

**A report on**  
**Gungrog Happitots Playgroup**  
**Gungrog CiW Infants School**  
**Gungrog Road**  
**Welshpool**  
**Powys**  
**SY21 7EJ**

**Date of inspection: May 2011**

**by**

**Michael T. Ridout**

**for**

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



INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR  
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL

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:

<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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## Context

Gungrog Happitots Playgroup is an English-medium setting. It is situated close to the town centre of Welshpool in Powys and serves a largely residential area. It meets in Gungrog Church in Wales Infant School. The playgroup is a co-opted body of the school.

The children who attend come from a range of backgrounds, including a minority from disadvantaged homes. Almost all children have English as their home language. None of the children speak Welsh at home. One child has English as an additional language. A very few children have additional learning needs.

The setting was reorganised in September 2010 to combine 'Flying Start' and three year old education and this has involved new roles and responsibilities for the staff. The setting is open for 42 weeks of the year and offers five morning sessions each week, four of which are funded. It is registered for up to 24 children between the age of two and admission to school. The local authority (LA) currently funds twelve places for three year olds during term time.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in March 2010. It is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The setting is generally good because:

- most children make good progress in relation to their starting points;
- children enjoy learning and are happy and well behaved;
- most teaching is good;
- practitioners successfully promote children's health, safety and wellbeing; and
- recent improvements in provision impact well on standards.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the setting is well led and managed;
- there is effective teamwork among practitioners;
- a strong culture of self-improvement is becoming established;
- practitioners respond positively to advice and guidance and are committed to seeking ways to improve; and
- there is a good record of improvement since the setting was reorganised.

## Recommendations

In order to improve provision further the setting needs to:

- provide sufficient resources to enhance children's skills in communication and in using a range of information and communications technology (ICT);
- effectively plan to integrate use of the outdoors for continuous activities;
- clearly identify learning outcomes in planning and match focused activities more closely to children's differing needs and abilities;
- formalise strategic planning and provide a clear framework for continued improvement.

### ***What happens next?***

*The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.*

## Main findings

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

**Good**

### **Standards: Good**

Most children achieve well in relation to their stage of development and ability. They make good progress across the Foundation Phase areas of learning as they acquire new knowledge and develop their skills. The children gain in confidence, most cope well with new experiences and they enjoy the stimulus and challenge of varied activities.

Almost all children apply their skills well to an appropriate range of learning and play activities. Many make good progress in communication skills, but a few have limited competence. Most listen attentively and steadily increase their vocabulary as they engage in simple conversations about their play. For example, they describe using the lift and parking cars in the multi-story car park and confidently name toys such as railway characters. Most respond well to instructions and are inquisitive, particularly when engaging in new experiences, for example 'mixing' compost. A few ask questions and most recognise their name. Many join in songs and rhymes with enthusiasm and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. They handle books as readers, follow the story from the illustrations and happily recall familiar stories. More able children show increasing awareness that the text conveys the story. Children happily engage in imaginative role play and show interest in mark making. Their skills in early writing are developing.

Most make good progress in numeracy skills. They count in sequence to at least ten and a few count objects reliably to five. Many sequence objects and name common shapes such as a square. They match shapes and colours and a few begin to use comparative language such as 'bigger' and 'smaller.' Many make good progress in creative development and for their age show good levels of independence within the setting. They handle tools or materials with increasing skill. Their skills in ICT are less well developed.

Children's progress in Welsh language is good. Many show increasing understanding of familiar phrases and instructions, they count to five, name colours and describe the weather, although their spontaneous use of Welsh is at an early stage.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Children settle well when entering the setting and quickly become involved in activities. They are well motivated, show interest and have positive attitudes to new experiences. Most co-operate well during play activities and encourage others to take part. Most make choices about how and what they learn within the setting, but their involvement in helping to plan and develop activities is underdeveloped.

Many have an appropriate understanding for their age and stage of development of the importance of eating healthily and exercising. They develop social skills well. In particular they enjoy snack times together when they eat a wide range of healthy

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food prepared for them. Most name a range of fruits and foods and children serve each other and pour drinks. Most are aware of the need to wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet.

The standard of behaviour is good. Most show appropriate respect and care for each other and respond well to the positive role models for relationships and the expectations for behaviour set by adults. Children are polite to each other and adults. Most take turns, share toys and cooperate well. They take care of resources and develop responsibility by joining in tidy-up sessions.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Adequate**

The setting provides all children with a broad range of interesting and stimulating learning experiences in most areas of learning. Practitioners work very well together to plan a wide range of activities that stimulate, engage and challenge many children to learn effectively.

In order to ensure appropriate progression in children's skills the setting leader ensures planning is securely based on the Foundation Phase Child Development Profile and Skills Framework. Practitioners collaborate successfully to provide children with learning experiences that appropriately develop their communication and numeracy skills. The provision for creative skills is a strong feature, but the focus on developing skills in ICT is less well developed. Weekly planning provides suitable details of focused and continuous activities. The content of activities is well planned, but the learning objectives are less well developed. Too few details of how and what children of different abilities may achieve are identified to ensure more able children are provided with enough challenge. Across areas of learning practitioners give children opportunities to solve problems, be independent and experiment with new experiences. They know the children very well and respond to their varying needs spontaneously and appropriately during activities.

Practitioners do not plan well enough for the use of the setting's outdoor area to promote continuous activities. This limits children's experiential learning, including opportunities to move around more freely, to be noisy and to take risks.

There is good provision to promote awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales. For example, when celebrating St David's Day the children discovered they liked leek and potato soup. Practitioners regularly promote children's Welsh language skills through group activities and use Welsh incidentally during activities.

The setting provides few opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, recycling or the impact we have on the world.

**Teaching: Good**

The quality of most teaching is good. Practitioners are aware of the planned activities, have a sound understanding of the Foundation Phase and use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning. They make learning fun

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and the children respond very well to this. Children are given sufficient time to complete tasks and practitioners intervene sensitively and appropriately when needed. On occasions practitioners use open-ended questioning well to extend and challenge children's thinking. Teaching is most effective when practitioners challenge children to extend their learning and provide helpful oral feedback. Weekly planning provides sound guidance for teaching, but details of the expected steps in learning for different groups of children are not well enough defined.

The arrangements for the assessment of learning are developing well. The setting is reviewing its procedures. Day-to-day observations involving all practitioners are generally used well to evaluate individual progress. The information provides a good basis to plan children's next steps in learning, but assessments are not always sharply enough focused on the learning and skills promoted by activities. Practitioners make time before and after sessions to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress. The setting also provides a detailed report of progress when children move to the primary school.

**Care, support and guidance: Good**

There are effective arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These procedures contribute well to children's general development and support their learning well. The strong emphasis placed on social and moral development is a very good feature.

Children are happy and secure in the setting and are willing to ask for help and support. The provision encourages curiosity about the world, fosters values such as fairness and honesty and promotes both good behaviour and caring relationships. Children are encouraged to share resources, take some responsibility for their actions and to develop greater independence.

Arrangements to provide children with personal and specialist support when required are well established with the school and specialist agencies such as health, psychological and social services. There is effective communication with the relevant agencies in the case of vulnerable groups, including those with additional learning needs. The provision and support for more able children is less well developed. There are effective induction and transition arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting.

Procedures to ensure the setting is safe and secure are effective. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented and members of staff and regular volunteers have valid CRB checks. The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures, including the appointment of responsible persons, with regard to child protection and safeguarding.

**Learning environment: Good**

The setting provides a welcoming environment for children and has an inclusive ethos. Practitioners value children as individuals and nurture understanding and respect for diversity. The children have equal access to all areas of provision and the positive relationships within the setting promote good behaviour and help to ensure children are free from harassment that may cause undue anxiety. There are suitable arrangements in place to ensure that any future children with disabilities do not suffer

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disadvantage.

The setting employs enough qualified practitioners to meet the needs of all children. They are experienced, have good knowledge of the Foundation Phase and regularly attend training opportunities to update their knowledge and skills.

Much good work has been undertaken since September 2010 to enhance the learning environment. The accommodation provides sufficient space indoors and this is arranged to provide focused areas for learning. There is good access to a large outdoor play area, but this is not fully developed. There is a basic sufficiency of resources, some good quality resources have been purchased, but overall the range and quality is limited. There are insufficient resources for ICT and developing communication skills. Good use is made of the school grounds, but limited use is made of visits, visitors and the community to enhance learning.

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

The setting is well led and managed by the recently appointed setting leader. She successfully ensures practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and involves them fully in establishing the setting's direction and purpose. A very positive ethos is established where staff and children are valued and respected.

Leadership sets high expectations and is developing strategies for improvement. A strong culture of self-improvement is evident amongst practitioners. This is a good feature that results in the current good work of the setting. Regular discussions ensure that practitioners contribute to planning.

There are no formalised arrangements for practitioners' appraisal and professional development. The governing body maintains appropriate oversight of the work of the setting and the headteacher provides valuable day-to-day managerial advice and support. However, strategic leadership is less well developed.

The setting responds positively to national and local priorities. In particular the provision builds well on the Foundation Phase principles.

**Improving quality: Adequate**

Formalised arrangements for self-evaluation are at an early stage of development. The leader has established a reflective culture within the setting and there is strong commitment to take account of the views of parents, carers and children as much as possible. Good use has been made of Foundation Phase training and external advice to reorganise the provision. This has resulted in good improvements in the short term. All practitioners were involved in an audit of provision and contributed to an improvement plan that has helped them to focus on key areas. Leaders articulate their aspirations for further improvement clearly, but strategic plans of action to prioritise, guide and resource initiatives over the medium term are not in place.

The self-evaluation report is a useful document. It reflects the strengths and areas for improvement identified in the setting's audit of provision. The text is descriptive



and judgements are seldom based securely on first hand evidence. The processes of self-evaluation benefit from the involvement of external agencies, but the absence of planning to secure the next steps in improvement hinders progress.

Networks of professional practice support practitioners' professional development well, but their awareness of innovative approaches to learning and teaching in other settings is limited.

### **Partnership working: Good**

A range of established partnerships contribute well to children's progress and wellbeing. Practitioners maintain very positive and mutually beneficial relationships with parents and carers. Day-to-day communication is effective in keeping parents up to date with important dates and information. This encourages them to contribute to their child's education and to attend sessions, such as 'learning and play' with their children. Parents are provided with a clear statement of purpose and a helpful prospectus about the setting.

Partnership working between practitioners within the setting is effective in improving provision. Close links with the primary school ensure a smooth transition from playgroup to school. The setting provides placements for students undertaking vocational courses and plans to draw on resources and people from within the local community to enhance provision further.

The setting's partnership with an advisory teacher provided by the LA encourages practitioners to reflect on how the setting is organised and promotes 'best practice'. Practitioners value the support they receive, including that from LA services and voluntary agencies. They are keen to respond to advice and guidance and benefit from attending training organised by the LA. This encourages links with other settings, but such networking is at an early stage of development.

### **Resource management: Good**

Following reorganisation of the setting last September the day-to-day management of resources to improve outcomes for children is increasingly effective. The setting leader skilfully deploys practitioners and other adults to make best use of their expertise in meeting the needs of children. Generally good use is made of the available resources to provide focused and continuous activities indoors and although regular use is made of the outdoor area, opportunities to integrate indoor and outdoor provision are not fully developed

The governing body exercises appropriate oversight of income and expenditure, but strategic planning lacks clarity and precision in the allocation of funding to improve provision in line with the setting's needs and priorities. This makes it difficult for the setting leader and her team to plan and secure further improvement. The recent improvements in provision and outcomes indicate the setting provides good value for money in a challenging context.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Fourteen questionnaires were received. Nearly all strongly agree children are helped to settle in well, they are well prepared for school and teaching is good. Most strongly agree their child feels safe and likes the playgroup. They say practitioners are approachable, the playgroup is well run and that they feel well informed about their child's progress. Many strongly agree children are treated fairly and receive appropriate additional support when needed. They indicate children are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise and say they are satisfied with the setting. A majority strongly agree children behave well in the setting and around half strongly agree there is a good range of activities. There were six written comments praising the setting and one suggestion that a simple uniform be introduced. Brief discussions with parents bringing children to the setting confirm high levels of satisfaction with the provision.

#### Responses to discussions with children

Observations of the children show that they settle happily in the setting and enjoy learning. They have positive relationships with their peers and with the adults. An inclusive ethos helps to ensure children feel safe and secure. All children demonstrate a strong sense of trust and know that members of staff provide them with effective care and guidance.

## Appendix 2

### Reporting inspector

Michael T. 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.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.