



*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**

**Spittal Playgroup  
St Mary's Church Hall  
The Green  
Spittal  
Pembrokeshire  
SA62 5QT**

**Date of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 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:

<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

Spittal Playgroup was established in 1986 and is located in the local Church Hall. The setting caters for children between two and a half and four years of age and meets for four sessions a week during school terms. The children who attend are drawn from a wide geographical area, which is described as neither advantaged nor economically and socially disadvantaged. All the children are from English speaking homes. At present, there are no children from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The setting is registered for 18 children. During the inspection, three children were in receipt of Welsh Government funding. The setting admits children with additional learning needs and appropriate support arrangements are in place.

There are four members of staff. The setting is in the care of a highly experienced lead practitioner who holds relevant qualifications in the education and care of young children. There are three assistant practitioners including one who is Welsh speaking. The setting is managed by a voluntary committee.

The setting operates as a member of Pembrokeshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. It was last inspected by Estyn in May 2005 and by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in October 2009. The setting is a member of the Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association and achieved its quality standard in 2008.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- the children are happy and enjoy their learning;
- the children are offered a wide range of rich learning experiences;
- the teaching is good overall;
- there is a very good relationship between the children and the practitioners;
- the inclusive ethos creates a warm and caring environment for children.

**Prospects for improvement**

The setting has good prospects for improvement because:

- the lead practitioner has high expectations and offers strong and committed leadership;
- all the practitioners work effectively as a team;
- the playgroup is ably supported by its management committee;
- there are suitable processes to evaluate the quality of provision;
- development plans to improve the setting further are implemented successfully.

**Recommendations**

In order to develop further, the setting needs to:

- R1 improve the provision to develop children’s information and communications technology (ICT) skills and build on the opportunities to extend their Welsh language skills;
- R2 refine the planning to extend the older children’s learning more consistently;
- R3 extend the assistant practitioners’ knowledge of the Foundation Phase curriculum and of assessment and self-evaluation processes.

**What happens next?**

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

**Main findings**

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
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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 in the setting at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

### **Learning experiences: Good**

The practitioners provide a wide range of interesting and relevant activities which gain the children's interest. Planning is firmly based on the Foundation Phase learning outcomes. Activities are planned purposefully across the areas of learning within appropriate topics and themes. At times, however, the planning does not focus sufficiently on extending the older children's learning. There are regular opportunities for children to experiment with new experiences and to develop into independent learners.

There is good attention to promoting children's learning skills particularly their thinking, communication and number skills. The overall provision to develop children's ICT skills is more inconsistent. There is a good balance between activities chosen by the children and those led by adults.

Appropriate activities develop the children's awareness of the world around them and the need to respect and care for the environment. Visits to Scolton Manor offer children good opportunities to observe animals, birds and plants in their natural habitat.

Experiences of different celebrations including the Chinese New Year and the festival of Divali contribute well to developing children's awareness of diversity and of their roles as global citizens.

There is appropriate planning to offer children suitable opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills. The use of Welsh during registration periods, Welsh story time, and incidentally during activities is beginning to develop children's knowledge of greetings, colours, basic numbers and shapes. Children have a growing awareness of Welsh traditions and celebrations when they celebrate St David's Day and enjoy 'cawl' and Welsh cakes.

### **Teaching: Good**

The teaching is good overall with effective use of a range of teaching approaches. The lead practitioner has a thorough knowledge of child development and of the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum which is used successfully to lead activities. Whole group activities have a clear learning objective and there is effective use of the opportunities that arise to extend children's communication and mathematical skills. Assistant practitioners are well briefed about the activities and learning outcomes. All staff communicate effectively with children and make purposeful use of equipment and resources to support the learning. They succeed well in creating a happy and supportive learning environment for all the children.

The practitioners know the children well and regularly assess and record their progress. Relevant comments are recorded on 'observation sheets' and discussed fully with the lead practitioner. There is appropriate use of the information collected to plan further activities.

Parents are kept regularly informed about their children's achievements, wellbeing and development through informal discussion at the beginning and end of sessions. They also receive an informative written report on their children's progress in all areas of learning when they leave the playgroup. In addition, samples of each child's work are compiled and annotated into a useful booklet and shared with parents. During activities, the practitioners interact purposefully with children and offer good support. Older and more confident learners offer sensible views on aspects of the activities they enjoy.

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

The setting is a caring and very orderly community and there are effective arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing. The induction arrangements, alongside the daily contact with parents, ensure that children settle well into the setting. The children are happy and relaxed in the adults' company. The practitioners have clear expectations which promote very good behaviour.

Children's needs are identified early and appropriate and effective support is arranged. The staff work closely with outside agencies and specialist services to address any specific needs. The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. The lead practitioner accesses regular training and arranges for all practitioners to receive training as part of their professional development. Regular risk assessments are undertaken of the site.

Effective learning experiences promote children's personal development well including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are encouraged to collaborate with others and to take full advantage of the learning experiences provided.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is an inclusive community where children receive equal access to the curriculum and to all the activities provided. Practitioners succeed well in creating a warm environment where children acquire positive attitudes and values.

The practitioners have sufficient knowledge and experience to deliver the curriculum. Overall, there are sufficient resources which are used effectively to support the learning and teaching. Resources to develop children's ICT skills are more limited. There is very good use of visits and of visitors from the community to enhance children's experiences. These are planned effectively and impact well on the quality of learning.

The accommodation offers suitable facilities which are used fully by the practitioners. The hall is spacious with resources and equipment well organised and accessible to children. Attractive displays, which include children's work, contribute to the colourful and inviting environment. The small outdoor play area is used for a range of activities, but offers limited opportunities for using large apparatus. The setting, however, makes effective use of the village green, located opposite the hall, and of the facilities in Scolton Manor for a range of learning activities.

### **Leadership: Good**

There are very good features to aspects of leadership and management. The lead practitioner offers a strong sense of direction and purpose. The practitioners are aware of their different responsibilities and work constructively as a team. Daily routines are well established and operate very effectively. Appropriate policies, such as child protection and securing equal opportunities, are implemented. Parents are kept well informed through newsletters and a regularly updated notice board.

The management committee brings together a range of expertise which is used effectively to support and develop the playgroup. The registered person demonstrates a very good knowledge of the quality of provision and undertakes her role conscientiously and efficiently. The committee meets regularly and parents are invited to attend meetings.

The lead practitioner attends courses on aspects of child development and care and uses this training well in planning the provision. She is very well informed about the professional development needs of her colleagues. All practitioners attend aspects of training, but recognise the need to extend their knowledge and skills further. There are well structured systems for the appraisal of staff with clearly identified targets.

The setting meets local and national priorities well. The lead practitioner in particular has been fully involved in training and other developments connected to the Foundation Phase.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The setting has suitable procedures for identifying its strengths and areas for development. The lead practitioner knows the setting well and regularly discusses and plans improvements collaboratively with other practitioners and the local management committee. Assistant practitioners contribute to aspects of self-evaluation, but their role is more informal in nature. The views of children, parents and other partners are considered.

The annual audit of provision is used well by the lead practitioner and registered person to identify relevant targets. The development plan arising from the audit identifies appropriate areas for attention linked to strategies to achieve the targets set. The recommendations from the previous Estyn report have been addressed successfully.

All practitioners attend relevant training opportunities which impacts positively on the quality of provision.

### **Partnership working: Good**

A range of partnerships contributes effectively to children's achievements and wellbeing. There is a good relationship between the setting and parents. This was

confirmed in the conversations with them during the inspection and in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Good links have been established with the local primary school and collaboration is close and effective. This supports smooth transition and the sharing of good practice. The productive relationship with the local authority link teachers contributes to the improvements in the setting's work. The close links with the community, including local businesses, are used very effectively to support children's learning. The beneficial links with other settings promote the sharing of educational ideas and practice.

### **Resource management: Good**

The setting is appropriately staffed. Practitioners are well deployed and implement daily routines successfully. Learning resources are managed and used effectively to support the learning. They are accessible to the children and this encourages independence. There is very good use of the local community as a learning resource to provide additional learning opportunities for children.

The management committee has a thorough understanding of the budget and prioritises spending according to the setting's needs. There is good use of fundraising events to supplement resources. The impact of expenditure is analysed by the lead practitioner and discussed with the management committee. The setting offers good value for money.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Three questionnaires were received from parents who expressed very positive comments overall about the provision. They feel that their children make good progress and that they enjoy attending the setting. They believe that their children are prepared well for moving on to primary school. They say that the staff are very approachable and that their children have settled in well. They believe that the setting is well managed.

#### **Responses to discussions with the children**

The children are happy in the setting and join in the activities enthusiastically. Many speak readily about the activities they enjoy.



## Appendix 2

Dorothy Morris

Reporting Inspector

**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))