



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Markham Community Playgroup
Institute Buildings
Abernant Road
Markham
NP12 0QH**

Date of inspection: October 2016

by

**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

Markham Community Playgroup is situated in Markham, an old mining village bordering the town of Blackwood in Caerphilly local authority. The setting is registered with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to take up to 18 children between the ages of two and five years. It provides Foundation Phase education funded by the local authority during the spring and summer terms. There were no funded children present at the time of the inspection. Under the Flying Start initiative, the setting provides 12 childcare places. It opens daily for 39 weeks of the year between 9.15am and 11.45am, and 12.20pm and 2.50pm.

English is the home language of nearly all the children, and there are very few children with additional learning needs attending the setting. There are five full time members of staff. All are experienced in working with young children and nearly all are suitably qualified. The setting leader took over as manager and owner of the playgroup in 1994. The setting was last inspected by CSSIW in December 2013 and by Estyn in February 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- It provides a worthwhile range of engaging experiences across all areas of learning
- Practitioners know the children well and respond to their individual needs instinctively
- There are valuable opportunities to develop children's communication, numeracy and physical skills
- Practitioners provide a consistent approach to learning and behaviour management
- The setting promotes the children's health and wellbeing successfully
- Practitioners provide a warm, welcoming and inclusive community where children are valued
- There are many good quality resources that support children's learning well

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting leader has a strong sense of purpose and commitment to achieving high standards
- She sets high expectations of herself and others
- All practitioners are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and carry these out well
- Practitioners work well together as a close-knit team
- The setting responds promptly to advice and support
- There are a good range of partnerships that benefit the children and enrich learning experiences
- The leader manages staff and resources well

Recommendations

- R1 Improve planning so that it feeds directly into the setting's daily work and responds to children's learning needs effectively
- R2 Make sure that records of accidents and incidents are well organised, and contain all the necessary information to meet children's needs fully
- R3 Ensure that all risk assessments are thorough and fit for purpose
- R4 Improve self-evaluation processes to make these a regular part of the setting's work and involve all stakeholders appropriately

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	n/a
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Standards: n/a

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.

Wellbeing: n/a

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

The setting provides a worthwhile range of engaging experiences across all areas of learning. These are linked to themes that children enjoy, such as 'Autumn' and 'mini beasts'. Practitioners know the children well and respond to their individual needs during planned activities instinctively. This enables them to provide suitable challenge and support, ensuring that most children make useful progress.

Practitioners plan activities as a team. They make sure that learning experiences link appropriately to Foundation Phase outcomes, focussing purposefully on developing children's skills. However, written plans do not always build systematically on prior learning, and they do not always correspond to the daily activities carried out in the setting.

The setting develops children's speaking, listening and literacy skills well. They provide worthwhile opportunities for children to listen to stories and encourage them to join in with repeated phrases. There are many engaging opportunities for children to practise their mark making both indoors and outside, using a variety of tools. Practitioners develop children's numeracy skills successfully overall. They focus well on helping children learn about numbers and to count, and talk meaningfully about different sizes, for example when examining pumpkins. However, there are fewer planned opportunities for children to learn about other aspects of mathematical development such as shape, measure and understanding money. There are suitable opportunities for children to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. There is a worthwhile focus on developing children's physical skills. This includes regular sessions where children follow instructions to stamp, jump and stretch, and good opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills, such as using tongs to pick up fruit at snack time.

There are appropriate opportunities for children to develop their Welsh language skills. For example, practitioners count and name colours in Welsh regularly. The setting provides interesting experiences that help children learn about their Welsh heritage when they celebrate St David's Day.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners work well together as a team, supporting children's learning sensitively and effectively. They demonstrate a good understanding of child development and the requirements of the Foundation Phase. As a result, they focus effectively on developing children's skills, and intervene instinctively to challenge and extend their learning. For example, practitioners work purposefully alongside the children to develop and support their learning, taking the opportunity to explain about halves when a child snapped a runner bean into two pieces. Well-established routines promote children's independence well, for example giving them regular opportunities to choose which activities they want to pursue. The setting provides worthwhile opportunities for children to learn through play and active involvement, both indoors and in the recently developed outdoor area. These include opportunities to experiment in the mud kitchen, dig and plant bulbs in the raised bed and to examine different vegetables indoors.

All practitioners use a consistently positive approach when managing children's behaviour. This leads to a busy and purposeful working atmosphere. Practitioners speak clearly to the children and listen to their responses carefully. This develops children's speaking and listening skills effectively. The use of skilful questioning and comments helps children to develop their thinking skills effectively.

The setting is beginning to use the Foundation Phase Profile to establish a starting point for the children. Practitioners assess children's progress regularly during adult-led activities. This helps build a suitable picture of what children have mastered, and to identify areas where they may need more practice. As a result, practitioners know the children well and provide appropriate support during the sessions. However, their use of observations to feed directly into written planning is still at an early stage of development. The setting shares information about children's progress with parents and carers effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The setting promotes children's health and wellbeing successfully. Practitioners establish a warm and nurturing environment and as a result, the children are happy and secure. There are regular opportunities for children to be outside in the fresh air and to take part in physical activities. Practitioners help children understand that they should wash their hands before eating and encourage them to do this independently. There are good opportunities for children to get into the habit of eating fruit regularly.

The setting promotes children's spiritual, moral, and social development well. During the rolling snack time, children have valuable opportunities to develop their social skills and their independence by sharing, taking turns, and taking responsibility for pouring their drinks. Children have good opportunities to develop a sense of awe and wonder when they watch butterflies and grow plants in the outdoor area. There

are suitable opportunities to encourage children's cultural development, such as when they taste Chinese food. However, opportunities for children to learn about sustainable development are underdeveloped.

The setting's provision for safeguarding is adequate. Most procedures are in place to promote children's safety, including regular risk assessments. However, checks are not always thorough enough to identify all potential risks. Records of incidents, accidents and concerns are not organised well enough, and they do not include all the relevant information needed in order to safeguard children fully.

Practitioners follow clear procedures for identifying any additional learning needs when children enter the setting. The setting has effective links with specialist services, including the speech therapist, and follows the advice and guidance given by external agencies carefully. Practitioners involve parents appropriately when children receive additional support.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is a warm, welcoming and inclusive community where children are valued. Practitioners ensure that all children have equal access to the activities offered and encourage children to behave respectfully towards each other and adults.

The setting provides plenty of good quality resources that support children's learning well across the areas of learning. Children are able to access these independently, allowing them to make choices and follow their own interests effectively. Resources include interesting natural items in the finding out area, recently purchased ICT resources and a well-stocked book corner.

Practitioners develop a stimulating and inviting learning environment indoors, and make good use of the space available. This includes attractive displays that celebrate the children's work well and provide useful opportunities to familiarise children with numbers and print. The setting's recently developed outdoor area is safe and secure and provides a range of interesting learning experiences. These include opportunities for solving problems, such as working out how best to catch water flowing along large guttering.

The setting makes appropriate use of the local community to extend children's learning experiences. These include trips to the shop to buy food for snack time and to the park to hunt for mini beasts, giving children good opportunities to develop their confidence outside the setting.

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

The setting leader is dedicated to her work and has a strong vision that places the playgroup at the heart of the local community. She promotes a powerful sense of purpose and commitment to achieving high standards. The setting leader makes sure that all practitioners are aware of their day-to-day roles and responsibilities and

that they carry these out effectively. She is beginning to delegate leadership responsibilities appropriately and these are starting to have a beneficial impact on the provision. This includes the provision for developing children's physical skills. The leader sets high expectations for herself and all practitioners. As a result, practitioners adopt consistent and positive approaches to their work and work well together as a close-knit team. Children benefit from good quality Foundation Phase provision within a nurturing and caring environment, where practitioners and children know they are valued.

There are well-established performance management systems in place that support practitioners successfully and identify training needs effectively. The setting reviews its policies and procedures regularly, acting promptly on advice from outside agencies. However, in a very few instances, linked to documenting accidents and incidents, the setting has not developed its record keeping procedures well enough for them to be fully effective.

The setting fosters good relationships with parents that support children's learning and development well. It has made good progress towards meeting national and local priorities, including focussing successfully on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills and teaching them about healthy lifestyles.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting understands the need for continuous improvement and practitioners are beginning to reflect on their day-to-day practice appropriately, such as when they evaluate and adapt their planning in weekly meetings. This supports them in beginning to identify areas for improvement. For example, when ensuring that the books they choose to support their themes are not too challenging for young children. However, in general, this aspect of the setting's self-evaluation process is at an early stage of development.

The setting leader works closely with the advisory teacher to produce an appropriate annual review of the setting's work. This provides a generally accurate picture of the setting's strengths and a suitable opportunity for the leader to evaluate how well the setting has progressed. However, the setting does not currently involve all practitioners in this process. As a result, practitioners do not have the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development and to contribute in identifying priorities for improvement. The setting consults parents appropriately through an annual questionnaire, and seeks their views informally throughout the year.

Practitioners welcome the regular advice and support they receive from other agencies including the local authority advisory teacher. They act promptly and effectively on advice, and include priorities in a suitable action plan. This has led to measurable improvements in the provision for developing children's physical skills and the development of a good quality outdoor learning environment.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a wide range of partnerships that benefit the children and promote their health and wellbeing effectively. The partnership with parents is particularly strong. The setting shares useful information through a display in the entrance hall. It provides helpful activity days where parents learn how they can help their children at home. Parents appreciate the setting's warm approach and feel welcomed into the playgroup community.

Children benefit from the valuable partnership with the nearby primary school. These include regular meetings between the school and the setting to consider children's needs before they move on. This helps them to settle quickly and happily. There are useful links with the local community that extend and enrich children's learning experiences successfully. Links with the local chapel and visits from the police officer help children become familiar with the community around them.

There is a beneficial partnership with the local authority advisory teacher who visits the setting regularly. Her support has a positive impact on the achievements of the children and enhances the work of the setting. Practitioners work well with other agencies such as Flying Start, the health visitor and the speech and language service, to ensure that they identify and meet children's additional needs effectively when the need arises.

Resource management: Good

The setting provides a good range of high quality learning resources that match children's stage of development well and meet any additional learning needs appropriately. Practitioners are suitably qualified and experienced to teach the curriculum, and the leader deploys them carefully to make best use of their expertise. Practitioners make the most of opportunities to attend training and to learn new skills and approaches to teaching and learning. They share what they learn effectively in weekly team meetings and use new approaches appropriately in the setting. However, effective systems to evaluate the impact of training on standards and provision are in the early stages of development.

The leader has a good understanding of the setting's budget. She prioritises spending well to ensure good management of the setting and to obtain the best outcomes for the children. This includes effective use of grants to buy resources that support children's communication and ICT skills development well.

In view of the effective learning experiences provided, the good quality of the teaching and the strengths in leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Sheila Margaret Birkhead	Reporting Inspector
Anne Elizabeth Manning	Team Inspector

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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 partnerships 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>

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (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.