



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

**Ysgol Mair Playgroup
Chapel Buildings
Ysgol Mair
St Margaret's Drive
Rhyl
North Wales
LL18 2HY**

Date of inspection: May 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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Ysgol Mair Playgroup is located in the grounds of Ysgol Mair Primary School in a residential area of Rhyl in North Wales. Initially when it opened in September 2009, it was for afternoon sessions only, but due to increase in number of children it now opens both morning and afternoon. Currently sessions take place between 9 a.m. and 11.20 a.m. and from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. during school term time. (39 weeks of the year).

Currently there are 11 three year olds on the register and all are funded. The setting is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 24 children.

Children come from the immediate locality – a residential area that is not particularly socio-economically privileged or disadvantaged. Children from minority ethnic communities are welcomed and several attend at present. The playgroup also welcomes children with additional learning needs (ALN) and these are well supported.

No child comes from a home where Welsh is spoken, most of the children are English speaking. The playgroup reports that children whose primary language is not English quickly become competent in the language. Children are admitted to the playgroup aged 2 years 3 months and leave for the next stage of their education in the September after their third birthday.

The playgroup meets in a large, recently renovated and decorated room. It is approached via a small hallway with adjacent toilets. Useful background information and administrative details are displayed in the hall.

The main room is differentiated into activity areas in keeping with the Foundation Phase philosophy and a small kitchen area enables snacks to be prepared.

There is no outside play area. The accommodation is also used by breakfast and after school groups and this proves problematic at times. The playgroup is currently working towards Wales Pre Playgroup Association quality assurance accreditation.

The playgroup was inspected by CSSIW in 2010 and the recommendations have been addressed. 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.
- All children enjoy their time at the playgroup.
- All children behave responsibly and are developing their independence.
- All children benefit from a range of good experiences.
- All children are well cared for and supported – their wellbeing is given priority.
- Teaching is effective and focused on the Foundation Phase desirable outcomes.
- Staff work together very well and have contributed substantially to the success of the playgroup.

Prospects for improvement

- Good track record of bringing about improvement in the provision for the benefit to children.
- The leader and staff are receptive to new ideas.
- All staff are self-evaluative and are well focused on providing the best experiences for the children.
- Plans are in place to provide outside facilities so as to extend children's experiences.

Recommendations

To improve further the Playgroup needs to:

- R1 continue to evaluate the taught curriculum so as to ensure a good coverage of all aspects of the Foundation Phase desirable outcomes
- R2 develop the immediate outside environment and extend children's experiences and choice of activities *
- R3 review the range of activities undertaken in each session so as to establish a good pace for each session

* This is included in the Nursery's development plan.

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

Observations of children undertaking their activities and scrutiny of their work indicate that children are making good progress and achieving well. Most children show good levels of knowledge and understanding and, when motivated, children concentrate and persevere on tasks.

Most children have well developed literacy skills. They have good listening skills and enjoy listening and contributing in circle time activities. All children look at books independently and are eager to share their books with others and with the inspector. They hold their books appropriately and turn pages individually. At best, a few children talk about the characters in the story.

All children are beginning to write and know the purpose of writing. Most children are beginning to count and a few recognise number. Most children can match shapes and group objects using a single criterion such as colour.

A notable and good aspect of children's skill development is their well developed computer skills. All children take considerable enjoyment from their computer based activities and many show well developed computer skills.

Most children have a basic understanding of the Welsh language and a few use simple Welsh words. All children enjoy creative activities where they mix paints and use materials such as paper and junk materials in their creations.

All children are able to make decisions regarding their choice of activities and work independently for reasonable periods of time. However, when sessions are overlong they lose interest and are easily distracted.

Wellbeing: Good

All children are developing an appropriate understanding in line with their age of how they can keep healthy, including the importance of dental hygiene. They feel safe and free from physical and verbal abuse in the playgroup.

Most children are confident and many show high levels of self-confidence. Most children are well motivated and show a positive attitude towards learning, particularly when the tasks challenge them. All children are good decision makers and quickly choose activities set out for them during free time.

All children enjoy their time in the setting, they show a sense of anticipation when they arrive and soon become involved in activities set out for them. They are co-operative and capable of making decisions, such as what activities they select.

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

The playgroup provides children with a wide range of interesting activities. Planning is done collaboratively and includes children's ideas. It is flexible and provides for continuity in children's learning.

There is good provision to develop children's communication, numeracy and information technology skills and overall the curriculum is generally designed to meet the Foundation Phase learning outcomes. However, children do not have sufficient opportunities to work and play outside or to learn about the world around them.

Welsh words are used incidentally and children count in Welsh. All children celebrate and learn about Welsh festivals, such as St. David's day, but less so about other cultures.

Children's understanding of recycling is underdeveloped.

Teaching: Good

Staff have a good working knowledge of child development and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase for children's learning.

Staff provide stimulating learning experiences for the children but time isn't always well managed in that activities tend to go on too long with some children losing interest.

There is an appropriate balance of child-selected and adult-led activities and adult support is well directed at developing children's thinking skills and at developing their language. Resources are well used to support the teaching and learning.

Children's progress and wellbeing are tracked across all areas of learning. Children's achievements are noted in their individual record books.

Staff know the children's ability well and the information is used well to plan children's learning.

Parents are kept well informed about children's progress and achievements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Effective arrangements are in place to support children's health and wellbeing. Policies are in place and procedures are well established and ensure children's general development and support their learning.

All children are happy, they arrive with a sense of expectation and are soon involved with activities set out for them. Relationships are very good and children are happy to talk to visitors. Children are totally free from any form of harassment.

There are good arrangements to support children with additional learning needs (ALN) and the setting has worked collaboratively with key agencies to support such children.

Induction arrangements are good and ensure that children settle down quickly into the setting. Specialist services are used as necessary.

The learning experiences provided for the children and the overall caring atmosphere is highly effective in promoting children's personal development. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well developed.

The setting fully meets safeguarding regulations and responsibilities to ensure the safety of children at all times. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of the settings provision.

The setting is generously staffed with well qualified and experienced adults, well able to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Staff guide and support the children in their chosen activities and use questioning well to develop children's language.

There is an adequate supply of resources to support the teaching and learning and are accessible to the children.

The accommodation is spacious and in good decorative order. Staff have worked hard since taking over the building to refurbish and decorate it and currently it provides an attractive learning environment for the children.

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

Staff work together well under the direction of the leader. The setting is well managed and the implementation of policies and initiatives are effective. The leader and staff have worked together very well to secure improvement in the setting and have clear plans to maintain the current standards and to improve the provision, notably by developing the immediate outside area.

The Foundation Phase is successfully implemented and children are provided with good experiences. Relationships throughout are very good and this provides for a sense of community. Outcomes for the children are good and set to improve.

Improving quality: Good

A good and notable feature is the pride that all staff feel about the improvements that have been undertaken recently to improve the setting. Areas for development were recognised and actions taken to bring about improvement. This was often done in the staff's own time. The changes made have been effective but the setting is not complacent and further areas for improvement have been identified. A positive culture focused on improving the provision is evident and the setting is receptive to change.

The setting reflects the improved provision with the consequent benefit to the children in terms of their achievement and wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

Worthwhile partnerships have been established with parents. Parents have easy access to the staff who are always available to discuss their children's achievements and wellbeing. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and the work of the setting.

An outstanding link exists between the setting and the primary school. The headteacher of the school is the registered person and is well aware, through visiting the setting and discussion with the leader and staff, of the working of the setting. The headteacher has been very supportive of the setting in its development. Close links also exist with the reception teacher and this is proving beneficial. Overall, such arrangements are very beneficial and also ease the transfer of children to the next stage of their education.

The Local Authority advisory teacher has also provided valuable advice and the leader and staff recognise her contribution. Advice has been accepted and well used. There are also beneficial links with specialist help, such as to support children with ALN.

Resource management: Good

Resources are managed and deployed effectively to support learning. Spending has been well prioritised and in line with planned improvements. Resources are well focused on the likely outcomes on children's learning and this has been successfully achieved.

Overall the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Nine questionnaire replies were received. The responses show very good support for the Playgroup and what it provides. Most parents reported their satisfaction with the Playgroup and strongly agreed that:

- (i) their child likes the setting
- (ii) children settle in well and make good progress
- (iii) the teaching is good and children are treated with respect
- (iv) children are safe at the Playgroup
- (v) children with additional learning needs are well supported
- (vi) parents are comfortable approaching staff
- (vii) the Playgroup is well run.

All agreed that children are encouraged to be healthy.

Responses to discussions with children

All children enjoy the Playgroup. They arrive showing a sense of anticipation and soon settle down to activities set out for them. They enjoy meeting visitors and were keen to speak to the inspector.

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.