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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Llangynidr Playgroup
Llangynidr Village Hall
Cwm Crownon Road
Llangynidr
Powys
NP81LS**

Date of inspection: May 2013

by

**Eifion R Morgan
Reporting Inspector**

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

The playgroup is located in Llangynidr village hall. Llangynidr is a small rural village midway between Brecon and Abergavenny, just south of the A40. It is an English medium playgroup where all the children attending come from English speaking homes. Children attending the playgroup come from the village and the other adjacent villages of Talybont and Bwlch. The playgroup reports that none of the children come from economically disadvantaged homes.

The playgroup is long established and is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 24 children at any one time. Currently there are 22 children on roll, 10 of whom are 3 year olds and all are funded. Children attend the playgroup from the age of 2 and leave for the next stage of their education in the term in which they are 4 years of age. There are currently no children with an ethnic background nor any child recognised as having additional learning needs.

The village hall provides the playgroup with a large well lit room, half of which is used for playgroup activities. Activities set out are well matched to the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum. There is an adjacent kitchen where food is prepared and toilets and washing facilities further along a corridor.

The door to the hall is alarmed so no one can enter or leave unannounced. This is important since other rooms in the village hall are used during the morning and necessitates a member of staff accompanying children to the toilets and to wash their hands.

All equipment has to be set out and cleared away for every session and the hall committee has prohibited the use of sand and water in the hall. There is direct access to the outside area – an area of tarmac and grass. This is a suitable area for play but children have to be supervised by a member of staff.

Parents bringing their children to the playgroup enter through a locked door and bring their children into the hall. They can settle their children, but this is rarely necessary as children are anxious to get involved in the activities set out for them.

The playgroup operates from 9.15 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday and Wednesday, and 9.15 a.m. to 12 noon on Tuesday and Friday. It is open during school term times.

The playgroup is registered by CSSIW and was last inspected in 2012. Estyn inspected the playgroup in 2007 and the recommendations have been addressed.

Summary

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

Current performance

The playgroup's performance is good because:

- the learning experiences motivate and interest the children and are well designed to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum;
- skills are well integrated into the activities and ensure that children make good progress;
- day-to-day activities are well designed to enable children to form good relationships, and to develop their self-confidence and independence;
- there is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities;
- children are regularly assessed and the observations recorded;
- the children are well cared for and supported;
- the calm atmosphere and good ethos evident in the playgroup.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the staff work together well as a team, complimenting each other well;
- the staff are receptive to change and attend professional development courses;
- of the good quality support, advice and encouragement provided by the local authority advisory teacher;
- self-evaluation has clearly identified the strengths of the playgroup;
- staff have a good understanding of the philosophy of the Foundation Phase.

Recommendations

R1. refine its assessment procedures so as to identify the specific skills children have acquired and use the information to plan the next steps in their learning.

R2. examine ways to involve parents to a greater extent to support children's learning.

R3. further develop improvement planning to be more specific and to highlight targets set, and a time scale for improvement.

What happens next?

The playgroup will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	
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There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills 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.

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

Planning is done collaboratively and is successful in motivating and engaging all children. Activities are varied and are well focused on encouraging children to progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. A notable and good feature is the way the curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Learning activities successfully encourage children to form good relationships, to show respect and tolerance. All children show a high degree of self-confidence resulting from knowing that they are well cared for and supported. Their self-confidence manifests itself in their ability to work independently for sustained periods of time.

Planning provides for good opportunities for children to develop their physical and creative skills and to learn about the world around them. Children learn to care about living things by looking after growing plants.

All children have good planned opportunities to acquire basic and key skills, particularly their communication, numeracy and ICT skills. These are well integrated into activities and well matched to children's knowledge and understanding. Staff seek opportunities to develop and reinforce these skills. Planning ensures that activities proceed at a good pace and this successfully maintains children's interest.

Appropriate times are planned during the sessions to develop the Welsh language. A series of appropriate questions are included in the planning to develop children's basic competence in the language. Songs and nursery rhymes help children to memorise Welsh words. The planning gives particular attention to festivals and this includes Welsh festivals and celebrations including St. David's day.

There are good learning opportunities for children to learn about recycling of materials such as paper and plastics.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are experienced and have a thorough knowledge of child development and understand the philosophy of the Foundation Phase. They know when to intervene and when to allow children to work independently. Day-to-day activities show a good balance between child-selected and adult-directed activities.

Tasks and activities are well designed to maintain children's interest. Children are well behaved and respond promptly to instructions. Staff are good language models, exhibit a calm attitude which is reflected in the attitude of the children. Staff compliment each other well and sessions proceed at a good pace.

Children are assessed regularly and observations recorded. This provides a good measure of children's progress. Assessment is well focused on the 6 areas of learning itemised in the Foundation Phase. Overall, however, the comments made on children's achievements tend to be rather generalised. Such comments are a useful reflection of the child's progress. However, they do not indicate in detail the skills acquired by individual children and do not pin point the next steps in children's learning. As such, individual children's needs cannot be accurately planned for in terms of children's literacy and numeracy development.

Care, support and guidance: Good

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

Day-to-day activities foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect. Children are well aware of the difference between right and wrong and behave accordingly. Most children are happy to accept responsibility such as helping at snack time and show initiative such as when clearing away. Visits to the locality help children develop a sense of curiosity about the world. Studies of other peoples' lives help them appreciate differences in the way we live.

All children have well established knowledge of rules of behaviour and all children are happy to share toys and resources. The playgroup functions as a supportive community where children contribute and are involved in decision making.

The playgroup uses specialist services when necessary to support any child. Whilst no child requires such help at present the services used have included health visitors.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Policies and procedures are in place and all staff have received recent training in child protection. The setting's provision for safeguarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

There are no children identified as having additional learning needs (ALN). The playgroup is well prepared to accommodate such children.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup has a very good ethos that is fully inclusive. All children have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum. Children enjoy coming to the playgroup and are shown a good degree of affection by the staff. They are personally welcomed into the playgroup and staff encourage them to take part in the activities set out for them.

A friendly, tolerant attitude pervades the playgroup and all children are respected as individuals. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs and the playgroup is free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. The playgroup is ideally suited to receive children with physical disabilities.

The playgroup is generously staffed with well qualified and experienced practitioners. Staff have attended recent and relevant professional training courses. All have experience of working with young children. Resources are well matched to the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and children's interests.

Accommodation requires all resources and equipment to be set out and cleared away after each session. This is done very efficiently and causes little disruption. There are adequate storage facilities. The accommodation is spacious, clean and well maintained. The local environment is well used to enhance children's learning.

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

All staff understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities efficiently. Staff compliment each other and work very well as a team. The staff show a strong sense of purpose that is well focused on promoting and sustaining improvements in the educational provision. Practitioners share aims and values and create a strong positive ethos in the playgroup. Staff have high expectations of the children, particularly in their personal and social development, language and numeracy and these are very largely achieved in practice. There is a strong focus on children's needs and children are managed very well. A calm reassuring atmosphere pervades

the playgroup enabling individual and groups of children to pursue their interests without disturbance.

Appropriate induction courses are in place. Staff appraisal takes place annually and this enables the staff to identify training needs. The staff report that recent courses organised by the local authority have been useful in providing new ideas for the benefit of the children.

Parents are very supportive of the playgroup but are not always sufficiently encouraged to support their children's learning.

The management committee understand and fulfil their roles efficiently. They are well informed about the performance of the playgroup and are fully supportive of the staff. They have recently financed an extra 2 hours a week for staff planning and this is proving very worthwhile. The committee is appointed at the annual AGM and meet regularly. They fully meet their legal duties.

The playgroup meets national priorities in that the Foundation Phase is well established and takes note of local priorities, such as Healthy Eating.

Improving quality: Good

The recently produced self-evaluation document is comprehensive and includes the sources of evidence to reinforce the statements outlining the strengths of the playgroup. To date, changes in the educational provision have resulted in positive gains for the children.

The setting makes the best use of the facilities seen within the current context of using a public hall and the limitations imposed on the playgroup.

Self-evaluation has identified areas for improvement and these are identified in the Improvement Plan. However, the areas for improvement have not been prioritised and planning lacks detail.

The staff have been involved in professional development learning courses and have had a positive impact on the provision and children's progress. Practitioner's experience of visiting other playgroups is limited.

Partnership working: Good

The playgroup has established a close working relationship with the parents based on trust and an understanding of the children's expectations. Parents are fully supportive and in discussion spoke of their satisfaction with the arrangements and facilities provided for their children. They reported on the good progress their children are making, particularly in terms of their social development. Parents spoke

in glowing terms of the attitude and approachability of the staff. Parents receive regular updates providing them with useful information.

There are good links in place with the receiving primary school. Children visit the school and meet with the relevant teacher.

The local authority advisory teacher visits the playgroup regularly and provides regular evaluative reports. The visits and reports provide the playgroup with invaluable constructive comments and advice. Overall, the support provided by the local authority advisory teacher has been very helpful in developing the playgroup to provide the high standard of provision enjoyed by the children. This is a very effective partnership.

Resource management: Good

Staff are well deployed and compliment each other well. Sessions run smoothly with a good range of activities available for the children and this ensures that they are on task. Resources are well matched to the needs of the children and the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Overall, the quality of the resources makes a significant positive impact on children's learning. The outdoors is well used to develop children's skills, notably their physical and creative development.

Overall, the playgroup provides a valuable experience for children and is a good introduction to their more formal education. The playgroup provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on parental questionnaires as only a small number of responses (fewer than 10) were received.

Responses to discussions with learners

Children say that they are happy in the setting and are confident to turn to any adult to ask for advice and support.

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)

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

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
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) 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 partnership's 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 3 to 7 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 which 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>

National Childminding Association (NCMA)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National (NDNA)	This organisation which 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.