



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

A report on

**St Winefride's Playgroup
St Winefrides Catholic School
Whitford Street
Holywell
CH8 7NJ**

Date of inspection: June 2018

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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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Context

St Winefrides Playgroup is an English-medium nursery in Holywell in Flint local authority. The setting is registered for 25 children between the ages of two to four years. It offers early education sessions from Monday to Friday from 12.45pm until 3.15pm during school term time, between January and July. There are currently 11 children in receipt of funded early education.

The setting has identified very few children as having additional learning needs. There are a few children from ethnic minority backgrounds and a few children have English as an additional language. No children have Welsh as their home language.

There are five members of staff including the management team. All members of staff work with the three and four-year-old children. The lead practitioner has been in post since November 2011.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in May 2018 and Estyn last inspected it in May 2014.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Nearly all children's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Nearly all children co-operate successfully with each other and share toys and equipment readily
- Practitioners provide a good range of interesting learning experiences indoors that engage many children successfully
- Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of foundation phase practice
- Practitioners' caring approach creates a positive learning environment
- Arrangements for care, support and guidance are comprehensive
- The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of its provision

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Its arrangements for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective
- All practitioners are committed to improving quality
- Practitioners work together effectively and understand their roles and responsibilities
- Practitioners use information from training well to improve the provision
- Partnerships with parents, feeder schools and supporting agencies are highly effective
- The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning successfully

Recommendations

- R1 Develop children's skills and understanding of writing for different purposes progressively
- R2 Develop the outdoor learning environment to enable children to develop their skills across the curriculum consistently, including problem solving and thinking skills
- R3 Plan for the next steps in children's learning systematically in order to ensure that all children, including more able children, are challenged effectively
- R4 Develop positive behaviour strategies to maintain an effective learning environment that supports children's engagement and wellbeing consistently

What happens next?

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

Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing its highly responsive approach to supporting quality family engagement in children's learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Many children enter the setting with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. During their time at the setting nearly all children make good progress, particularly in the development of their personal and social skills. A few children make exceptional progress.

Nearly all children listen attentively. They pay good attention when others are talking and allow others to speak without interrupting them. Most children understand and follow instructions successfully such as collecting a mat before joining the group for a story. Many children speak clearly, and a minority give simple verbal instructions such as 'you roll it like that', when showing an adult how to make a play dough snake.

During group time, nearly all children pay close attention to a story retold using soft toys as props. A few children select, and handle books independently and particularly enjoy looking at a smaller copy of the book read by a practitioner. A majority of children readily take part in mark making activities with a range of equipment such as paint and chalk. However, very few children show an understanding of writing for different purposes.

Nearly all children's numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points. Many children develop skills in line with those expected for their age and a few children develop skills above those expected for their age. Most children apply their numeracy skills in different situations when encouraged by an adult. For example, they count five pieces of strawberry for their home-made ice-lolly successfully. Many children explore simple shapes in their play and a minority use mathematical language independently. For example, whilst riding a trike they invite an adult to join them saying, 'I'm going around and around in circles; do you want to come?'

A majority of children's physical skills are developing well. Nearly all children cope with fine motor tasks successfully. For example, they peel tangerines at snack time with very little help. Nearly all children use a range of tools such as rollers, spades and brushes independently. A majority of children develop good gross motor skills, such as negotiating space on trikes and running confidently across the playground. A minority make good progress with their ball skills and enjoy making up their own simple ball games.

Nearly all children make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they will use. Many explore their environment confidently and a few are developing their problem-solving skills successfully. For example, they persist and try different approaches when trying to stack magnets on a metal surface. However, most children's problem-solving skills are underdeveloped.

Most children access and use familiar information and communication technology (ICT) equipment successfully. For example, they use battery-operated toys such as torches and a digital camera. A minority of children use programmable toys and tablet computers with confidence.

Most children develop their Welsh skills well in relation to their starting points. Many join in with a range of Welsh songs and rhymes confidently and a few count to five in Welsh independently. Most children respond positively to simple commands given in Welsh during daily routines and many use single words. For example, they say whether they want milk or water during snack time. However, very few children use Welsh spontaneously during their play.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children settle well as soon as they arrive at the setting. They co-operate well with one another and share toys and equipment willingly. Most take good notice of instructions given by an adult and respond to requests appropriately. For example, they line up before going to the outdoor area. A majority help to tidy up when encouraged.

Most children look after the setting's resources well and treat adults and children respectfully. Most children are courteous and show good manners when encouraged. Most children behave well. However, a minority do not always respond to instructions given by practitioners and, in a few cases, this disrupts learning for others.

A few children are beginning to show concern for others when they are hurt or upset. Nearly all children are developing their independence, such as washing their hands after going to the toilet and attempting to fasten their shoes after being in the sand area.

Most children sustain interest in activities and move confidently to another activity when ready. Nearly all children make independent choices about what they want to play with from activities offered, and all children can do this when supported by an adult. Nearly all children show interest in the activities offered outside and particularly enjoy the opportunity to ride a range of wheeled toys.

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

Practitioners provide a good range of learning experiences indoors that engage nearly all children successfully across all areas of learning. They focus well on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. Practitioners consistently adapt planning to take account of individual children's ideas and preferences. For example, they keep the sand dry at the request of a child who is interested in pouring it to make pretend cakes.

Practitioners plan weekly learning experiences for the outdoor area and have made recent improvements to provision such as a den area and water area. However, opportunities for children to develop their skills in the outdoor area are inconsistent. When children do have access to the outdoors, the provision for developing thinking skills and problem solving is limited.

The setting uses visitors very effectively to enhance the curriculum, including a small creature roadshow, a new baby, a musician and a story teller. Children have

worthwhile opportunities to visit the local library, go to the local shop and walk to a nearby park. They have also benefited from taking part in community events such as singing in the town centre at Christmas to raise money for charity.

The setting provides effective opportunities for children to learn to care for living things. For example, they support children to grow and look after flowers and beans. Practitioners encourage children to show kindness to minibeasts they find in the outdoor area such as caterpillars and worms. They also support children to be gentle to creatures visiting the setting such as a pet chicken.

The indoor environment provides useful opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, such as using paint brushes and pegging out washing in the role-play area. There are worthwhile opportunities for children to develop pedalling and ball skills in the outdoor physical play area. However, practitioners do not provide sufficient opportunities for large scale physical development consistently.

The setting's provision to develop children's numeracy skills is effective. Nearly all practitioners provide children with useful opportunities to match, count and recognise shapes and patterns. For example, they encourage children to count the number of pasta pieces and create patterns during a threading activity. Resources available, such as a toy clock, measuring tubs, calculators, shape puzzles and telephones, provide children with a wide range of experiences that develop mathematical concepts and language well.

Practitioners provide a range of opportunities for children to develop their communication skills effectively. They support children to join in with conversations and ask appropriate questions. The environment is full of examples of written language with many captions and labels written in both English and Welsh. The cosy book area is well resourced with a range of appropriate books, cushions and soft toys. Practitioners provide sound opportunities for children to take part in mark making activities. These include using chalks, white board markers and painting. However, there are limited opportunities for children to develop their understanding of writing for different purposes.

The setting has recently improved provision for developing children's ICT skills. There is a suitable range of equipment available, including a programmable toy, digital cameras and tablets, which children access with interest.

Practitioners support children's Welsh language development successfully. They model Welsh through singing songs, reading stories, counting and using Welsh words and phrases throughout the session. They use Welsh to greet children on arrival and during other routines such as snack time. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage. For example, they visit a local Welsh speaking school, paint daffodils and make Glamorgan sausages as part of their recent St David's Day celebrations.

Teaching: Good

Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of foundation phase practice. They use a worthwhile range of strategies to encourage and to motivate children to learn. They combine focused activities with children's free play effectively. As a result, children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning. Practitioners' interactions with children are very sensitive, respectful and caring,

Practitioners observe how well children engage with activities and adapt the provision in response to their observations. This builds on children's interests successfully. The setting is beginning to involve children in planning. For example, practitioners plan a holiday theme in response to a child sharing news of their holiday. Practitioners use resources imaginatively such as using a paddling pool to create a large indoor sand area.

A few practitioners use open ended questions well to extend children's thinking and encourage children to try and work things out for themselves. They are aware of the need to provide children with ample time to think about a question or solve a problem. However, practitioners provide very few opportunities for children to develop their thinking skills and solve challenging problems independently.

The setting has developed a range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and most children respond to these well. Nearly all practitioners explain rules to children and have a consistent approach. However, expectations of children's behaviour are not always high enough.

The setting has a highly effective range of assessment procedures. Practitioners observe children and identify what they can already do during their first few weeks in the setting. At regular intervals, they update these records to show children's progress over time appropriately. There is a very good system for recording observations of children which highlights useful information such as the language spoken. Observations also identify the next steps in children's learning. However, practitioners do not use this information to plan for children's individual learning needs systematically.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has successful arrangements to support children's healthy eating and drinking. During snack time, practitioners encourage children to eat a range of foods and provide water or milk to drink. Most food options are healthy. Children make choices about what they would like to eat, and practitioners encourage them to try new foods such as honeydew melon and pineapple. The setting provides valuable opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise. For example, children readily take part in healthy community events such as Sports Day. This develops children's co-ordination successfully and encourages them to adopt a healthy life-style.

Practitioners are good role-models and support children to develop respect for others and a sense of right and wrong successfully. They encourage children to share equipment and to take care of resources effectively. As a result, children learn to cooperate with each other well. For example, they make up painting games together in the outdoor area and share their fruit at snack time spontaneously.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children through encouraging them to plant seeds and observe them grow. Children have appropriate opportunities to find out about other cultures through, for example, learning about Christmas traditions in Poland from a family attending the setting.

Practitioners provide meaningful opportunities for children to learn about sustainability. They encourage children to put waste into designated bins and make good use of opportunities as they arise to teach children about recycling. For example, they support children to collect and recycle litter on their way to the outdoor area.

There are effective processes to support children with additional learning needs. These include effective links with a range of support agencies that help meet children's individual needs appropriately.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is very welcoming, and practitioners are friendly and approachable. They create a strong and inclusive community ethos. Practitioners encourage all children to take part and have equal access to each area of the setting's provision. Practitioners lead by example in encouraging children to show tolerance towards one another and respect for the setting's equipment. As a result, most children play and learn happily.

The setting's accommodation is secure and well maintained. There are plenty of good quality resources across the areas of learning, which meet the needs of the children well. The setting has suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the foundation phase.

The lead practitioner makes creative use of the space indoors which is attractive and welcoming. Resources and furniture are generally of good quality and appropriate. Well-organised learning areas make resources easily accessible for children.

The outdoor area is shared with the school and is set up each day with the children. It supports the development of children's literacy, numeracy and physical skills appropriately.

The accommodation is well maintained and secure.

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

The lead practitioner has a clear vision to provide the best for children so that they reach their full potential. She works effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children and manages practitioners and children well to ensure that the setting runs smoothly, following established routines. Practitioners work well together and understand their roles and responsibilities.

The setting has effective arrangements for managing staff performance. Nearly all staff have good opportunities to discuss and reflect on the quality of their work. They take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development which link appropriately to the setting's priorities for improvement. Recently, this has helped improve the quality of the provision for developing children's ICT skills.

The voluntary management committee supports the setting well. It monitors the setting's development and contributes actively to long term strategic planning, including maintaining and improving provision. The committee has developed highly effective links with the school and local community. This has a positive impact on fundraising and ensuring the future viability of the setting.

There are a range of beneficial policies and procedures to support the organisation of the setting, and staff review these appropriately. The lead practitioner pays valuable attention to local and national priorities and, as a result, there is a successful focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

Improving quality: Good

The setting's arrangements for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective and all practitioners are committed to improving quality. The lead practitioner makes beneficial use of information from a range of sources to inform the self-evaluation process. Most practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to improve. They explain clearly what they have identified as priorities in order to raise standards.

The self-evaluation document identifies the setting's strengths and achievements successfully. It identifies what the children do well and what they need more help with. Improvement plans set out clearly what the setting needs to develop. The targets come directly from the self-evaluation process and from ongoing reflections. The improvement plan is a well-organised document that sets out appropriate actions, staff responsibilities, time-scales and monitoring arrangements.

Practitioners are open to new ideas and respond well to support from a range of sources. This results in improvements to the quality of learning experiences, for example the successful development of provision for ICT and Welsh language skills.

The setting has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Partnership working: Excellent

The setting has an extensive range of highly effective partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children extensively.

Partnerships with parents are outstanding. The setting is proactive in providing exemplary support for vulnerable and disadvantaged families. Leaders are highly responsive to the individual circumstances of children and their families and tailor support flexibly to meet their specific needs. Practitioners provide one to one support to a majority of families which focuses on specific aspects of their child's development, such as personal and social skills. This contributes significantly to the very good progress that most children make in this area of learning. Other interventions focus on parental aspirations for their children, including raising parental expectations of their child's achievements. Strategies used by practitioners include home visits, home learning activities, sharing informative videos and modelling good practice. This aspect of the setting's work is exceptional. The setting communicates extremely effectively with parents through the setting's notice board, regular newsletters, social media and informative daily contact. This helps parents to

feel comfortable in approaching the setting about any concerns and keeps them informed about daily activities very successfully.

There is a strong partnership with the school that supports children's learning well and helps prepare them to move on to the next stage of their education. For example, practitioners invite children to wear school uniform and the setting uses the school playground and field regularly. This helps them feel a part of the school and supports their physical development effectively. The lead practitioner welcomes the nursery teacher into the setting regularly, enabling the children to get to know their teacher before starting school. Practitioners share valuable information about individual children's interests, learning and development during these visits which supports their continued progress as they enter the nursery class. The management committee works very effectively with the school to improve the learning environment. For example, in partnership with the school, it has secured joint funding for an 'eco garden' to enhance the provision for children's physical, creative and problem-solving skills.

The lead practitioner has developed very strong links with nearby settings. For example, practitioners welcome visits from children attending the local Welsh speaking playgroup and visit them regularly for shared stories and celebrations. This supports children's progress with the Welsh language successfully. The setting works collaboratively with other local playgroups and invites them to attend the setting for joint training such as 'story telling'. This provides useful opportunities for practitioners to learn from each other in order to raise standards of teaching and learning across settings.

Leaders have developed successful links with nearby training institutions and provide placements for students undertaking courses in childcare. This helps connect the setting with the local community effectively.

The setting has highly beneficial links with the local authority and receives regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. This has led to regular improvements, particularly in the provision for ICT.

The setting makes extensive use of its links with professional organisations and other external agencies. For example, the lead practitioner has worked closely with Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA) in order to bring current issues faced by settings to a national audience.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning well. Leaders and managers make sure that the setting has enough suitably qualified and well-trained practitioners to support the effective delivery of the foundation phase curriculum. Resources are plentiful and of good quality, such as the wide range of equipment to support role-play.

The setting ensures that most staff access training based on needs identified through the appraisal process. Most practitioners also make good use of training to improve provision. For example, this has supported them to improve provision for developing children's language and communication skills. Nearly all practitioners reflect on their practice and are aware of personal strengths and areas to develop. They share ideas and support each other's professional development well.

The committee manages the setting's budget suitably and has appropriate systems for keeping spending under review. The treasurer is proactive in securing grants to improve provision, for example raising funds for the 'eco garden'. The committee organises an extensive range of fundraising events within the community which support the setting's budget well. In view of the good quality of teaching, the quality of provision and the progress children make, the setting provides good value for money.

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
CIW	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 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 three to seven 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 that 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)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation 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