and a written report when their child transfers into school.

## **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The setting successfully promotes children's health and wellbeing. Children are happy, feel safe and settle quickly to the routines and activities offered in the setting. Practitioners encourage children to take responsibility for their actions and to care for others. Daily routines provide good opportunities for children to develop important values such as fairness and respect and to know right from wrong. Children's spiritual and cultural development is promoted satisfactorily.

There are currently no children with identified additional learning needs in the setting, but appropriate procedures are in place for identification and support. There are no links between the setting and relevant specialist services at the moment but practitioners are aware of who to contact should specialist help be required.

The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and the setting has a range of relevant policies that support its day-to-day work and meet requirements.



**Learning environment: Adequate**

The setting is an inclusive community that offers equal access to the curriculum to all its children. Practitioners positively encourage children to respect others and to be sensitive to their needs.

With the exception of Welsh, information and communication technology and cultural diversity, there are enough resources to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase, although resources are showing signs of wear and tear.

The indoor environment is orderly and reasonably well-maintained. Access to toilet facilities is difficult because children have to walk through an adjoining classroom. Although this is managed well, children cannot visit the toilet unsupervised. This means that at certain times learning is disrupted as a member of staff accompanies the children to the toilet.

The use of the outdoors to enhance and develop children's learning is underdeveloped.

Practitioners are experienced in working with young children but are not as knowledgeable as they should be about teaching certain aspects of the Foundation Phase.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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**Leadership: Adequate**

The setting leader promotes a positive ethos in the setting. Practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have a shared purpose and commitment to providing the best possible experiences for children in the setting.

The management committee comprises the headteacher and governors of the school. The management committee has a good understanding of their role in terms of improving provision. A designated governor regularly visits the setting and provides sound advice on ways to improve the environment. The management committee is committed to improving the work of the setting and responds positively and swiftly to advice and support. However, formal monitoring of children's standards and the quality of teaching to inform the setting's future priorities is at an early stage of development.

The setting is responding appropriately to most local and national priorities related to the Foundation Phase.

**Improving quality: Adequate**

Formal processes for self-evaluation are quite recent for the setting and are developing steadily. Practitioners respond well to advice from the local authority and have worked hard to implement, such things, as new planning, assessment and self-evaluation procedures. Staff use external reviews from the local authority and from the Foundation Phase governor well to improve provision.

The lead practitioner and headteacher of the school recently met to prioritise areas for improvement and to produce a suitable plan of action. Many of the areas identified in the inspection as requiring further development had already been highlighted by the lead practitioner and headteacher. However, targets in the setting's improvement plan do not always identify measurable outcomes for children's standards and wellbeing or clearly identify how the plan will be resourced to support quality improvement.

Practitioners occasionally consult with children about what they would like to do and where they like to play and to use this information in planning activities. For example, after reading 'Jack and the Beanstalk' story the children decided to have a party for Jack's safe return. The setting is beginning to seek the views of parents through the use of a suggestion box.

Whilst practitioners make appropriate use of some training opportunities to develop and improve their practice, too few opportunities have been used to share and learn from good practice with other settings and from within the school.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting works well with a good range of partners to strengthen and enhance provision for children's standards and wellbeing.

Practitioners have very good relationships with parents and carers. Parents and carers value the strong informal links that they have with staff in the setting and feel that it contributes to the children's happiness and enjoyment. The outcomes from the parent questionnaires and discussions with a group of parents indicate a high level of satisfaction with all areas of the setting's provision. However, parents feel that on occasions formal communication could be better and they would welcome an opportunity to know more about what their children do every day. .

There is an effective working relationship between practitioners. The strong sense of team work in the setting means that practitioners' work well together sharing ideas and responsibilities and using their expertise.

The school is very supportive of the setting. Resources are often shared, access is allowed to the school grounds and school staff have helped write Welsh signage and provide information and communication technology support and training for the lead practitioner.

There is a positive working relationship between practitioners and the local authority Foundation Phase advisory teachers. Practitioners respond well to the advice and guidance they receive and have benefitted from attending one or two local authority cluster training sessions.

The setting has good links with the local community. For instance, children take part in local Eisteddfodau, visit local shops and library, all of which enhance children's learning experiences.

**Resource management: Adequate**

Appropriate use is made of the available staffing and resources. Practitioners are suitably deployed to make the best use of their time, expertise and experience. Practitioners' professional development needs have been identified and the management committee has identified ways of meeting these needs.

The management committee manages the budget efficiently.

Overall, resources are sufficient to enable most children to meet most of the Foundation Phase outcomes.

In view of the fact that provision and leadership are adequate, the setting provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Analysis of the seven returned questionnaires and informal discussions with a few parents indicate a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by the setting. They are pleased with the way that their children are looked after and cared for. Parents are confident to contact the setting if they have any concerns but feel that on occasions formal communication could be better.

#### Responses to discussions with children.

All children like coming to the setting and enjoy the daily activities on offer. They enjoy co-operating with others to complete activities such as tidying up and clearing away after snack time. Almost all children are confident when speaking to adults and visitors. They understand the importance of being kind to others and of behaving well.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

Mrs Bev Jenkins	Reporting Inspector
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### Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))