



*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**

**Ysgol Ardwyn Playgroups  
Ysgol Ardwyn Infant School  
Red Bank  
Welshpool  
SY21 7PW**

**Date of inspection: May 2013**

**by**

**Mr 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:

<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

Ysgol Ardwyn Playgroups is a Welsh medium and bilingual pre-school provision offering all day care. The morning sessions are mainly conducted in English and the afternoon sessions are Welsh medium. The playgroups are accommodated at Ysgol Ardwyn Nursery and Infant School on a site overlooking the town of Welshpool in Mid Wales. The playgroups, formed from the amalgamation of Ardwyn Playgroup and Cylch Meithrin y Trallwng, is run by a volunteer management Board of Trustees and is a Charitable Limited Company.

Currently there are 43 children on the register, 19 of whom are aged 3 years and all are funded. Twelve of the funded children attend the morning sessions (English medium) and 7 attend the afternoon sessions (Welsh medium). The setting has been registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate up to 18 children.

The playgroups operate between 9 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. Monday to Friday and between 12.30 and 3 p.m. Monday to Thursday during school term times and the first two weeks of the summer vacation.

The playgroups are administered by a manager who is also the Company Secretary. The educational organisation is overseen by a play leader assisted by her deputy, play assistants and nursery student play assistants.

Children attending the playgroups come from the town of Welshpool and the surrounding villages and rural area. Their backgrounds are variable with a few coming from socio-economically disadvantaged homes. A few children come from the European community background. The playgroups accept children whatever their background and this has included children with additional learning needs in the past.

No children speak Welsh as a first language and whilst a few parents are Welsh speaking, none come from homes where Welsh is spoken exclusively. All children are fluent English speakers except a few from the European Community background.

Children attend the playgroups once they are 2 years old and usually leave for the next phase of their education in the term they achieve their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Occasionally, if parents request, a child may remain at the playgroup a little longer.

Facilities, staff and planning are identical for both groups – the only difference being the language used. The accommodation comprises a large well lit teaching room that is suitably furnished and resourced to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. It is approached along a corridor where useful information for parents is displayed. Well appointed cloakroom and toilet facilities are to one side of the corridor, the disadvantage being that children have to be accompanied to the toilet.

There is a small outside play area but children have to be accompanied when using it. Arrangements are being made to relocate the playgroups within the complex. This will improve the access and provide immediate access to the outside for children

so increasing the choice of activities available to them.

The playgroups are affiliated to the Wales PPA and are a member of the Mudiad Meithrin. It received the award of Cylch Ragorol in 2012. The playgroups were inspected by CSSIW in March 2013. There were no major recommendations. An Estyn inspection took place in 2007 and the recommendations have been addressed.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

#### Main findings

The current performance of the playgroups is good because;

- most children achieve well and are making good progress;
- the playgroups nurturing ethos supports high standards of children's wellbeing;
- planning the curriculum takes good account of children's interests;
- the quality of teaching is good;
- all children behave well;
- children are well cared for and respected as individuals;
- the parents are very supportive;
- of the good leadership and management.

### Prospects for improvement

#### Main findings

The playgroups prospects for improvement are good because:

- staff work well as a team to create a vibrant learning environment;
- there is a clear vision for the future of the setting focused on the best provision for the children;
- staff are engaged in professional development and such courses improved the educational provision;
- parents and trustees are highly supportive of the setting and actively involved in bringing about improvements for the benefit of the children;
- the playgroups are well led and managed.

## **Recommendations**

The playgroups need to:

R1. continue to provide good quality provision for the children.

R2. seek ways to raise the standard of children's Welsh language, particularly the standards in the Welsh medium afternoon groups.

R3. take opportunities to review examples of good and excellent practice and incorporate these where possible.

### **What happens next?**

The setting 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

All children, in both groups, achieve good standards and are making realistic progress across the curriculum. All children have good attitudes to learning and are constantly engaged in activities set out for them, concentrating and thinking about their tasks.

All children in both groups have good communication skills. They have a good vocabulary and express themselves clearly in English. Children very much enjoy listening to stories and participate enthusiastically in action songs and rhymes. All are attentive and respond to suggestions and instructions promptly and willingly. Most children show interest in books and many can identify characters in books read to them.

Most children choose opportunities to experiment with pencils, crayons and chalk to make marks as a precursor to writing and know some of the purposes of writing.

All children count by rote, as for example counting the number of children present, and a few can count the number of objects correctly. A few children are beginning to recognise and repeat simple patterns. Many children have good ICT skills relative to their age. They use digital equipment and a few demonstrated good computer skills, as for example when using the computer mouse to move icons on the screen.

Children's Welsh language skills are variable. The English medium group understand some basic Welsh words and instructions – they understand more words than they can speak. Many children can repeat familiar words spoken by an adult. They respond promptly to instructions. A notable feature of their language development is their participation and enjoyment of singing Welsh songs and rhymes. However, their competence is at an early stage of development.

The Welsh medium group are reluctant to use the language apart from basic words such as number and colour. A few children will respond without prompting, such as "Pa liw?" Children understand more than they can speak and are happy to repeat words spoken by a familiar voice. This group enjoy participating in Welsh action songs and do so enthusiastically. They enjoy stories and looking at books. Most children experiment with mark making using different media and know some of the purposes of writing. Overall, these children's competence in the Welsh language is at an early stage of development.

**Wellbeing: Good**

All children have a positive attitude to learning and all show an interest in their work. Most children engage in tasks enthusiastically and maintain their concentration for sustained periods of time. Children's behaviour is good and they relate well to each other and to adults.

Most children have an appropriate understanding of the need to keep clean, such as washing their hands before food. A few children, in discussion, named healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables.

The setting provides children with a safe environment free from physical and verbal abuse and this is reflected in children's behaviour and attitudes.

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

Planning is done collaboratively and this ensures that staff are actively involved and know their roles and responsibilities. Planning procedures are similar for both English and Welsh medium groups. A notably good feature of the planning procedures is the involvement of the children in the brain storming exercise that precedes detailed planning. This ensures the successful engagement of children in the planned activities.

Learning experiences are well designed to enable children to progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. The settings key worker system gives the staff responsibility for a small number of children and ensures that the taught curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Children are acquiring their key and basic skills at a good rate and use them to access all areas of learning. Relationships are good; children are respected as individuals and staff are sensitive to their needs. Children are tolerant and have the self-confidence to work independently. Day-to-day activities give children ample opportunities to develop their physical and creative skills and an understanding of the world

Both English and Welsh medium groups have a good introduction to the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales. As well as traditionally celebrating St. David's day, children are familiar with Santes Dwynwen and have studied the Castles of Wales.

A major focus for the afternoon group is the development of their competence in the Welsh language. This is planned and a notable success is children's ability to sing Welsh action songs and rhymes. This plays a significant part in developing their language and their motivation to learn the Welsh language. The planning encourages the children to use the language as much as possible and children are beginning to use Welsh words naturally, such as stating the colour of objects. The morning English medium group benefit from the incidental use of Welsh by the staff.

All children have opportunities to learn about recycling. Recycling was used as a theme recently and this coincided with the town's focus on recycling. Children are aware of the different materials that can be recycled.

### **Teaching: Good**

Staff are experienced in child care and development and understand the philosophy of the Foundation Phase. They have high expectations of all children and these expectations are realised in practice. Children experience a wide range of experiences, both in classroom and out of doors. All children are very well supported by adults. Occasionally children would benefit from less adult support so as to develop their independence. However, staff are good language models and all are to be commended for their use of the Welsh language and the effort they have made to learn the language. Questions are well used to re-inforce learning and to challenge children.

A particularly good aspect of the teaching is when children select their story book to take home. This often involves children talking to each other about their likes and dislikes as well as being an incentive for parents to read with their children.

Children are assessed regularly and the observations recorded. This provides the setting with a good measure of children's progress. It also identifies what children have achieved. Key workers know their children well and can direct the teaching at the next steps in children's learning. Parents are kept informed of the curriculum and have access to their child's record of achievement. Such information helps them to support their child and to be aware of the progress they have made.

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

The provision for developing the children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Day-to-day activities successfully foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect. Children have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and behave accordingly. Many children show initiative, as when clearing equipment away at the end of a session. In their activities children are happy to share with others and respect what other children are doing.

The setting provides guidance to parents and children when necessary. Staff are sensitive to children's needs and good use is made of professional specialist services when necessary. These have included contributions from, for example speech therapists and physiotherapists. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that children are well protected. All staff have undergone recent training and are aware of their responsibilities. The setting is secure and the outside door is kept locked ensuring that no one can enter unannounced. The setting is vigilant in identifying any child potentially at risk. The setting's provision for safeguarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

Children with additional learning needs have full access to all areas of learning. Parents or carers are fully involved and the setting ensures that such children are well supported and receive specialist help as required. Children with ALN receive specific help and targets identified for them in their Individual Education Plans (IEP) which are regularly reviewed. Parents are kept informed at each stage.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting has a good inclusive ethos where staff know the children well and respond positively to their individual needs. Children who have recently joined the playgroups are well supported helping them to become part of the group. A tolerant attitude pervades both groups and all children are free from any form of harassment and oppressive behaviour. All children, whatever their background, enjoy equality of opportunity. The current location would pose some problems for children with physical disabilities but the new location is more suitable for such children.

The playgroups are well staffed and practitioners are experienced. Staff are appropriately qualified and have attended relevant courses. Resources are sufficient and suitable to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The current accommodation is used to best effect. The setting is secure and well maintained.

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

Staff work together well as a team and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Staff share values, aims and objectives focused on providing the best educational provision for the children. All contribute to strategic planning. Staff have high expectations of the children and give good support to children suspected of having additional learning needs. New staff and students on placement have suitable periods of induction and regular staff appraisal is used constructively to identify staff's professional development.

Effective links with parents are in place and they are encouraged to support their children's learning.

The setting has an active board of trustees. They are well informed about the performance of the setting and influential in maintaining standards and bringing about improvements. The day-to-day management of the playgroups is efficiently undertaken by the nursery manager and company secretary.

The setting successfully meets national and local priorities including establishing the Foundation Phase curriculum.

### **Improving quality: Good**

Self-evaluation procedures are well established and the setting is self-critical. Self-evaluation has identified the strengths and areas for improvement and has ensured that results will provide positive gains for the children. A good and notable feature is the commitment of trustees, staff and parents to improving the provision for the children. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the on-going work to re-locate the playgroups to another part of the building. Potentially this will provide both better access and facilities for the children.

Information derived from the self-evaluation has enabled plans to be prioritised; there are strategies in place and are well underway to bring about improvement.

All staff have attended a wide range of professional development courses which have benefited the children in terms of improving the educational provision. The setting is also actively involved locally in bringing together practitioners from other nurseries and playgroups.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting works well with parents, who, in discussion, are very supportive of the playgroups. Parents are fully involved in any decisions concerning their children. There are close and effective links with the receiving infant school. The children know the nursery teacher and the close proximity of the nursery classroom, facilitates the transfer of the children. Effective links are in place with specialist services which are used as necessary to support children with specific needs.

The setting collaborates well and receives effective support from professional organisations including the Welsh PPA, Mudiad Meithrin and from the local authority advisory teacher.

### **Resource management: Good**

Practitioners are well deployed and resources well used to motivate children to learn. The setting takes good account of future resource needs and plans accordingly.

Currently there is a small outdoor area which is effectively used. Funding is efficiently controlled and the setting provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires.

There were 14 replies to the parent's questionnaires. Parents were asked to respond to 16 statements in terms of "strongly agree, agreed, disagree, strongly disagree or don't know".

The responses are summarised below:

More than 75% of the responses strongly agree with:

*Overall 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.*

*My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.*

*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 procedures 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.*

Over 90% strongly agreed that:

*Overall 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.*

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

*The setting is well run.*

No parent disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the statements.

## **Responses to discussions with learners**

Children enjoy coming to the playgroups and the majority are soon actively involved. They enjoy the activities, particularly story time and action songs. In conversation they said that they enjoy meeting and playing with their friends.

## 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.

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<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>

<b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<b>National (NDNA)</b>	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
<b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.