



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

**Markham Community Playgroup
Institute Building
Abernant Road
Markham
Blackwood
NP12 0QH**

Date of inspection: February 2012

by

Linda Vittle

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

Markham Community Playgroup is situated in Markham, an old mining village bordering the town of Blackwood. The playgroup became registered as an educational provider in 2004. It is accommodated in a small room in the Miners' Institute building, with access to a small outdoor area. The room is bright and well displayed. The playgroup is open for 39 weeks of the year and provides morning sessions.

Children attending the playgroup come mainly from the village and surrounding local area which has a high level of social and economic deprivation. Two children come from homes where Hungarian is spoken but all children currently attending have English as their first language and none speak Welsh at home. The nursery is inclusive and welcomes all children. Children enter the playgroup with a wide range of abilities. Currently no children have been identified with additional learning needs (ALN). The playgroup is registered for 18 children aged from two years to five years. At the time of inspection 16 children were present of which seven were three year olds eligible for funding. The community playgroup has three staff. The manager and deputy have relevant qualifications in Childcare and Education.

The playgroup was last inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales in March 2010 and by Estyn in March 2006. The group recently moved into a new room in the Institute to access an outside area which they developed with a grant from the Groundwork Trust. The setting has been awarded the Caerphilly Healthy Snack award.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Children achieve well and make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding across nearly all areas of learning;
- The setting provides a good range of stimulating experiences which engage the children and support learning;
- There are warm caring relationships between children and adults and
- Children are happy and well behaved

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- Self evaluation has already led to improvements in the setting and is impacting positively on the quality of provision;
- Practitioners work well together as a team, value advice and act upon it in order to improve and
- The setting works closely and effectively with the local authority to improve standards and provision.

Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1 Improve standards in and provision for Welsh language development.

R2 Plan for and develop children's thinking skills.

R3 Plan for and use regularly the outdoor and local area to develop physical skills and extend learning opportunities.

R4 Link assessment and planning more effectively by using next steps from assessments to inform the learning objectives used in weekly activity planning.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In relation to their starting points nearly all children achieve well and make good progress. Many children demonstrate an effective level of knowledge and understanding across the areas of learning and enjoy the experience of varied activities. Nearly all children are confident learners who are eager to try out new experiences.

They apply most skills well to a wide range of play activities. Most have good communication skills which they develop through interacting with their peers and adults. They listen attentively to instructions and use a range of vocabulary and sentence structure to express themselves. Nearly all, enthusiastically, join in songs and rhymes and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. A majority of children are beginning to understand that letters have sounds and words and pictures convey the story. Many are interested in writing and take opportunities to mark-make when writing to their friends. They are beginning to understand the purpose of the marks they make and most hold a pencil correctly. Children enjoy self registering when they arrive and nearly all can recognise their own name. A majority are able to write the initial letter of their name and around half are able to attempt most of the letters in their first name.

All children show very good levels of independence. They confidently move from one activity to another, choose tools or materials themselves, peel the fruit and cut it up and wash hands after toileting. They share resources well and only ask for help when it is genuinely needed. Most concentrate for long periods, such as when washing the dolls and rolling and cutting out pancakes from play dough. Their thinking skills are underdeveloped.

Most children make good progress with their creative development. They keenly experiment with a range of resources and techniques. They mix paints, cut out shapes and choose from a variety of materials to make musical shakers and daffodil pictures.

Children's progress in Welsh is adequate. A few children count and can name a colour. Their understanding of simple instructions and use of individual words in different contexts throughout the day is at an early stage of development.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are well motivated and enjoy their learning. They enter the setting with confidence, settle quickly into activities and eagerly talk to adults. They are happy to attempt new experiences and show pleasure with their achievement.

Behaviour is good. Most children co-operate well during play activities and demonstrate consideration for others. They concentrate well in focused tasks, most taking turns and sharing resources appropriately. They eagerly assist the adults in tidy-up sessions.

Nearly all children are aware of the need for personal hygiene such as washing hands after toileting and before eating food. They develop good social skills during snack-time and eat a variety of healthy fruit. Most children name the fruits and understand that eating fruit and drinking milk and water helps to keep them healthy. They are aware of the importance of cleaning their teeth after having food and do this with much enthusiasm. They effectively contribute to planning activities, such as dressing up for charity, and making decisions about which activity they like best.

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

The playgroup provides all children with a wide range of varied and stimulating experiences in all areas of learning. Planning is clearly based on Foundation Phase principles and incorporates activities linked to the areas of learning. Practitioners work well together to plan a wide range of activities that stimulate and engage children but do not always challenge the more able. Planned activities do not always have clear learning objectives and therefore do not always focus on the development of skills. The planned activities enable children to make positive progress in communication, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) skills. Opportunities for children to develop thinking skills are not developed enough. There is a good balance of child led and adult led experiences which foster positive relationships, nurture respect and tolerance and promote awareness of other cultures, Regular use of the outdoor area needs to be in planning and the local area used as a learning resource. The many visitors to the playgroup provide opportunities for children to learn about the world of work and the need to care for all living things.

Provision for Welsh language development is adequate. While most practitioners use incidental Welsh in whole group activities, few use Welsh regularly with the children. There is good provision to promote the culture and traditions of Wales. The children are introduced appropriately to the culture and traditions of Wales through stories and celebrations such as St David's Day. They also have good opportunities to develop an understanding of different cultures by learning about the way children celebrate the Chinese New Year. The setting provides few opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, recycling or the impact we have on the world.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning. They know their children well and are sensitive to their needs, spending time to

support and encourage them in their learning. Practitioners promote independence and intervene sensitively and appropriately to extend learning. They effectively manage behaviour, quietly and calmly pointing out right from wrong. Teaching is most effective when practitioners use opportunities to challenge children and provide oral feedback as they learn. Practitioners make good use of resources inside the setting and when the condition of the outside area is safe it is used effectively to enhance learning. Adult support is well focused and makes a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.

All practitioners are involved in assessing children's progress. Day to day general observations and wellbeing are recorded and discussed along with weekly focused assessments which are used to evaluate progress. Comments are now evaluative with next steps in learning. These will need to be used in future planning. Practitioners have worked hard to develop parental links. They make time to be available for parents and carers to discuss their child's progress and parent link forms provide parents and carers with information of activities taking place and how they can help their children at home. The setting also provides an end of year report

Care, support and guidance: Good

The playgroup provides a safe, caring and happy environment for children to enjoy learning. Effective arrangements exist to ensure children's health and wellbeing and these contribute positively to children's general development. Practitioners have good relationships with parents/carers and are aware of and address any issues that might affect children's ability to settle and learn. Induction arrangements ensure children settle quickly into the setting. Policies and procedures are in place to promote healthy living and wellbeing. The playgroup has a local Healthy Eating Award. Arrangements to ensure children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are good. The setting ensures that children receive exercise by providing physical activities indoors when they are unable to access the outdoor area. They promote values such as honesty and fairness and encourage good behaviour.

Although no children at present have been identified with ALN, policies and procedures ensure all will have full access to all activities. The playgroup liaises with outside agencies and the local authority to plan for individual needs. There are good arrangements for children with personal and professional support.

Procedures to ensure the setting is safe and secure are in place. The manager liaises closely with the building committee to address issues of concern. Money has been raised to address the poor condition of the flooring and the manager will address this when she receives the backing of the committee. Practitioners know how to respond if challenges arise in relation to poor behaviour, bullying and safeguarding. The playgroup has an appropriate policy and has procedures for

safeguarding and the manager is the named person responsible for child protection. The leader and deputy have undertaken appropriate First Aid training.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting provides a welcoming environment and has an inclusive ethos. The ramp at the back of the building ensures that children or adults with physical disability can access the playgroup. The adults in the setting know the children well and value them as individuals. They nurture sensitivity and encourage them to respect one another. Practitioners are experienced in working with young children and have appropriate qualifications. They work well together to create a stimulating environment for learning.

The small room is bright, welcoming and well displayed with access to a small outdoor area. Resources are well matched to the children's age and stage of development. Practitioners use this area to provide good learning experiences for all children. Use of the outside area is limited because the sloping grass area is constantly wet and slippery. However more outside resources on the flat area would ensure children receive learning experiences in physical development outdoors as well as inside. The local environment is not used enough as a learning resource.

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

The leader creates a very positive ethos where staff and children feel valued and respected. Practitioners display a sense of purpose and a commitment to raise standards and are keen to receive and act on advice and suggestions to raise standards. They have positively responded to change to ensure improvement. The playgroup has clear policies and aims which are implemented by all practitioners. All practitioners contribute to planning and assessment. The culture of self evaluation involves all practitioners and helps to develop the good work of the setting. Improvement targets will need to be monitored and evaluated to ensure standards continue to improve. Practitioners respond appropriately to national and local priorities and use training effectively to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Relationships with parents are good. Parents speak highly of all the adults and feel they are well informed about their child's progress and general well-being. The managers ensure legal requirements are addressed and development plans are effective.

Improving quality: Good

Managers know their setting well and have developed good procedures to evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement. They have made good use of Foundation Phase training and advice from the LA Adviser to improve their self evaluation process. The setting is in the early stages of monitoring its effectiveness in terms of improving standards. There is a commitment to valuing the views of parents, carers and children.

Liaison with the Local Authority is very effective in improving quality. The adviser visits regularly. She works very closely with all the adults in the setting to help promote 'best practice' and develop effective procedures, such as planning and assessment, to improve learning and teaching. Practitioners value the support they receive and are keen to respond to any advice and guidance. Practitioners have strong links with the local school and work closely with early year's staff to improve their organisation and practice. Foundation Phase training has increased knowledge and raised the confidence of all adults in the setting.

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners create positive relationships with parents and carers that have a significant impact on children's wellbeing. They work hard to encourage parental involvement in their child's learning through newsletters and reports. The parents' notice board keeps them up to date with important information and dates. Partnership working between practitioners in the setting is purposeful and established links with the local primary school help to ensure a smooth transition from playgroup to school. The setting enriches its provision through its use of visitors, such as road safety officers and parents. It does not utilise the local environment as a resource for learning.

A positive relationship with the LA adviser and relevant voluntary organisations enhances the work of the setting. Links with the Integrated Service for children with additional learning needs (ISCON) ensures children's specific needs are met. Currently there is no link with the health visitor. The setting provides good support to students.

Resource management: Good

There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced practitioners to meet the needs of the children. They are deployed effectively to make the best use of their expertise and experience. The good range of resources provides an appropriate range of activities and contributes to progress. Photographic evidence and discussions indicate that appropriate use is made of the outside but resources for this area are limited. Opportunities to have indoor /outdoor learning are not always fully developed. Effective appraisal systems are in place to identify and address the development

needs of adults in the setting. The best possible use has been made of the small room, providing children with a well organised, stimulating environment for learning. The lead practitioner has an appropriate understanding of the budget and prioritises spending according to need. The use of grants and fundraising events supplement resources well. The setting offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received.

Children spoken to during inspection said they enjoyed coming to playgroup. They have developed a very strong bond with the adults and approach them if they need help or are anxious in any way. Nearly all had established friendships. They named a number of activities they enjoyed and most said their favourite activity was playing in the sand.

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Linda Vittle	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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.