



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

**Croco Doco Dile Playgroup
The Youth Centre
Mount Lane
Llanidloes
SY18 6AZ**

Date of inspection: February 2013

by

**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

Croco Doco Dile Playgroup serves the town of Llanidloes and the surrounding villages. The playgroup meets each morning and two afternoons a week in the purpose-built Youth and Early Years Centre in the centre of the town. The playgroup has an enclosed outdoor area that includes a soft-play surface, a grassed section and a shaded area. There are four experienced members of staff, including one practitioner who is responsible for children with additional learning needs.

The playgroup is registered to take up to 26 children per session and children are admitted from the age of two and a half years. There are currently 51 children on roll. The number of children who attend each session varies. On the first morning of the inspection, there were 21 3-year-olds present, all of whom are funded by the local authority, and on the second morning, there were 11 funded 3-year-olds and five two-and-a-half-year-olds.

The children who attend the nursery come from a wide range of family backgrounds. All children have English as their home language. There are no children from Welsh speaking homes. There are a very few children with additional learning needs.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in January 2012. The setting was last inspected by Estyn in March 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good. This is because:

- the playgroup is a safe, vibrant and exciting setting where children settle well and play happily together;
- nearly all children make good progress and achieve well during their time at the setting;
- nearly all children listen attentively and develop very good communication skills and many speak clearly and confidently in social situations;
- all children are polite, they behave well and develop positive relationships with others; and
- experienced, skilful practitioners plan interesting activities that encourage children to participate and motivate them to learn successfully.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good. This is because:

- effective teamwork and a very positive ethos creates a happy atmosphere for adults and children to work and learn together;
- the leader, practitioners and management committee have a clear picture of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement;
- all practitioners respond positively to guidance and support and are committed to improving all aspects of the playgroup's work for the benefit of the children;
- self-evaluation and improvement planning are becoming an important part of the setting's day-to-day practice; and
- improvements are having a noticeable impact on the quality of children's learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in Welsh
- R2 Consistently plan activities that challenge and extend the skills of all children, particularly the more able
- R3 Build on existing assessment procedures to enable practitioners to measure children's progress from their starting points more accurately
- R4 Ensure that policies, particularly those for safeguarding and child protection are sufficiently detailed and reviewed at appropriate intervals

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that 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

Nearly all children make good progress from their starting points and most achieve well by the end of their time at the playgroup. They develop a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills that prepares them well for the next step in their education. Most children who are approaching the age at which they transfer to the primary school are ready for that transition.

Nearly all children listen attentively and talk confidently about their activities. Most communicate effectively for their age and stage of development and many use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. Older, more able children give extended answers and a few pose their own, searching questions to other children and adults. For example, they explain why they put garden waste in the compost bin and ask why the compost is not yet ready to use in the garden. Most children enjoy sharing stories and joining in with repeated phrases in familiar books. Many handle books appropriately and respond enthusiastically to questions related to the content. The majority of children respond positively to opportunities to develop early writing skills, using a variety of mark-making equipment. Many demonstrate good fine motor skills and control writing implements well.

Most children develop good early numeracy skills. They count to ten by rote correctly and a few able children recognise and sequence numbers accurately. The majority use a good range of mathematical language naturally when playing. For example, they describe containers as 'full', 'empty' and 'overflowing' when pouring water through pipes from a jug to a bowl.

Children's skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are progressing well. Many use a computer mouse competently to move items around a computer screen and create pictures. The majority handle a child's digital camera with growing dexterity and many children enjoy imitating adults using calculators, electronic tills and telephones in the role-play area.

Children's Welsh language skills are developing slowly. All children respond to the register in Welsh. Most enjoy listening to Welsh stories and the majority join in with songs. A few more able children count to 10 and repeat simple words in the correct context. However, children do not use enough Welsh in their play or when talking to adults.

Wellbeing: Good

All children are happy and confident and have positive attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in all experiences provided for them, settling to activities quickly and willingly. Most concentrate well for their age. They persevere for a considerable period when collecting soil to fill a tyre for planting potatoes and many demonstrate high levels of involvement when playing in the fruit and vegetable shop.

Nearly all children relate well to each other, showing consideration for others' feelings and co-operating successfully, often without adult support. Snack-time is a social occasion when children show respect for each other and engage in appropriate conversations whilst enjoying each other's company. They develop good independent learning skills: for example, most cut fruit, spread butter and pour drinks with growing confidence.

Most children choose their individual play activities confidently and move from one area of learning to another purposefully. Although children occasionally help to choose what the role-play area will become, they are not routinely involved in planning what and how they learn through themes.

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

Practitioners work well together to plan a wide range of learning activities based on appropriate themes that interest and engage all children. Practitioners use skills ladders conscientiously to plan activities that enable children to make generally appropriate progress across all Foundation Phase areas of learning. For example, a simple activity of making faces out of fruit and vegetable peelings stimulates children's to be creative, discuss mathematical shapes, compare the features of human faces, improve their understanding of healthy eating and encourages them to experiment with new experiences.

The playgroup offers children appropriate opportunities to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum through a wide range of activities, including role-play, sharing stories and mark making. There is suitable provision for developing children's skills in numeracy and ICT. Practitioners often encourage children to think for themselves and provide relevant opportunities to solve problems and act independently. However, planning does not always take good enough account of children's ability to ensure that activities extend the skills of more able individuals.

Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions when they celebrate Dydd Santes Dwynwen and St David's Day. Practitioners use the Welsh language reasonably well during whole-group carpet time. A Welsh speaker leads these sessions effectively, reading stories, singing songs and encouraging children to respond in Welsh. However, practitioners do not use Welsh enough outside these sessions and this limits children's independent use of the language.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners are experienced and have a secure understanding of the expectations of the Foundation Phase. The pace of sessions suits children's stage of development well and means that children always have something new and interesting to stimulate them. Practitioners use a wide range of effective teaching strategies to encourage children to access and learn from the good range of activities on offer across all areas of learning.

Children develop very positive relationships with all adults in the setting and this enables them to become confident learners and learn by their mistakes. All practitioners intervene sensitively in play situations to move children's learning forward, often through the effective use of questioning. For example, they model shopping activities in the role-play area effectively to promote the use of relevant language and develop early mathematical skills, such as weighing.

Assessment procedures are developing steadily. Practitioners carry out appropriate observational assessments of individuals and groups of children. These assessments, along with their good knowledge of the children, are beginning to enable practitioners to identify the next steps they need to take with individuals and groups of children. However, on-entry assessment is not always detailed enough to ensure that practitioners can measure children's progress from their starting points accurately.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Good arrangements exist to promote healthy living and to ensure children's emotional and physical wellbeing. Daily access to physical activities and healthy snacks supports good physical development. Practitioners encourage children to form positive relationships and they nurture a sense of respect and tolerance towards others. Induction arrangements and daily contact with parents and carers ensure that children settle quickly into the setting and this contributes significantly to good emotional and social development.

An appropriate range of learning experiences fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Extensive opportunities to explore their natural environment and to observe birds eating the bird cakes they have made create a sense of awe and wonder about the world around them, whilst undertaking responsibilities at snack-time develops children's social skills effectively. Children learn about the importance of caring for the environment by growing vegetables and participating regularly in recycling and composting activities.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to promote safety and to safeguard children. Practitioners take considerable care to ensure the security of the building and grounds. There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff and all practitioners understand the procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues. However, several written policies, including that for child protection, do not provide enough detail and are not reviewed regularly.

There are good processes in place to support children with additional learning needs. Practitioners access professional help for children and their families conscientiously and they use this support effectively to ensure that the setting meets the specific needs of children.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all activities. Practitioners are suitably qualified and very experienced in working with young children. There are plenty of good quality resources for every area of learning

and practitioners ensure that they match children's needs closely. For example, practitioners recently identified a need to improve children's understanding of diversity and purchased an appropriate range of toys and dressing up costumes to enrich this aspect of the curriculum.

The accommodation is of high quality, well maintained and secure. Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities and help to create a bright and welcoming environment. Practitioners make good use of the available space. The setting's excellent outdoor area is safe and secure and practitioners use it effectively to provide a wealth of interesting experiences across the curriculum. The setting uses community resources, such as the library and local shops, particularly effectively to provide additional learning experiences that have a beneficial impact on children's skills.

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

The leader, staff and management committee work closely together as a team. This collaborative approach ensures that the setting achieves its aims and creates a positive ethos in which all children can thrive. All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities. The setting leader makes good use of her colleagues' strengths and encourages them to provide leadership in those areas. This means that all practitioners feel valued and have high expectations of themselves and others. They are becoming reflective practitioners who understand the need to improve the provision they offer and sustain improvements.

There are appropriate processes in place to manage the performance of staff. Annual appraisals identify practitioners' strengths well and the outcomes of these appraisals are beginning to influence the way that leaders organise training.

Leaders pay good attention to local and national priorities and the setting leader ensures that the management committee is well informed about developments in the setting. Implementation of the Foundation Phase has been successful, the setting has worked hard to provide regular opportunities for outdoor learning and practitioners focus well on the development of children's literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. However, leaders do not always give enough attention to ensuring that written policies reflect the generally good day-to-day practice accurately.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners and members of the management committee know the setting well. They contribute effectively to an annual audit in the autumn term that identifies strengths and areas for development accurately. Leaders use this information well to write a useful self-evaluation report and to develop an appropriate improvement plan. This plan identifies four relevant priorities and outlines clear steps the setting will take to achieve these targets. It refers to appropriate success criteria that usually relate suitably to outcomes for children, and identifies training and resource implications and the people who are responsible for each target.

The leader and practitioners are open to new ideas and have responded positively to support from the local authority advisory teacher and suggestions from the members of the management committee. As a result, practitioners are able to demonstrate the impact that improvements have had on outcomes for children. For example, the purchase of more appropriate ICT equipment, including a child-friendly digital camera, has enabled children to use the equipment more frequently and independently and improved their ICT skills significantly.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has good partnerships with parents and carers. Leaders share the setting's aims and objectives effectively with them. They receive relevant information regularly through the setting's noticeboard, newsletters and daily personal contact. Parents are encouraged to share their skills and expertise with the children during sessions and this, along with good induction procedures, enables parents and carers to see and understand the work of the playgroup. A recently introduced book-bag scheme encourages parents to share books with their children more frequently and this is already improving children's interest in books and reading.

Good partnerships exist with the local primary school and this promotes a smooth transition for children from the playgroup to the next stage in their education. Effective links with the community and the involvement of local people and organisations contribute well to children's overall development and wellbeing. Practitioners welcome the support they receive from the local authority advisory teacher and there is clear evidence that the advice she has given them has improved their practice, particularly in relation to self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Resource management: Good

The leader and management committee manage the setting's financial resources effectively to support learning and developments in the setting. They monitor the budget regularly and systematically to ensure the most efficient use of funds. The committee requires practitioners to justify spending requests. This ensures that spending decisions are appropriate and in line with the targets identified in the improvement plan or other setting priorities.

Leaders and managers ensure that the setting has enough appropriate staff. They deploy practitioners effectively to deliver the curriculum and enable them to use their expertise to have the greatest impact on children's outcomes. In view of the good outcomes achieved by children attending the playgroup, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty-three parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Responses are overwhelmingly positive and this compares favourably with the views of parents in other settings across Wales.

All are satisfied with the setting and agree that their children:

- were helped to settle in well when they started at the playgroup and enjoy attending;
- are making good progress;
- are safe at the setting and are encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- receive appropriate additional support for their particular needs; and
- are prepared well for starting school.

All parents and carers feel that:

- the setting is well run;
- they can approach practitioners with questions, suggestions or problems; and
- they understand the procedures for dealing with complaints;
- practitioners teach their children well and treat them fairly and with respect; and
- the setting provides a good range of activities and visits.

A very few parents do not feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Sarah 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)

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 partnerships 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.