



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

**Marford Playgroup
Marford Community Centre
Pant Lane
Marford
Wrexham
LL12 8SU**

Date of inspection: May 2012

by

Anne Manning

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

Marford Playgroup holds sessions in the community centre in the village of Marford near Wrexham, North Wales. There is a spacious hall with toilets and a small kitchen. The community centre has a fully enclosed garden for outdoor play with different spaces that provide good opportunities for a variety of activities including den making. Children attend from the age of 2 and a half to 5 years. The playgroup shares the hall with the community and this means that the playgroup practitioners have to set out and tidy away all the equipment every session.

The playgroup opened 30 years ago and is run by a committee, manager, supervisors and volunteers.

The playgroup is open school term time from Monday to Friday from 8.55am to 11.25am. The setting is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide sessional care for 26 children. Playgroup education is offered every morning. On the first morning of the inspection there were three children present aged three and on the second morning of the inspection there were two children present aged three. The playgroup also provides care in the afternoon for children who attend part time school. Pre-school children may also attend the Thursday afternoon session. The last Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspection was in March 2011 and this is the first inspection by Estyn.

The setting is English speaking, with some Welsh, providing care and education for children from families for whom all English is their first language. The children attending are nearly all from the village and are all White British and no children have additional needs.

The playgroup has an equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children. The area served by the setting is considered to be socially advantaged and children attending come from a range of backgrounds.

Marford Playgroup receives support from Wrexham Early Education.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

There is a good range of learning experiences including those in the community for example strawberry picking and den making.

Care, support and guidance for the children and their parents are good.

Teaching is good.

Children are confident and feel happy and safe in the playgroup.

All children behave well and form good relationships with one another.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

There is a focus on the learning needs of the children.

Leadership and management of the setting are good.

Self-evaluation is on going and effective and identifies areas for development.

There is a positive ethos whereby all children and staff are valued.

Practitioners and parents work effectively together to maximise the potential of the children.

Recommendations

R.1 Create more opportunities to use Welsh on an informal basis during the session.

R.2 Planning for focussed tasks needs to be developed to link more effectively to assessment and show where it has been adapted to meet individual needs.

R.3 Outcomes of assessment and observations of the children need to be more effectively recorded.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

N/A

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Learning experiences effectively develop the skills of the children and encourage them to form relationships and work together, for example, when den building. Children actively develop an understanding of the world around them through a range of outdoor play and visits within the local community such as strawberry picking and visiting the quarry. The children learn about caring for plants by growing vegetables and they are involved in the 'Grow with Me' project whereby they take produce home that they have grown. Children are effectively introduced to a range of animals and how to care for them such as a tortoise.

The setting ensures that the children acquire the necessary skills in communication and numeracy. The playgroup provides learning experiences that encourage the development of independent thinking across all Areas of Learning. Children are involved in decision making, for example, deciding where to release the spider they caught indoors. There are good opportunities for children to develop skills in ICT by using a lap top, a talking photograph album, keyboard and camera. Learning experiences effectively encourage children to progress towards Foundation Phase outcomes. Children effectively develop physical and creative skills.

Planning is flexible, successful, engages all and takes into account the weather and the interests and ideas of the children. It covers continuous and enhanced provision and although planning includes focussed tasks, this needs to be developed to show where it has been adapted to meet individual needs and have clear links to the process of assessment.

Children learn about re-cycling by choosing junk to make models and create 3d images, for example using tubs to make musical drums and they use rain water to water their plants.

Practitioners use the Welsh language effectively and children respond well, particularly during the circle time. Practitioners develop the learning of the children but this needs to be further extended throughout the session by increasing the use of simple Welsh words and phrases. The children celebrate festivals including St David's Day and are beginning to understand the traditions and cultures of Wales

and the wider world, for example, by enjoying activities based around the Chinese New Year.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a good knowledge of child development and high expectations of all the children. They know the children in their care well and employ an effective range of strategies to encourage the children to join in, make the most of the activities and learn. The playgroup make very good use of visiting practitioners actively using their skills and expertise, for example, when den building.

Practitioners are good language models and make effective use of questioning to challenge and extend the learning of the children and help them to make progress. They meet the needs of the children flexibly on an individual basis and manage the behaviour of the children well.

Children are given good opportunities to make decisions, for example, where to put the framework of sticks when making a den. Practitioners make good use of informal learning opportunities to develop the children and build on their understanding such as when looking at footprints in the sand.

Practitioners are involved in planning and are well briefed at the start of every session before the children arrive and as a result all know what is expected of them, their role and responsibility for the learning of the children during the morning.

Although practitioners regularly assess the children, they sometimes miss opportunities to record observations. Outcomes of the assessment and observations made are used to plan future activities to meet the children's needs and interests however this is not always sufficiently or effectively recorded.

Parents are effectively involved in the development of their children, are aware of their progress and what they can do to help them improve.

There are sufficient practitioners that have relevant and appropriate qualifications. The manager has NVQ3 and has been at the playgroup for 6 years. The assistant has a level 3 and has been working in the group for 5 years and one member of staff is working towards a level 2.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The playgroup has an appropriate policy and procedures in place regarding the safeguarding of the children and there is a named senior member of staff with responsibility for dealing with child protection issues. There are clear procedures that reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and there are appropriate arrangements for training staff.

The setting effectively promotes the health and well being of the children including their moral, social and cultural development and encourages a sense of curiosity about themselves and the world around them. Their spiritual development is taken in to account by saying a short prayer.

Marford Playgroup effectively fosters values such as honesty, and fairness and children learn to share and to take turns with equipment such as when playing with diggers in the sand. Children actively learn about what is right and what is wrong and are starting to take responsibility.

The setting provides good guidance to both children and their parents and there are effective procedures to support any children with additional needs and systems to liaise with parents, school and other professionals. The playgroup has effective links with specialist agencies. There are appropriate policies and procedures to support children in the group that actively contribute to their learning and successfully help them to achieve such as the initial concerns sheet, the individual play plans and the concerns review.

The setting effectively uses Ticw the Welsh bear to support the children whilst toilet training and children have the opportunity to take Ticw home strengthening links between home and playgroup.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has established an inclusive ethos that takes into account and effectively values the diversity of background of the children. All children have equal access to the curriculum and the setting has an equal opportunities policy to support the children and reflect the provision. An effective range of policies and procedures supports the children and their families.

There are sufficient practitioners that have relevant and appropriate qualifications in early years practice and experience of working with young children. The resources in the playgroup are appropriate, suitable and sufficient to address the requirements of the Foundation Phase and the individual needs of the children.

The accommodation indoors and outdoors is used effectively to provide a good range of learning experiences and the local environment and any additional practitioners are used well to enhance the existing facilities at the playgroup.

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

Leaders understand their roles and responsibilities. They give clear direction and there is a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement and develops the setting. Leaders effectively share values, aims and objectives and set targets in the group.

The playgroup has a positive ethos and there are high expectations of all. Practitioners focus on the needs of the children and both are managed well.

Practitioner appraisals to improve and develop practice are carried out every 12 months. Every week there is a planning meeting and practitioners are effectively briefed about their role before the start of each session.

Leaders have established effective links with parents to encourage them to support the learning of their children. The playgroup committee meets every month and the setting is involved in national and local schemes such as healthy eating, re cycling and is a member of Wales Pre-school Providers Association.

Improving quality: Good

The playgroup has achieved the Quality Assured Award from WPPA. The setting has completed self-evaluation that effectively identifies strengths and areas for improvement. This process is on going and provides a valuable tool in measuring positive gains for the achievement and progress of the children. Reviews are carried out every one or two months to reflect on provision and practice and where the setting is up to regarding any action points identified.

The self-evaluation includes all practitioners and Information is used to prioritise areas for development and strategies for improvement.

Practitioners are engaged in professional development. They meet with colleagues in other settings, share resources, ideas and good practice and attend a range of courses that effectively improve quality in the setting.

Partnership working: Good

A good range of partnership working with clear communication and trust improves children's learning and well being.

There are good links with the local village school and the nursery teacher and teaching assistant make visits to the playgroup to facilitate the transition arrangements for the children.

The setting produces an annual review for parents and their way of working effectively involves parents. A newsletter every term actively ensures that they know what is happening in the group.

Ticw the Welsh bear effectively strengthens links between home and playgroup. Marford Playgroup completes transition sheets that record the skills and achievement of the children when starting at the playgroup and actively shows the progress that they have made when they move onto their next setting.

The setting has good links with Wrexham County Council and has worked closely with them to develop outdoor risk assessments for a tyre and rope swing in the garden. The group is pro-active and also has a very positive relationship with the Early Education link teacher who visits the playgroup regularly to provide valuable support and guidance to the group effectively contributing to the learning and development of the children.

Resource management: Good

All practitioners are deployed well, especially volunteers. Resources are effectively used to motivate the children to learn and any future resource needs are well planned for.

Outdoor provision and visits in the local community are used well to motivate the children and develop their skills across all learning areas. The playgroup is well resourced, uses these effectively and plans successfully for future needs. Any extra resources, for example, those from the local authority actively contribute to the progress of the children and motivate them to learn.

All funding received is used to maximum potential and overall the playgroup gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. (This is because there were only a small number of relevant children at the time of the inspection.)

Responses to discussions with children

Children clearly like coming to the group. There are lots of things to do and they particularly enjoy den making. Children welcome the additional staff and the activities outside.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Anne Manning	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.