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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Acton Children and Family Centre
Old Community Centre
Oak Drive
Acton
Wrexham
LL12 7LA**

Date of inspection: January 2013

by

Mr 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

Acton Children and Family Centre is located in Wrexham near the town centre. It is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 30 children at any one time. Currently there are 41 children on the register of whom 13 are aged three years. All three year old children are funded. The setting is open from 8.30 a.m. until 4 p.m. Monday to Thursday and between 8.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. on Friday during school terms. During school holidays it operates between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Children attend for various sessions depending on parental requests.

Children come from the immediate locality incorporating some areas of deprivation and from the surrounding villages. Admission arrangements are clear and set out in the parents' handbook. Children are admitted following their second birthday and normally leave in the September following their third birthday.

Virtually all children come from English speaking homes but the setting welcomes children from minority ethnic backgrounds and children identified with additional learning needs (ALN).

The accommodation was a community centre and is owned by Wrexham Council. It is somewhat dated but clean, bright and well resourced with immediate access to an enclosed outside area. A new building is being erected to which the setting will move in September 2013.

Entrance to the building is via a small hallway where useful information for parents is displayed. Children meet initially in a large teaching room which is organised to provide differentiated activities and play areas. From this room children can access the well appointed outside area. Within the building is a small kitchen, a sensory room, small quiet room and toilets. The setting has sole use of these facilities.

The organisation is a non-profit making charity with two trustees and a parental management committee. The setting administrator oversees the day-to-day arrangements with parents and the Childcare manager oversees the educational provision. She is assisted by 4 permanent staff. The manager works in close partnership with the Early Years advisory teacher and all staff have received regular training provided by the Local Authority. There are close links with Acton Primary school which is the receiving school for the majority of the children.

The setting was recently inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSW) and by Estyn in 2006. All recommendations have been addressed.

Summary

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

Current performance

Good features

- Children's standards of achievement and progress.
- The provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing.
- The organisation of the setting and the range of activity areas provided for the children.
- The leadership provided by the childcare manager.
- The care, guidance and support provided for the children.
- The outdoor provision.
- Parental support.

Prospects for improvement

Good features

- The quality of the leadership.
- Track record of improvement.
- The quality of the self-evaluation and the realistic plans for improvement.
- The team spirit evident in the setting.
- The support provided by the Local Authority.

Recommendations

R1. Continue to provide the current good quality of education for the children.

R2. Refine its assessment recording so as to identify children's learning skills and to use the results in planning so that tasks are challenging and well matched to children's ability.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

All children are making realistic progress and achieve good standards from their starting point. They work conscientiously and are constantly engaged in the activities set out for them. A notable and good aspect is their ability to choose and make decisions and to work independently.

Children's literacy skills are developing well. Most children can express their feelings using an appropriate vocabulary and enjoy singing, particularly action songs.

All children carry out instructions willingly and are keen to co-operate with adults. Older children in particular, enjoy stories and looking at books. These children hold books appropriately, turning pages as the story develops.

Children experiment with basic writing and scribbling using chalk, felt tip pens and pencils and understand some of the functions of writing, such as writing their names when role playing in their doctor's surgery.

Children count in both English and Welsh and the more able recognise number in single figures. More able children are beginning to use mathematical language such as "full, half full and empty" when playing in their sand tray. They identify "big" and "small" and "under" and "over". Most children recognise and match patterns.

Children use electronic toys using buttons and switches to operate such equipment. Children do not have opportunities to use computers.

All children show their creative skills in painting and making artefacts that extend their fine manipulative skills. Children enjoy music making and using words such as "loud" and "quiet".

Children make good progress in the Welsh language. They understand basic words and phrases and show that they understand more words than they can speak. They repeat words spoken by familiar adults and enjoy looking at Welsh books.

Wellbeing: Good

All children show a sense of enjoyment and excitement when coming to the setting. They are keen to partake in activities set out for them and to meet and chat with their friends. Children show a very good attitude to learning and behave well. Their behaviour and application shows their developing and positive attitude to learning.

Children are contented and know that they are well supported by adults. This develops their social skills, including their decision making skills. Good relationships are evident between adults and children.

All children are becoming increasingly aware of what they need to do to keep healthy, such as cleaning hands before eating. Snack time is a very good social occasion when children learn to help each other and to handle equipment such as providing plates for their colleagues and pouring their own milk and water for drinking.

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

Planning successfully engages all children and they are provided with a broad range of interesting activities that captivates their interests.

Practitioners plan collaboratively and plans are flexible and take into account children's interests. Learning experiences encourage children to progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes.

Learning activities encourage children to become confident and to become independent learners whilst ensuring opportunities are provided to collaborate with others. Whilst good attention is given to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills, there is a strong focus on developing their creative skills, such as painting and model making, music and physical development.

Children are developing their basic and key skills, including their thinking skills. Practitioners, through perceptive questioning, exploit opportunities to develop children's skills.

Overall, however, planning does not focus sufficiently on providing suitably differentiated work. Tasks, such as focused tasks, are not always sufficiently directed on providing activities suitably matched to children's age and ability and to provide them with suitable challenge. Whilst key workers know their children's ability well and what they have achieved, the planning does not sufficiently ensure the systematic development of key skills.

Good provision is made to encourage children to use the Welsh language. Welsh words and phrases are displayed around the room and practitioners use Welsh words in their discussion with children. A Welsh phrase of the week is used and made known to parents who are encouraged to support children's learning.

There are opportunities provided for children to learn about sustainability and recycling. Children plant and grow seeds and appreciate where some of the

vegetables that are part of their diet come from. There is a recycling compost bin that provides additional compost.

Teaching: Good

Staff are well qualified and experienced and understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase. They have an up-to-date knowledge of child development.

A good and notable feature of the Playgroup is the good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities which successfully develops children's independence and also the ability to partake in group activities. However, tasks are not always sufficiently differentiated to match children's different abilities and to challenge them.

Children are well managed and behaviour is good. Practitioners are good language models and use questioning well to develop children's vocabulary in both the English and Welsh language. Adults know when to intervene in children's activities and when to allow them to work individually.

Practitioners work well together. Their roles and responsibilities are well set out by the Childcare manager. Overall, children are well supported both on activities indoors and outdoors.

Children are assessed regularly and observations recorded. Practitioners note children's achievements in a personal notebook and these comments are transferred to the child's individual record book (Dyma Fi). Comments describe clearly what the child has done but do not always identify the skills displayed. However, these are good records of the child's achievement and accompany the child to the receiving school.

Currently the outcomes of assessment are not sufficiently used when planning future activities so as to provide tasks well matched to children's needs and to provide them with challenging activities. In discussion, parents reported that they were well aware of their children's progress through information provided for them by the Playgroup staff.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Day-to-day activities and the general atmosphere in the Playgroup successfully foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect. Children have a clear understanding of and are able to distinguish between right and wrong and act accordingly. Children show tolerance and an understanding of others in the group.

The outside play area is favoured by the majority of children even during inclement weather that occurred during the inspection. Such experiences, together with numerous visits to the locality, develop children's curiosity and sense of wonder about the world.

Specialist services work in close collaboration with the Playgroup providing specialist support when necessary. The Playgroup accommodates children under care when needed. These are effective links that benefit the children.

The Playgroup is a safe environment. No person can enter unannounced and children leave only when collected by parents/carers. All staff have attended recent courses for Child Protection, they are fully conversant with the necessary procedures in place. The setting's provision for safeguarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

Children with additional learning needs (ALN) have full access to all areas of learning. Where necessary individual educational plans are prepared for them and parents are actively involved in all arrangements. Support teachers are provided when necessary and specialist services involved at appropriate times. Overall, this provides good quality support for children with all forms of needs, including those with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has an inclusive ethos that provides all children with equality of opportunity and access to a broad curriculum. Children are well respected by adults who are sensitive to their individual needs. Practitioners provide care and affection to any child who appears fretful.

The setting is completely free of any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. All children whatever their disability, are treated favourably and well respected. Policies and procedures are in place concerning such issues as complaints and equal opportunities.

The setting staff are appropriately qualified and experienced of working with children. Resources are well matched to the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the specific needs of the children. Resources are accessible to the children who are suitably encouraged to maintain them in good order.

The accommodation, though somewhat dated, is very well used. A good and notable feature is the room organisation with activity areas well defined, each having an aide memoire as reminders to staff of the potential of each area. Outside there are a wide range of activities for the children. The setting will benefit from a new purpose built accommodation from next September.

The Nursery makes good use of visits to the local environment.

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

The setting is efficiently managed by an administrator who oversees the day-to-day administration. The Childcare manager oversees the educational provision. There are four other assistants employed.

Overall, staff work well as a team and all understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities efficiently. The Childcare manager provides clear direction to the work of the setting and has promoted and sustained improvements since her appointment 1½ years ago.

All staff share values and aims that are well focused on providing the best possible experiences for the children. All contribute to the planning process and successfully create a positive ethos in the setting.

The Childcare manager manages practitioners well. There is a programme of regular appraisal of staff who have access to suitable professional courses. Induction procedures are in place for new staff.

The setting has an open door policy and effective links with parents. A notice board in the hallway informs parents of activities and serves as an encouragement for them to support their children's learning.

A management committee is in place which meets monthly and the setting is overseen by two trustees.

The setting has taken good account of National and local priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation procedures are well established and identify strengths and areas for improvement. Recently the areas identified for improvement have resulted in positive gains for the children. This has included the development of the outside provision which is now fully integrated into the curriculum and much favoured by the children. The format of "snack time" has also been modified to the current pattern which is a good social occasion for the children and extends their experiences to include "helpwr y dydd". Children serve themselves and have responded well to this initiative.

The current self-evaluation exercise has prioritised areas for development. These are realistic targets and will result in improvement in the provision for the children.

Practitioners make good use of professional courses provided by the local authority. The local authority advisory teacher is also a very good source of ideas and advice. The impact of training courses is evaluated. The setting has been used as an exemplar of good practice.

Partnership working: Good

Parents are very supportive of the setting. In discussion, many reported on the very good care provided by the setting and the way their children were developing, particularly their social skills. Parents reported on the friendly staff and the information they provided on their children's development.

Good arrangements are in place with the receiving primary school – most children attending the local school.

The setting works with the local authority advisory teacher and this is proving beneficial.

Resource management: Good

The setting is very well organised to provide activities matched to the requirement of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Currently the future resource needs of the new centre are being addressed to ensure a smooth transition and to maintain suitable activities for the children.

Resources are well deployed and good account is taken of spending.

The setting gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (less than 10).

Children

Children said they enjoyed coming to the setting. They enjoyed the different activities set out for them and particularly liked going outside.

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.

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnership's conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh.</p>

National Childminding Association (NCMA)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National (NDNA)	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.