



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

**School Lane Playgroup
Church Walks
Llandudno
Conwy
LL30 2DL**

Date of inspection: October 2011

by

Anne Manning

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

School Lane Playgroup is based in a converted old school building. The playgroup opened in 2003 and is situated in North Wales, close to Llandudno town centre. The playgroup is attached to the Early Education Centre and the manager is one of the local authority teachers. The running of the playgroup is carried out by the manager, an administrative assistant, two supervisors and practitioners.

The entrance has information for parents to view when they drop off or collect their children. Inside, the two ground floor rooms are divided into areas for play and outside; the rear garden has three parts and provides good opportunities for different outdoor activities.

The playgroup is open during school term time and is registered with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide full day care for 52 children. Playgroup education is offered every morning and afternoon. The children are divided into two age groups within the setting, two to three year olds and three to five year olds. There were two children aged three who were present for the inspection, neither eligible for education funding during this Autumn Term.

The last CSSIW inspection was in February 2011 and this is the second inspection by Estyn of the educational provision for three year old children in the setting.

The playgroup is English speaking, providing care and education for children from families for whom nearly all this is their first language. Nearly all are White British and no children have additional needs.

The playgroup has an equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children. The area served by the playgroup is considered to be socially advantaged and most children attending come from an advantaged social background.

School Lane Playgroup receives support from Conwy Early Education via the manager.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance is good because:

There is an excellent range of learning experiences.
The learning environment is of high quality.
There are good teaching approaches.
The provision effectively provides for the children's health and well being.
All children are confident and independent learners.
The outdoor area is used in an imaginative way.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are excellent because:

There is a very strong management structure that is focused on the learning needs and achievements of the children.
Self-evaluation is very effective and of good quality.
There is a commitment to provide the best learning outcomes for the children.
There are clear aims and an excellent sense of purpose that promotes and sustains development.
There is a positive ethos whereby all children and staff are valued.
The setting is used as an exemplar for good practice by the local authority.
The playgroup have already introduced Welsh Assembly Government developmental assessment records for the children.
An annual quality review is undertaken.
Resources are managed well to improve progress and outcomes for the children.

The playgroup has made excellent progress since the last Estyn inspection.

Recommendations

R1. Continue to develop the new assessment documentation.

R2. Make a more effective record of the children's ideas for planning.

R3. Develop further links with local schools to support the transition of the children when they leave the playgroup.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how the setting 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?

N/A

Standards: N/A

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing: N/A

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Excellent

Learning experiences of excellent quality ensure that communication, numeracy, ICT and wider skills are developed. The children acquire excellent thinking skills and are confident and independent learners who are very happy to explore new experiences and discuss their findings with the inspector, for example when noticing a snail on a friend's arm and deciding where to put it in the garden.

An excellent range of learning experiences actively enable children to form relationships, respect and tolerance for all. The outdoor environment is used very imaginatively and children experiment confidently with activities that extend their knowledge and understanding. Children collect and magnify plants and animals they have found.

Innovative activities provide very effectively for the needs and interests of the children and they learn through an excellent range of first hand opportunities about the world in which they live. The children re-cycle paper and waste food is composted and used in the playgroup garden. The children have also visited a local re-cycling plant to extend their learning about on a larger scale.

Activities are very well focused with high quality experiences and excellent use is made of the local community to enhance learning including walks to the beach, Heulfre Gardens and Café, a local farm and garden centre. Activities enable children to effectively develop an understanding of the world and the need to care for living things such as snails, fish, when finding mini beasts and growing their own vegetables.

An imaginative curriculum effectively stimulates their imagination and interest and builds systematically on their existing knowledge, understanding and skills. The children have re-created many of their experiences in the playgroup to effectively consolidate and extend their learning.

There are excellent opportunities for the children to listen to each other and share their experiences and news. Language, communication and writing are effectively embedded throughout the curriculum and are actively promoted by staff. Mark

making is built into the experiences of the children both indoors and out, for example, on material and with berries and fruit on different types of paper.

There are very good opportunities for children to develop their imaginations through a variety of role play situations and use money when visiting the local post office to buy stamps.

Children are actively encouraged to use the Welsh language throughout the session and the playgroup effectively develops knowledge and understanding of traditions.

Flexible planning engages all children and involves both staff and children and as a result children make excellent progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes. Although the suggestions and ideas of the children are incorporated into topics and themes, these are not always effectively recorded on the planning documentation.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have up to date knowledge of child development. They have high expectations of the children and know when to observe and when to join in and develop the play and learning opportunities. Practitioners are effective role models. They effectively start the session with a re-cap on previous activities and a good explanation of what is going to happen that morning.

Practitioners use questioning well to challenge the children and extend their learning. Teaching makes a good impact on the progress and achievements of the children. Resources are used well to support learning, including good use of technology such as a white board, light box and computer. They understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase and there is an effective balance between child selected and practitioner led activities.

The practitioners understand the importance of providing exciting opportunities for the children to learn through their play experiences, they intervene sensitively and skilfully and challenge the children not to overwhelm but to encourage. They make effective use of informal learning opportunities and resources both indoor and out.

The practitioners effectively develop confident learners who are happy to talk about and share their play and opinions.

The use of the Welsh language is good, spoken on a formal and informal basis and children respond well.

Practitioners observe the children regularly and record these in an observation book. There is an effective key worker system and they have an extensive knowledge of the progress and achievements of their key children. Although progress and well being are tracked across the areas of learning, the playgroup are in the early stages of introducing the new development profile documentation, provided by the Welsh Assembly Government and this process needs to be further developed to become embedded in the assessment system. The playgroup were part of the pilot for this new assessment documentation. The children have treasure books that contain supporting evidence of their progress and achievements in the form of notes and photographs.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The playgroup fully meets safeguarding responsibilities and ensures the safety of all the children. The setting is secure with a key pad entry system and there are appropriate written risk assessments for all activities on and off the premises. The setting succeeds in helping every child to take advantage of the learning experiences provided for them and to participate fully in the life of the setting. There are good opportunities for the children to discuss their feelings and the playgroup is very successful in helping children to achieve emotional health and well being. The playgroup provides an effective framework for keeping healthy including providing exercise and healthy snacks.

Children are effectively encouraged to be kind and thoughtful, to distinguish right from wrong and say sorry if they hurt their friends. Children are exceptionally well behaved and mannered. There is an effective moral framework that includes honesty, fairness, care and respect.

A sense of awe and wonder about the world has been developed by a range of excellent learning experiences that promote children's personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is encouraged through simple prayers and the playgroup has created an environment where children care about each other.

A sense of awe and wonder about the world has been enhanced by a range of excellent learning experiences including examining snails in their natural habitat.

There are no children with additional needs but where and when necessary the playgroup obtain specialist help and there are effective systems in place to support these children, their families and help progress, for example, using individual play plans. Playgroup identifies learning needs when children join the setting and there are good arrangements with other organisations such as the Children's Centre to support their health, well being and learning.

Children are happy and secure with the adults around them and they are confident to ask for support. There are good induction arrangements into the playgroup that ensure that children settle well and quickly. The children effectively learn about the cultures and traditions of Wales and other cultures by celebrating festivals in a simple and meaningful way.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is inclusive and values the diversity of the backgrounds of the children. All children have equal access to activities and all areas of provision. Children are all respected and practitioners have knowledge and understanding of each child's needs. Practitioners are experienced and well qualified and the core team have been working together for a number of years. There is a clear emphasis on respecting and celebrating diversity.

The playgroup has sufficient practitioners who have knowledge and expertise to teach the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners work well with the children and

make effective use of the space by creating a stimulating learning environment both indoor and outdoors.

Well maintained accommodation provides a very attractive learning environment and outside is an excellent resource for children to experiment and explore, grow seeds, care for plants and find small animals such as beetles and snails. There is a good supply and excellent range of resources that are well matched to the stage of development of the children that meet and extend the curriculum and support learning.

The resources in the community, for example the beach and post office are used very effectively to supplement those of the playgroup and enrich the curriculum.

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

Self-evaluation is very effective and of good quality and there is a commitment to provide the best learning outcomes for the children. The setting is used as an exemplar for good practice by the local authority.

An annual quality review is undertaken. Leaders successfully use relevant information about the playgroup and have a sustained focus on achieving progress towards the priorities of the setting.

There is a very strong management structure that is focused on the learning needs and achievement of the children. The setting is exceptionally well led by a manager, an administrative assistant, two supervisors and practitioners. The manager, who is also a local authority Early Years guidance teacher, ensures that staff share the same high values, aims and objectives.

There is a positive ethos whereby children and staff are valued, the manager is extremely aware of her role and all responsibilities and there is an excellent sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement within the setting.

The manager has organised fundraising events and the children have even had a response from Buckingham Palace regarding work that they sent to the palace. Children and practitioners are very well supported and there is a very clear direction and purpose in the playgroup.

Practitioners are briefed every morning about the day and the area in which they will be working is determined. The two supervisors meet every week. Practitioners also get together every half term to share ideas and good practice. This ensures that the provision very effectively focuses on the learning needs of the children.

A member of staff is designated as the leader for the outdoors, with the responsibility of providing appropriate resources and developing the play and learning.

Practitioners have regular appraisals and a performance development plan is produced. This links effectively to the needs of the children in the playgroup. Leaders

implement policies and procedures well and as a result the outcomes for children are excellent.

Relationships between children and their parents and carers and the manager and management team are excellent and contribute significantly to the sense of community.

The manager effectively meets national and local priorities and has been involved in the developmental assessment pilot. Staff have attended courses such as Play to Learn that shows the correct way to move, yoga and healthy eating to enhance the well being of the children.

The playgroup are also involved in local priorities such as re-cycling.

Improving quality: Good

A self-evaluation report has been completed that effectively takes into account the views of parents and children. The playgroup holds the WPPA quality assured award. The leader has a good knowledge of the strengths of the group and a clear understanding of the areas for improvement. The setting is well focused on improving the provision for the children. Practitioners know the setting well and have a very good understanding of the Foundation Phase philosophy and this is reflected in the work of the setting. Practitioners are highly professional and enthusiastic and committed to providing the best experiences for the children. Development within the playgroup is recognised and action is taken to maintain good practice and make any necessary changes.

There is a positive culture of self-evaluation and practitioners are open to new ways of working and trying out different things. Practitioners have attended relevant professional courses and the impact of their training is evident in the work of the playgroup and in the progress and well being of the children. Practitioners actively share their experience, knowledge and ideas and they are able to evidence how they have effectively improved the provision, standards and outcomes.

The playgroup has made excellent progress since the last Estyn inspection.

Partnership working: Good

A range of effective partnership working contributes effectively to the learning and well being of the children. The playgroup is a member of WPPA. There is an element of trust and clear communication with parents. They are able to access the 'Look' board and the progress and development files of their children. Community links are used very effectively to support the children, for example, with the Children's Centre. Parents are told about the work of the playgroup by talking to practitioners on a daily basis and they are informed of what is happening by a twice yearly open day and a termly newsletter that includes current Welsh words used in the playgroup.

Practitioners actively encourage parents to be involved in the setting and to extend the learning of the children, for example the parental involvement in reading books

they have written, to the children. Welsh story sacks have also been on offer for the parents to develop their Welsh language and that of their children at home.

A very positive relationship exists with the local authority as one of their teachers is the manager of the playgroup and this enhances the work of the setting. Practitioners work well together as a team, share information and the outdoor environment of the playgroup has been used for training purposes for the local authority.

Children attend local schools and have been on transition visits with their parents. The relationship between the playgroup and schools is underdeveloped. Stronger links would facilitate and support the transition of the children and also provide a valuable opportunity to share ideas and good practice.

Resource management: Excellent

Practitioners are very effectively deployed in the playgroup and not only are they fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, but also complement each other with their style of teaching. Resources of excellent quality are very well managed to support the learning of the children. The recent purchase of an interactive white board has had a positive impact on the progress and wider ICT experiences of the children.

Practitioners are pro-active in ensuring the success of the setting and make excellent use of the equipment to develop the skills of the children. Practitioners are well qualified and experienced and take every opportunity to improve their professional expertise. Children's ideas and suggestions are planned into the curriculum.

The playgroup makes excellent use of the local community and surrounding countryside to provide a range of outstanding experiences and opportunities for learning.

The outdoor area is continually developing and provides a rich stimulus which enhances learning. The excellent range of indoor and outdoor resources is regularly used by the local authority to support training that is offered to other practitioners and is used as an exemplar for good practice to other settings.

The manager and playgroup committee are aware of resource needs and have an excellent understanding of budget matters and prioritise these very effectively according to plans for improvement. The setting makes very good use of funding and uses resources to improve progress and outcomes for the children. Financial decisions are evaluated for impact on standards and the playgroup provides excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

100% parents strongly agreed with all the statements on the inspection questionnaire

Including:

I am satisfied with the setting.

My child likes this setting.

My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.

My child is making good progress at the setting.

Children behave well in the setting.

Teaching is good.

Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.

My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.

My child is safe at the setting.

I am kept well informed about my child's progress.

I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.

I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.

My child is well prepared for moving on to school.

There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.

The setting is well run.

Responses to discussions with children

Children were very confident in the playgroup and spent time talking to the inspector about what they were doing in particular discussing how the snail had come to be on someone's arm.

They like the playgroup and the staff and enjoy the activities and being outside.

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Anne Manning	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)

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