



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

**Puddleducks Playgroup
Trefnant School
Hennlan Road
Trefnan
Denbighshire
LL16 5UF**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

Eifion R Morgan

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

Trefnant is a small rural village in Denbighshire and the Puddleducks Playgroup is located in Ysgol Trefnant. It occupies a room in the school and makes use of all the school's facilities, including the outside play areas, field and school garden. It is open every day between 11.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. during school terms. The primary school headteacher is the registered person and the playgroup is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate up to 16 children. Currently there are 21 children on the register, 10 three year olds of whom 8 are funded.

Children attending the playgroup come from the immediate locality and the majority are from English speaking homes. Occasionally one parent or grandparent is Welsh speaking, but in general English is the spoken language in the home.

No child comes from a background that could be described as socio-economically disadvantaged or particularly advantaged and none are from an ethnic minority background. None of the children currently present have been identified as having additional learning needs, although the playgroup is happy to accommodate such children and have done so in the past.

Children attend the playgroup from age 2½ years and proceed to the next stage of their education in the September following their third birthday. The playgroup benefits substantially from its close links with the primary school and the support it has received from the local authority advisory teacher.

The setting was last inspected by CSSIW in 2009. It has not previously been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

- All children achieve well and make good progress across all areas of learning.
- All children have very good communication skills, including their listening and speaking skills.
- All children have good numeracy skills and other basic skills enabling them to take a full part in all learning experiences.
- All children have outstanding attitudes to learning, participate in all activities and behave very well.
- The playgroup provides the children with a comprehensive range of innovative learning experiences well suited to the children's interests and ability.
- The teaching is well directed at extending children's knowledge, understanding and skills.
- All children are well cared for and supported and this plays a significant part in children's good progress and in developing their self-confidence.
- Safeguarding arrangements and good and children are free of any form of harassment.
- The playgroup radiates a very good ethos where all children feel valued and respected.
- The playgroup is well led and managed and staff and others work together very well.

Prospects for improvement

- The leadership has a good track record of improvement and has provided a clear direction for the work of the setting.
- The leadership is self-evaluative and has established clear targets for improvement over the last few years and these have been implemented.
- Staff have a positive attitude to improvement and have undertaken recent training.
- A good relationship exists between the playgroup and the school and they work together very well.
- Good use is being made of the support and advice provided by the local authority advisory teacher.

Recommendations

- R1 maintain the children's current high standards of achievement and progress.
- R2 refine assessment procedures so as to clearly identify children's skill development and the next steps in their development.

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?	Good
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Standards: Good

All children achieve good standards and often very good standards and this reflects good progress. All children are enthusiastic, work hard and are constantly engaged in their tasks. A notable feature of most children is their developing self-confidence that enables them to tackle new tasks, to make decisions and to work independently when appropriate. Their thinking skills are developing well and they are capable of persevering for lengthy periods of time.

All children have very good skills of communication. Their listening skills are of a very high standard and their speaking skills are outstanding. Nearly all children enjoy speaking to the inspector. They have a wide vocabulary and make themselves understood. All children, at different times, showed their interest in books, selecting and looking at the illustrations. They enjoy stories as told by adults and are keen to participate. Many can name their favourite stories and characters in the story. All children experiment with mark-making and understand some of the functions of writing.

Most children have an appropriate and developing mathematical language to express their ideas, as for example when playing in sand and water. All children count together to 15 and many children can count correctly on their own. Virtually all children recognise pattern, sequences and relationships between shapes.

Children know that electronic equipment can be switched on and off using buttons and switches. They use digital cameras and listen to CD players. Their use of computer programs, for example to create pictures, is limited. Children's basic skills associated with physical activity, creative work and knowledge of living things is good.

Children understand basic Welsh words as is apparent in their response to instructions. They understand more words than they can use in speech. All children join in Welsh action songs and rhymes and repeat some Welsh words. Their vocabulary includes the ability to count in Welsh and to name some colours.

Children are being immersed in the language through the incidental use of the language (such as amser golchi dwylo) but the children's ability to converse in the language is limited.

Wellbeing: Good

All children demonstrate an enjoyment in learning, and have outstanding attitudes and behaviour. Virtually all children show interest in their tasks and concentrate for substantial periods of time. They work co-operatively showing a very mature attitude towards each other which is demonstrated by their considerate caring attitude.

All children have an appropriate understanding, in line with their age, of how they keep healthy. They know and name some healthy foods and know that exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle. The day-to-day activities of the playgroup, both inside the classroom and outside, provide children with a safe environment and they show, through their actions, that they feel safe from any abuse.

Overall, children play an active part in the life of the playgroup, being given specific responsibilities such as “Helpwy y dydd” and taking on other responsibilities.

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

Curriculum planning is well designed to meet the needs of all children and to challenge and involve them. Planning is flexible and takes into account the views and interests of the children through brainstorming activities such as “What does spring mean to you?”. This successfully motivates them.

Learning experiences are well focused on meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes and the curriculum builds systematically on children’s existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

The high quality learning experiences provided for the children and their self-confidence enables them to begin to become independent learners. The calm, supportive atmosphere in the playgroup also ensures tolerance and respect for each other.

Learning experiences are effective in developing children’s basic skills, including their creative and physical skills and their understanding of the need to care for living things. Overall, the playgroup ensures a coherent provision of skills across the 7 Areas of Learning and makes good provision for developing children’s thinking skills.

Children, during “circle time” and informally are introduced and are developing a basic understanding of some Welsh words and phrases. The playgroup celebrates some of the traditions of Wales, such as St. David’s day when children play an active part, dressing appropriately and sampling traditional Welsh foods.

Children are introduced to the ideas of sustainability through recycling activities, such as the recycling of waste vegetables and fruit.

Teaching: Good

Staff have a good understanding of the philosophy of the Foundation Phase and this is apparent in their approach. They also, through experience, have a good up-to-date knowledge of child development.

Staff have high expectations of children in terms of their achievements and personal behaviour and these are realised in practice. Tasks are suitably challenging and often staff challenge children with suitably phrased questions and suggestions. Staff

are themselves good role models and this establishes good relationships in the playgroup.

There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities. Staff show a good understanding of when and when not to intervene in the differing activities and play.

Assessment of children is done regularly and methodically. The playgroup uses "floor books" to record what has been done and the comments made by different children. In this way individual children's contributions are noted and a good record of the work is produced.

Each child has a record of achievement booklet where each child's achievement is noted under the 7 Areas of Learning identified in the Foundation Phase learning outcomes. These observations are dated and consequently illustrate progress made. These records accompany the child to their next stage of education. The recorded observations are, at times, specific but at other times are too descriptive and do not identify the levels of skills achieved. As such, the next steps in children's learning are not always apparent and the assessment comments less useful in planning for future curriculum.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision made for children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with some very good aspects.

The day-to-day activities are highly effective in fostering values, such as honesty, fairness and respect for truth. Children have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and act accordingly. Children are curious about the world around them and this curiosity is enhanced by visiting their garden, school fields and the locality.

The playgroup successfully establishes a code of behaviour that establishes children's life skills and teaches them tolerance and encourages them to contribute to their community.

The playgroup has good links with specialist services that have, in the past, provided valuable support.

The playgroup is well suited to provide for children with additional learning needs (ALN). It could provide full access to all areas of learning for children with physical disabilities.

Safeguarding arrangements are well established. Policies and procedures are in place and the headteacher of the primary school is the Registered Person. The procedures in place reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008).

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup has an excellent ethos that is fully inclusive. All children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and the tolerant, supportive atmosphere that radiates all aspects of the working of the playgroup ensures that all children and staff are free from harassment or any form of oppressive behaviour. Whilst no child currently present suffers from any disability, the staff are vigilant and would ensure no unfavourable treatment of such a child. The playgroup promotes equal opportunities and procedures are in place to deal with any complaints. None however have arisen.

Staff are sufficient, have relevant experience and are appropriately qualified. They are helped when necessary by parents who themselves have CRB certificates.

Resources are suitable and sufficient to address the requirement of the Foundation Phase curriculum and are well matched to children's requirements. The outside environment provides for extending children's experience although the children in the playgroup do not have unlimited access.

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

The leader provides the setting with clear direction and a sense of purpose that pervades the work of the playgroup. This has resulted in improvements being made and, in conjunction with the school, provides facilities and activities that are well matched to the objectives of the Foundation Phase.

The playgroup has high expectations of the children and these are realised in practice. Staff have used training opportunities well and have made good use of the support provided by the local authority advisory teacher.

Good links with parents are in place, there is regular dialogue between the playgroup and the parents that is to the benefit of the children.

All staff understand their roles and have taken appropriate account of relevant legislation and guidance. Legal duties are fulfilled. The playgroup also is successfully meeting national and local priorities, including implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Improving quality: Good

A positive culture of self-evaluation and planning for improvement pervades the playgroup and its work. Staff are open to new ideas and have successfully improved the provision by the introduction of the Foundation Phase. Strengths and areas for development are recognised and action is taken to implement change where it is perceived that improvements can be made. Such improvements are well focused on the provision for the children.

Partnership working: Good

The established partnership activities make a worthwhile and effective contribution to children's high achievement and wellbeing. The close liaison with the primary school and in particular the infant teachers, is particularly worthwhile and gives the children's education a holistic feeling. The positive relationship with the local authority advisory teacher has been particularly valuable and the playgroup reports that they receive help and advice on a regular basis.

Parents are very supportive of the playgroup and value the approachability of the staff. Information is provided both formally and informally on the children's achievements. Parents reported that they feel able to approach the staff at any suitable time if there is a need.

Resource management: Good

Resources are well managed and deployed effectively to support children's learning. Appropriate resources have been purchased and are well used to further the aims and objectives of the Foundation Phase and are well matched to children's needs.

Overall, the playgroup gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Eight questionnaire replies were received.

Only one response (14%) disagreed with the statements made on the questionnaire and that concerned lack of understanding of the settings procedure for dealing with complaints. In no other instance was there disagreement.

Overall, there was strong agreement (strongly agreed) or agreement (agreement) to all the statements made. In 4 instances there was a 100% strong agreement. These statements were:

- (i) my child likes the setting.
- (ii) my child settled in well when he/she started at the setting.
- (iii) teaching is good.
- (iv) staff treat children fairly and with respect.

Responses to discussions with children

All children, in conversation, said they enjoyed their time in the playgroup. Several responded that they look forward to coming to the playgroup. They liked practically all the activities, especially painting and playing outside with their friends. Several mentioned story time. They liked the staff and often met them outside school.

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.