



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
Village Playgroup**

**Welfare Hall
Hope Avenue
Aberkenfig
Bridgend
CF32 9PR**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

Mary Dyas

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

Village Playgroup is an English medium setting which serves the village of Aberkenfig and the surrounding area. It meets in a community hall in the village where it has the use of the large hall, a smaller upstairs room and a safely fenced outdoor area accessed directly from the hall.

The setting serves a semi-rural area. The children who attend come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and all have English as their home language. None of the children speak Welsh at home. Nine per cent of the children have additional learning needs.

The setting is open daily during the school terms and children are able to attend for either morning or afternoon sessions or for a full day. Children are admitted to the setting from two years of age. Sixteen three year olds and one four year old are currently in receipt of funded educational provision from the Local Authority.

The setting obtained the Wales Pre-school Providers Association Quality Assured Accreditation in June 2010. It was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in November 2010 with no requirements or recommendations and by Estyn in February 2005.

Summary

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

Current performance

The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the Foundation Phase Outcomes for children's learning.

The setting is good because:

- All children enjoy coming to the playgroup and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities available
- Children enjoy their learning and make good progress
- All children behave well and show care and consideration for one another; and
- Relationships between adults and children are warm and caring

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- The setting is very well led by the leader and her deputy
- The setting leader is very experienced in the Foundation Phase methodology and, together with her staff, has established a learning environment which has a positive impact on many aspects of children's development
- Systems for self-evaluation and planning for the future within the setting are well established and there is clear evidence that improvements have been made and sustained over time; and
- Ongoing professional development of all staff is well established and effective

Recommendations

The recommendations for improvement are to:

R1 continue to improve the standards in, and provision for, Welsh language development

R2 ensure that all focus activities are effectively evaluated in order to inform assessment of children's learning and to identify the next steps

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how the setting is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points across all the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning. Children acquire new knowledge and understanding effectively and enjoy the challenge of new and varied activities. Most children are confident learners who are willing to learn from their mistakes, take risks and explore their surroundings.

Most children are articulate and speak in full sentences. They communicate freely with one another and with the adults in the setting and almost all are happy to talk to visitors. Most children concentrate for appropriate lengths of time according to their age and stage of development. They listen carefully to instructions, for example when they are taking turns to ride a visiting pony, and are beginning to understand the functions of writing when they recognise and try to write their names. All children are developing their understanding of mathematical concepts and many are beginning to apply this and to use mathematical language in the course of their play. Most children use electronic toys with some understanding and play games on a computer confidently. Most are also developing good levels of independence. They visit the toilet unaided and understand the need to wash and dry their hands afterwards, before they eat their snacks and meals and also after they handle animals as part of their topic on 'The Farm'. Many children show great enjoyment and developing skills in their creative development. They explore and experiment confidently with a range of different techniques and materials and make clear personal choices about the materials they use.

Children's progress in Welsh is adequate. They respond in Welsh to the register and many are able to count to ten together with an adult and know basic colour names. Few use individual words in Welsh or respond to simple instructions.

Wellbeing: Good

Standards of wellbeing are good. Children are relaxed and happy in the setting and are eager to try new experiences. They are beginning to express opinions and to ask for particular resources. All children interact positively with one another and with adults and behaviour is good. Children are polite to each other and to adults. Most children take turns and share toys and objects. Many are keen to talk about their experiences and are confident to ask for help from adults.

Many children show an appropriate understanding for their age and stage of development of the importance of eating healthily. They enjoy snack-time, eating a range of fresh, healthy food prepared for them.

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

Practitioners work very well together to plan a wide range of activities which stimulate, engage and challenge most children to learn effectively. Plans are based on ensuring coverage of the areas of learning using the Foundation Phase Development Profile and Skills Framework and on specific needs identified from observations of children's learning. This ensures that more able children are challenged in their learning experiences and all children have their specific learning needs met.

Practitioners know the children very well and respond appropriately to their varying needs, abilities and interests. Planning clearly addresses the needs and interests of the children and children have been involved making decisions about their learning. Overall, learning experiences successfully enable children to develop communication and numeracy skills every day.

Provision for Welsh language provision is adequate. Welsh is not used consistently throughout the session although it is well used during the morning group time. The setting involves all children in recycling a variety of resources which are put into labelled bins. Leftovers from the children's lunch and snacks are saved for the compost bin in the garden.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good. Practitioners have a sound understanding of the Foundation Phase and use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning. All intervene appropriately and make good use of questioning to challenge children and to extend their thinking. There is a good mix of planned activities and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Practitioners are very enthusiastic and fully committed to supporting children and to providing high quality all round provision. The setting operates a keyworker system. A simple baseline assessment profile has been developed which is completed on entry. Daily observations are noted on sticky notes by all practitioners and then entered into children's personal profiles. There is a daily verbal exchange of information with parents and carers during the handover at the beginning and end of sessions and the setting provides termly progress reports for parents who request this. All parents receive an end of year report on their child which indicates progress under all the areas of learning and includes a comment on the child's next steps in learning. Parents are also encouraged to contribute comments on their child's report.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has good arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing and arrangements for the support of children with additional learning needs are effective. Children with additional learning needs have appropriate targets identified in an Individual Play Plan. This is shared with parents and reviewed termly. Good procedures are in place to ensure that children settle quickly when they start at the playgroup. The setting provides a warm and welcoming environment for the children. Children attending the playgroup move on to a wide range of schools and the setting works to support each school's transition arrangements.

Children, and their parents or carers say they feel safe in the setting. A good range of policies to ensure the children are safe is in place and appropriate risk assessments have been carried out. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities. Other policies are appropriately detailed and relevant. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup is an inclusive community and respects and celebrates diversity. Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities and help to create a bright and welcoming environment. The setting makes thoughtful use of the space available. The large hall is divided into areas of provision using room dividers which are attractively decorated with children's work appropriate to the activity. The setting has recently changed the use of the upstairs room following the realisation that children were not choosing to access the activities offered there. This has proved to be more successful.

Practitioners in the pre-school group are appropriately qualified to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. They work well together to create a stimulating environment for learning. Practitioners regularly attend training courses to update their knowledge, understanding and skills. The group is well resourced with a range of high quality equipment which is used appropriately to support children's learning.

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

The setting leader is very well qualified and experienced. She has considerable experience which she uses to good effect to provide very good provision for the children. Teamwork is a real strength of the setting. Practitioners work closely together and support one another very well. They are constantly seeking to provide the children with high quality, stimulating and interesting experiences which address their needs.

The setting leader provides an excellent example to her staff. She creates a very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. Her sense of purpose and vision for improvement are reflected in the enthusiasm and commitment of her staff and in their shared vision for improvement.

Much has been achieved in addressing local and national priorities and in disseminating new ideas.

Improving quality: Good

Self evaluation is good and has been in place in a variety of formats for a number of years. The setting's self evaluation document is detailed and comprehensively addresses the three key questions for inspection. It reflects the ethos of seeking to provide the best for the children which is at the heart of the way the setting is led and managed. Areas of success and improvement are clearly identified and targets for improvement are set and reviewed.

A strong feature of the setting is their involvement in professional development. Practitioners attend training offered by the Local Authority and the leader has herself delivered training on many occasions and served on working parties.

Partnership working: Excellent

This is a real strength of the setting. The leader has worked closely with a number of organisations including a year with the Local Authority to support settings in the implementation of the Foundation Phase, involvement in the development and delivery of the All Wales Flying Start Training and also in the development of the Foundation Phase guidance materials. The leader is frequently asked to speak at training events and the setting has been regularly used by the Local Authority to welcome visitors from other settings to see different aspects of good practice in action. Good relationships exist with the Local Authority link teacher who visits regularly to provide support and advice.

Parents and carers are kept well informed through newsletters and an informative notice board in the waiting area. An annual questionnaire to parents and carers shows many positive responses and the setting has made quick and positive responses to the very few less positive comments. The playgroup is very much at the heart of the local community and the children make frequent visits around the village.

Children from the playgroup move on to a number of different schools. Practitioners provide positive support for the different arrangements made by each school and on occasion have attended induction sessions with children if their parents or carers have not been able to do so.

Resource management: Good

The setting has a good range of resources which are well used to support different learning experiences. Practitioners are effectively deployed to maximise children's learning and independence both indoors and out.

The setting leader, who is also the owner of the playgroup, manages its finances efficiently. She is mindful of the impact of spending decisions on the quality of provision and the progress children make. The setting gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fourteen replies were received to the parent questionnaire. Nearly all were very supportive and felt that they were very happy with the work of the playgroup. A very few parents felt they were not fully informed about their children's progress. Additionally parents commented that they feel confident leaving their children at the setting and also that transition arrangements have been a positive support to their children.

Responses to discussions with children

Most children were happy and confident when talking to a visitor. They spoke clearly and used age appropriate vocabulary. All said they liked coming to the playgroup and enjoyed their activities. They felt that they had many friends and were happy. Most knew what to do if they were unhappy or needed help.

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.