



*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**

**Mochdre Playgroup  
Mochdre Infants School  
Station Road  
Mochdre  
Conwy  
LL28 5EF**

**Date of inspection: June 2011**

**by**

**Eifion R Morgan**

**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:

<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

Mochdre is a small village just off the A55 south of Llandudno in North Wales. The playgroup is located in Ysgol Babanod Mochdre. Until 2006 the playgroup children and nursery pupils were amalgamated in one class and taught by a member of the school staff. Since then the playgroup has been a separate entity. It occupies a large, well lit and well resourced room in the school and there is a secure outside grassed play area immediately accessible from the main teaching room. The playgroup also uses the school's cloakroom facilities and the nursery tarmac yard when not used by the school.

Parents and carers approach the setting via the school yard. Children are met by the playgroup staff and parents can settle their children down in the playgroup if necessary.

The playgroup is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accept a maximum of 26 children. During the inspection there were 13 children present, 8 three year olds, of whom 7 are funded. There are 4 members of staff in attendance.

All children come from the village which is a community first area with a few coming from owner occupied homes further afield. All children come from English speaking homes. None are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The playgroup readily accepts children with additional learning needs (ALN) including those with medical, behavioural and communication problems. All are well supported and the playgroup has good and effective links with the local professional referral centre.

Children start the playgroup in the term following their second birthday and leave for the next phase of their education in the September following their third birthday. The playgroup operates for 5 afternoons a week between 12.30 and 3 p.m. during school term time. The playgroup has been previously inspected by Estyn when it was part of the school's nursery provision and the one recommendation from that inspection has been carried out. Since the inspection (2005) it has a completely new staff and management. The playgroup is a member of the All Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association.

The playgroup was previously inspected by CSSIW in February 2011. The recommendations have been addressed.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

- All children achieve well and make good progress from their starting point.
- All children's language skills (English and Welsh) are limited but developing.
- All children enjoy their time in the playgroup and are keen to attend.
- Most children behave well and have good attitudes to learning.
- Planning meets the needs of the children and activities interest them.
- Provision for language development is adequate.
- Teaching is generally good; assessment is not used consistently to underpin planning of the curriculum.
- Care, support and guidance, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- There is a good learning environment; the playgroup has a good ethos and equality of opportunity.
- Good partnership arrangements are in place.

### Prospects for improvement

- The playgroup has a good track record of bringing about change.
- It has a good record of having to adapt, and make best use of amenities.
- Currently playgroup staff and the registered person with responsibility for the playgroup work together well.
- Self-evaluation has identified strengths and areas for improvement, these are realistic and achievable.
- The registered person knows the playgroup well and the management committee are very supportive and focused on improving the provision.

## Recommendations

The playgroup needs to:

1. give greater emphasis to developing children's literacy skills in both English and Welsh;
2. review assessment procedures so as to focus on children's skill development and to identify the next steps in children's learning and to reduce bureaucracy as far as possible.
3. involve parents to a greater extent in children's learning;
4. make better use of the outside play area so as to increase the choice of activities available to the children.

The inspection recognised the Management Committee's intention to appoint a playgroup leader for the next academic year.

### **What happens next?**

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

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### Standards: Good

Children are making realistic progress and achieve good standards relative to their starting point. Most work well at their tasks choosing their activities and are often making a good effort.

Children have a limited but developing vocabulary. Most children are developing good listening skills, for example as during “circle time”. They enjoy stories and express their interest and enjoyment. Most children respond positively to instructions and many are eager to answer questions. Their answers, however, are often single words or incomplete sentences and their expression limited. Most are reluctant to speak to the inspector.

All children, at different times, look at books and many handle books correctly. Their ability to talk about their favourite story is limited. Most children are beginning the process of mark making, although only a few make recognisable scribbles.

All children follow and join in with familiar number rhymes and show an awareness of number in counting activities. Many children count correctly to 3 and some beyond with many rote counting to 10. A few children understand the meaning of “one more” but their ability to recognise written numerals is underdeveloped. Children are beginning to use mathematical language such as “big” and “little” towers.

A few children enjoy working at the computer and have reasonable skills, such as when using the mouse. Children know about digital equipment and that it is activated by switches and buttons. A few children are able to grasp the idea of directing a programmable toy.

All children enjoy creative work and show good manipulative skills, such as when making patterns and using materials to make their artefacts. They enjoy painting and mixing paints. Most children display good physical skills, such as jumping, sliding and climbing. They are beginning to understand seasonal change and its effect, such as leaf fall in winter.

Most children’s understanding and command of the Welsh language is underdeveloped. Most are able to repeat words and phrases spoken by adults and understand more than they can speak. They happily join in Welsh songs and nursery rhymes, especially action songs. They respond positively to instructions given by adults in Welsh as for example “golchi dwylo”. However, their ability to use the language is limited.

### Wellbeing: Good

Most children have good attitudes and behave well. They have a basic idea of why they are given certain foods during snack time because they are “healthy foods”.

They also recognise the importance of cleaning their teeth, and washing their hands before food. The playgroup provides them with a safe and secure environment and children act accordingly showing sufficient confidence to try new activities and seeking help when necessary. Children are free from physical or verbal abuse.

All children show an enjoyment in learning and most are happy and eager to participate. Most children are learning to be considerate and play together happily. A few children work independently, although most need assistance.

Most children, when given a choice select their favourite activity indicating that their decision making skills are developing.

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

Planning successfully engages all children. Day-to-day activities provide challenging and innovating activities that are well designed to enable children to progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes. Planning is suitably flexible and builds on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Overall, good procedures are in place for planning the curriculum and these are effective. There are also effective procedures in place to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum, well matched to the requirements of the Foundation Phase. These records show clearly aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum that has been planned and incorporated into the day-to-day activities. In some instances however it is repetitious and needs to be streamlined so as to avoid unnecessary work.

Learning activities encourage children to participate and to develop their self-confidence. Good emphasis is given to developing children's creative skills and there are ample opportunities for them to develop their physical skills. Their activities in the outdoor environment help to develop an understanding of the living world and the need to care for living things.

All children are beginning to acquire skills that enable them to access all areas of the curriculum. There are, in the main, good opportunities planned to enable children to use and develop their skills. The playgroup, however, does not sufficiently focus on developing children's communication skills in both languages. There are too few opportunities planned to encourage children to speak and use language in their day-to-day activities. This applies to both the English and Welsh languages. Planning to develop children's knowledge and understanding of some of the traditions and celebrations of Wales is appropriate.

Children, through practical experiences are beginning to learn about recycling. They collect any waste vegetables and fruit and add them to their compost. They also know not to put empty milk cartons in the waste bin since they will be collected separately.

## **Teaching: Good**

Staff have a good understanding of the requirements and philosophy of the Foundation Phase and have experience of working with children. Staff display a calm, confident manner and have high expectations of all children, including those identified as possibly requiring additional learning support.

Planning successfully underpins the teaching providing a good basis for the day-to-day activities. Staff know the children well and know their individual ability and needs. Questioning is used well to support the children. The planning also ensures a good balance between child-selected and adult-directed activities and a notably good feature is the staff's understanding of when they should intervene and when it is beneficial to let a child work on his/her own. However, staff are vigilant to ensure that all children are actively involved. Staff also, from information provided in the planning, know their roles and what they are expected to do.

Children are assessed regularly and the observations recorded in individual record files, in scrap books and as illustrated group activities. Day-to-day activities are well matched to children's ability and prior attainment because staff know their children well and tasks provide for a range of different abilities.

However, in the main, the results of assessment are not used sufficiently to underpin the planning. Comments made on children's achievement are generally descriptive. They do not pinpoint what skills individual children have achieved or the next steps in children's learning. Neither do they enable the playgroup to make parents aware of their children's progress and what they can do to help them improve.

Parents and carers, at the end of the year, receive an illustrated record of their child's work and these are much appreciated by parents and carers.

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

The provision for children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Day-to-day activities in the playgroup foster values such as tolerance, fairness, honesty and respect for each other. Children are learning to distinguish between right and wrong and are acquiring a good social framework that begins to give them rules of behaviour and life long skills. The calm and caring environment is also very worthwhile for children who, in their own way, value the support they get from the staff.

All children are valued and respected as individuals and it is obvious that children realise that they are respected by the staff. This is highly effective in improving their self-confidence and feeling of self worth. A child's sense of awe and wonder about the world around them was evident when she found some mini-beasts in leaf litter she was examining.

The playgroup, in conjunction with the school, has established excellent links with outside professional specialist services. Staff are vigilant in evaluating and



monitoring children suspected of having specific learning needs and are conversant with the necessary procedures. Parents and carers reported that they were fully consulted at each stage and reported on the success of the system in terms of their child's progress.

Safeguarding arrangements are appropriate. Policies and procedures are in place and a senior member of staff is the responsible person. All staff have received the necessary training. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008).

The playgroup has effective, well established procedures for supporting children with additional learning needs. Good use is made of specialist services provided by the local authority. These children have individual play plans (IPP) indicating targets for improvement, dates and progress reviews. These are signed by parents who are involved at each stage. Parents reported on the success of the support their children had received.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The playgroup has an inclusive ethos that is calm and supportive. All children, including those with ALN, whatever their background and ability have equal access to all areas of the curriculum. A notable and very worthwhile aspect of the playgroup is the tolerant attitude that pervades all aspects of the playgroup. This successfully promotes an atmosphere free from harassment and the virtual elimination of all forms of oppressive behaviour. The playgroup's positive behaviour strategies are very successful in overcoming minor misdemeanours and maintain the good ethos of the playgroup. There is a well established complaints procedure but has not been needed.

The playgroup is generously staffed and are all appropriately qualified and experienced in working with young children. The playgroup is well resourced and these are accessible to the children. Resources are well focused to support the teaching of the Foundation Phase curriculum and to respond to children's needs. The outdoor resources and facilities are safe and well matched to children's interest and ability. The area is adjacent to the main room and easily accessible and the playgroup has the necessary wet weather clothing. However, the outside is only used at specific times and is not part of the choice of activities available for the children.

The accommodation generally is of high quality and very suitable for children of this age.

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

The playgroup functions with a sense of purpose that successfully promotes children's development. Staff know and fully accept their roles and responsibilities and both teaching and learning are well managed. Whilst the playgroup has

undergone changes of personnel and responsibilities immediately prior to the inspection, such changes have been very well managed with the minimum disruption to the working of the playgroup. Staff have worked together well and with the support of the Local Authority advisory teacher, planning for the curriculum has been done effectively and this has ensured a good quality of provision for the children. The infant school headteacher, who is the Registered person, accepted responsibility for the playgroup and assisted by the senior playgroup assistant, have successfully overseen the current organisation of the playgroup. The Foundation Phase is successfully delivered and the current organisational arrangements ensure that children receive good experiences. The leadership has given the playgroup good strategic direction and a real sense of purpose.

Relationships with children, with parents and carers, and with the management committee are positive and the overall working of the playgroup, in spite of difficulties, has been good whilst maintaining a focus on achieving good progress. The outcomes for the children have been good and likely to improve. The playgroup has consistently met national and local priorities.

### **Improving quality: Good**

A culture of self-evaluation runs through the working of the playgroup and all staff strive to give the children the best possible provision. The self-evaluation document identifies clearly areas for improvement. These are prioritised, achievable and realistic and will result in gains for the children. All staff have been involved in the self-evaluation process.

The views of parents and others associated with the playgroup have been taken into account. Staff have undertaken professional development and training regularly and the impact of training is apparent in terms of the benefit to the children's progress and wellbeing. Parent's views are sought regularly.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The playgroup has close and worthwhile links with parents and carers. Parents and carers are invited to come to the playgroup to observe and talk with the staff before their child begins at the playgroup. There is also an informative pack (statement of purpose) which the parents receive. They are welcomed to accompany their child and to settle them down initially and stay with them. Staff are always available to talk to parents and, in discussion, parents valued this informal contact. Parents and carers also receive regular newsletters and a scrapbook of their child's work at the end of the year.

Parents reported that they were interested in their children's activities at the playgroup and would welcome further and regular information. This would enable them to be more involved in their child's learning and progress. Parents reported that they are kept well informed and involved at each stage if their child required extra support.

One of the advantages of having the playgroup in the school is the ease of transfer of the children to the next phase of their education. The Nursery teacher is well known

to the children. Playgroup children use the school's facilities and know the children at the school.

The local authority has, and is playing, a significant part in supporting the playgroup. It provides specialist backup facilities where necessary. Good and effective support has also been provided by the local authority advisory teacher, particularly in advising, supporting and helping the planning on a weekly basis.

Overall, strategic partnerships are proving very beneficial and the joint planning involving the local authority advisory teacher has been effective and ensured good quality provision.

The playgroup also benefits from its association with the Welsh Pre-school Playgroup Association (WPPA).

**Resource management: Good**

Staff work together effectively and all know and accept their roles. The playgroup is well resourced to meet children's needs and the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Resources are well used to support the teaching and learning. The room is suitably differentiated into activity areas and displays of children's work enhance the learning environment.

The outdoor resources are well used to extend children's experiences but currently children only have access to the outside at specific times. The playgroup also benefits from using the school yard for play when the children use large toys such as tricycles. Overall, the playgroup gives good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

4 questionnaires were returned. The comments below also relate to brief discussion with a sample of parents when they were bringing their children to the playgroup. All parents were strongly in agreement with the following statements in the parent's questionnaire that:

1. My child likes this setting.
2. My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.
3. My child is making good progress at the setting.
4. My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.
5. The setting is well run.

There was general agreement to the statements in the parental questionnaire that:

1. Overall I am satisfied with the setting.
2. The teaching is good.
3. Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.
4. My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.
5. I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.
6. I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.
7. My child is well prepared to moving on to school.

A number of parents/carers would like more information about what their child has been doing at the playgroup.

#### Responses to discussions with children

Most children were reluctant to speak to the inspector and responses tended to be nods or smiles. The general impression (supported by parents/carers) is that children looked forward to coming to the playgroup and enjoyed their time there.

Discussion, over lunch, with children who had previously been at the playgroup, confirmed their enjoyment of their time in the playgroup.

## 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.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

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