



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
Dolau Playschool
Llanfinghangel Rhydithon CP School
Dolau
Llandrindod Wells
LD1 5TW

Date of inspection: March 2011

by
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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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About the setting

Dolau Playschool is an English medium setting which serves the rural area around the village of Dolau near Llandrindod Wells. It meets for two mornings a week in the Community Hall adjacent to the primary school and for two afternoons in a classroom within the main school building.

The children who attend the setting are considered to come from neither prosperous nor disadvantaged backgrounds. All children have English as their home language and none speak Welsh at home. No children currently have identified additional learning needs.

The setting is registered for up to 16 children who are able to attend from the age of two years and three months. Children initially attend the morning sessions until they are eligible to receive funded educational provision in the term after their third birthday, at which time they may also attend the afternoon sessions in the school.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in July 2010 and this is the first time it has been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

Children enjoy their learning and make good progress

Children have access to a wide range of learning experiences and are also enabled to pursue ideas of their own

Relationships between children and staff are warm and caring

Children enjoy their time in the playschool

The setting benefits from a close relationship with the school

Prospects for improvement

The playschool leader and her staff are very committed to providing the best possible learning environment for the children in their care

There is good evidence that, over time, improvements have been made and sustained.

Recommendations

- R1 improve standards in, and provision for, Welsh language development
- R2 ensure information from observations of children's learning is used not only to inform planned activities but also to identify children's progress in learning
- R3 ensure planning identifies both continuous provision and focused activities for the outdoors

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

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: Adequate

The setting provides all children with a range of interesting and stimulating learning experiences in most areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. Practitioners work well together to plan a range of activities which stimulate, engage and challenge most children to learn effectively. During their morning sessions the children have direct access to a small paved area outside the hall where different areas of continuous provision are set out. In the afternoon sessions they are able to use the school playground and climbing equipment for more strenuous play and also to explore the wildlife garden. However, planning does not yet clearly indicate outdoor learning and it is not always clear if the next steps in learning which have been identified have been followed through.

Children have good access to a computer and an interactive whiteboard during the afternoon sessions in the school and most children demonstrate good levels of understanding and proficiency. The provision offers good opportunities for children to develop communication skills and to listen, for example during circle time and when following instructions. The playgroup encourages the children to sing songs and rhymes and promotes an interest in books by providing a cosy area to read or listen to stories. Welsh language provision is adequate. Practitioners have introduced simple words and phrases, count with the children in Welsh and read stories but do not make systematic use of incidental Welsh throughout the session. All children are beginning to understand the need to conserve resources when they try not to waste water and electricity and when they collect left over scraps from their snack for the playgroup leader's chickens.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners provide a suitable balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities and manage behaviour well. They have growing expectations for each child and plan stimulating activities throughout the day. They use a range of teaching strategies which engage and challenge most children. They spend time with the children and help them to develop their thinking through encouraging them to talk about what they are doing.

Practitioners make observations of children's learning throughout the sessions and these are relevant to the skills development but are not yet used systematically to track individual progress. They know their children well and are fully aware of what each child needs to be learning next but this is not well documented. There are good informal opportunities for parents to receive information about their children's progress. The school is part of a close knit community and the staff are well known to parents and carers. Once a month the parents of children in the playgroup organise a coffee morning in the school when they are able to talk to members of staff if they wish.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The arrangements for ensuring children's health and wellbeing are effective and make a significant contribution to children's development. The general ethos of the setting suitably encourages values such as honesty, fairness and respect for others. Most children show that they can appreciate right and wrong and what is acceptable behaviour. Children show curiosity and wonder about the world they live in and this is apparent from their responses to activities in the wildlife garden outdoors. Children understand that they are part of a wider community that they share with others.

Although there are no children with additional learning needs in the playgroup, practitioners are very aware of the developmental needs of the children and are aware of their responsibilities with regard to early identification.

Children starting at the playgroup for the two morning sessions are able to come for shorter sessions until they have settled. Induction from the group is an easy one as the children use the early years classroom during their afternoon sessions and often share activities. This enables staff and children to know each other well.

There are appropriate risk assessments in place and the playgroup has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding children. The playgroup takes good care to ensure that the children receive a healthy diet at snacktime and plenty of outdoor exercise and the children show that they understand the importance of this. Learning experiences to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup presents an attractive and welcoming environment. The classroom has a good variety of displays of children's work which are relevant to the current topic and all children have full access to all areas of provision.

There are sufficient well trained practitioners with an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase to ensure all children's needs are met. All practitioners are keen to improve their own knowledge and attend regular training. Good resources are available and these are used appropriately to develop the children's skills and understanding.

Visits to, and visitors from, the community are used effectively to support children's learning and understanding of the community.

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

All practitioners are fully committed to ensuring the best possible provision. The playgroup leader and her staff have created a very positive ethos and the children are well supported and valued for themselves as individuals.

The setting comes under the governance of the school. The headteacher is fully involved and ensures that national and local priorities such as the Foundation Phase are met. The playgroup is very much a part of the school and receives the support and affection of both staff and children. The playgroup leader has received the full range of Foundation Phase training. Her present staff are relatively new and are still undergoing training but are enthusiastic and wanting to learn.

Improving quality: Good

An audit of provision has been conducted and identifies strengths in the provision and areas for improvement. The documentation covers all areas of provision and leadership. From this, targets for the annual development plan are drawn. There is good evidence of sustained progress towards meeting targets. Ongoing informal self-evaluation is effective in developing and improving the activities offered and the progress of children as individuals.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has positive relationships with the parents of the children in their care and results from the parents' questionnaires show that parents are very satisfied with the provision for their children. Practitioners provide parents with daily information about what their child has been doing and celebrate success. The setting enjoys a very positive relationship with the Early Entitlement link teacher from the local authority who provides support and advice. There is clear evidence that this advice has been acted on to improve provision for the children.

Resource management: Good

Good quality resources are managed well and deployed effectively to support the learning needs of all children. The setting is appropriately staffed by experienced practitioners who have a very positive effect on the progress made by individual children. The best possible use has been made of the very different morning and afternoon environments to deliver the curriculum. Finances appear to be managed well by the headteacher who endeavours to link spending to priorities and the setting is well supported by the school. The setting gives value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

Nine completed questionnaires were received. All parents and carers who responded are positive about the provision. Parents report that their children are treated as individuals and they value the warmth and friendliness of the staff.

Responses to discussions with children

Children say that they enjoy coming to the playgroup. They like to play with their friends and most say they know what to do if they have a problem.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mary Dyas	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