



*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**

**OakTree Playgroup  
Bistre Community Centre  
Nant Mawr Road  
Buckley  
Flintshire  
CH7 2PX**

**Date of inspection: February 2014**

**by**

**Michael T. Ridout  
Reporting Inspector**

**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:

| <b>Judgement</b>      | <b>What the judgement means</b>   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Excellent</b>      | Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice |
| <b>Good</b>           | Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement   |
| <b>Adequate</b>       | Strengths outweigh areas for improvement                                  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory</b> | Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths                        |

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**Publication date: 11/03/2014**

## Context

Oak Tree Playgroup is an English-medium setting. It meets at Bistre Community Centre in Buckley, Flintshire. Most children attending have neither prosperous nor disadvantaged backgrounds and live in Buckley or the surrounding area.

The setting provides sessional day care and education for children aged between two and four years old. It provides four morning sessions each week during school terms and is registered for 32 children. At the time of the inspection there were 27 children on roll, including 15 three-year-olds that are funded up to 10 hours per week by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. All children attending are English speaking and British born. None is from ethnic minorities. No families speak Welsh at home. At present none of the children need extra support for learning.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales last inspected the setting in November 2013 and Estyn in November 2007. The setting supervisor was appointed in 2010.

## Summary

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>The Setting's current performance</b>       | <b>Good</b> |
| <b>The Setting's prospects for improvement</b> | <b>Good</b> |

### Current performance

The setting's performance is good because:

- many children make good progress and achieve good overall standards;
- a wide range of interesting learning experiences is provided;
- high quality care, support and guidance assures children's wellbeing;
- teaching is enthusiastic and promotes very good relationships;
- the learning environment is stimulating and has an inclusive family ethos;

and

- partnerships with parents, community and supporting agencies are effective.

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the setting leader provides clear direction;
- a culture of self-improvement promotes high expectations;
- a shared sense of purpose and a teamwork ethos are evident;
- planning for improvement is secure;
- the management committee is well informed;

and

- there is a good track record of improvement since the last inspection.

## Recommendations

**R1.** improve children's competence in information and communication technology (ICT) and Welsh;

**R2.** refine planning to better guide teaching and help ensure appropriate challenge, especially for able children;

**R3.** build on the key priorities identified in self-evaluation and secure their impact on learning and teaching.

### What happens next?

*The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.*

## Main findings

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|---|-------------|

### **Standards: Good**

Many children make good progress from their starting points and achieve good overall standards. They steadily acquire new knowledge and skills as they enthusiastically explore their surroundings and try out new experiences.

Most children have good speaking and listening skills. Many spontaneously begin simple conversations, for example during role-play. They make their needs known, ask sensible questions and express themselves clearly. A few use a wide vocabulary and confidently engage in extended conversation about their family and what they are doing. With few exceptions children enjoy listening to stories and enthusiastically recite familiar songs and rhymes. A few able children handle books appropriately as readers and show increasing awareness that the text and pictures 'tell' the story. Mark making skills steadily develop and a few experiment with 'writing' in play. Progress in early mathematical skills is good. Numeracy skills develop well as children count as part of daily routines, sing rhymes and play number games. Many have a good grasp of counting objects to at least 5 and show increasing awareness of one-to-one correspondence. They are beginning to use appropriate mathematical terms. However, able children seldom use a sufficient range of mathematical terms when sorting and comparing objects and exploring shape and capacity. Children's competence in using a narrow range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is developing.

Competence in Welsh is at an early stage of development. Many children respond appropriately to the words and phrases used within everyday routines. They readily recite familiar rhymes and songs, but the spontaneous use of Welsh is not established.

Children receiving extra help with learning achieve well in relation to their targets, but able children do not always achieve in line with their abilities.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Most children are keen to learn and have positive attitudes. They engage in activities with enthusiasm and confidently make choices as they move between tasks. Levels of engagement are high and with few exceptions children remain busy and on task for appropriate periods of time. They are well motivated and sustain interest and concentration well.

Children have good relationships with each other and with adults. They increasingly show consideration and courtesy, such as when sharing resources or taking turns to mix ingredients. Standards of behaviour are good. Most work well with others, but on occasions a few become unsettled and lose interest when activities last too long.

Many children confidently state their likes and dislikes and practitioners encourage them to help choose which activities to keep or change in the setting. Most develop high self-esteem, increase in self-confidence and readily undertake simple day-to-day jobs well, for example as Helpwr Heddiw.

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|---|-------------|

**Learning experiences: Good**

The range and quality of learning experiences is good. This provision meets most children's needs well and successfully promotes the Foundation Phase outcomes. Imaginative activities are systematically planned in all areas of learning. Planning is suitably detailed and the adult lead and enhanced tasks are well defined with appropriate details of the learning objectives noted.

Planning provides a good framework for long and medium term provision. A skills based approach is used with themes introduced to add context for the activities as children mature. Weekly planning is detailed and guides provision well. Practitioners are flexible in implementing this planning. There is a good range of indoor and outdoor activities and these build well on children's prior knowledge and skills.

Good emphasis is placed on developing literacy, numeracy and communication skills. For example, the book corner and a variety of role-play activities are used effectively to promote speaking and listening skills. Similarly, children's counting skills are developed well, for example when building towers. However, the focus on ICT skills is less well established. Good opportunities to role-play with everyday applications, such as the mobile phone are planned, but opportunities to use ICT independently are insufficiently developed. Detailed records show the skills framework is used systematically to check that relevant skills are promoted in the activities planned and that all areas of learning are covered. This helps ensure appropriate progression in learning and weekly plans increasingly indicate how and what the children might learn.

Practitioners know the children very well. Learning experiences foster positive relationships, nurture respect and increasingly promote awareness of other cultures, such as through celebrating festivals. Good use is made of the local environment and the community to enhance learning. This appropriately promotes awareness of the wider world. However, opportunities to raise awareness of sustainability are insufficiently developed and the integration of outdoor learning is not yet embedded.

The provision for Welsh language development and to promote awareness of Welsh history and culture is appropriate. Some Welsh is spoken within daily routines and activities are planned, such as to celebrate St David's Day.

## **Teaching: Good**

Teaching skilfully manages and supports children's learning. Practitioners have high expectations of children's behaviour and achievement. They provide good role models in language; interact well with children and respond effectively to their needs.

Practitioners have good knowledge and understanding of child development and the Foundation Phase. Daily routines are well structured and promote a positive learning environment. Practitioners know well the tasks they are to lead or support and successfully promote high levels of engagement in a wide range of activities. However, their understanding of how to develop the learning objectives inline with children's ability is variable. Children are given plenty of time to complete tasks and practitioners intervene appropriately. They are enthusiastic and often use questioning and praise well to promote learning. In particular, practitioners develop communication and social skills very well. Learning through play is effectively encouraged. However, on occasions adult led tasks are over directed and limit opportunities for choice and independence.

Systematic procedures for assessment are established. Practitioners routinely note children's achievements. Their observations are linked to planning and often identify the skills developed. This information is used well to encourage the next steps in learning, although levels of challenge for able children vary. Individual assessment booklets are regularly updated and provide an informative profile of progress.

Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress and opportunities, such as coffee mornings, help ensure effective discussion with practitioners about their child's progress.

## **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. This impacts very well on children's personal and social development. The setting successfully promotes positive values such as fairness, honesty and respect for others. Very good provision is made for children's moral and social development and that for their spiritual and cultural development is appropriate.

Arrangements to assure children's health and wellbeing are implemented consistently. Healthy eating is appropriately promoted through the choice of foods offered at snack time and children enjoy regular opportunities for energetic play. Practitioners strongly promote good behaviour. Children are sensitively encouraged to distinguish between right and wrong. Visits and events help engage them with the community and promote curiosity about the wider world. Opportunities, such as growing plants and observing pets encourage reflection on the wonders of the natural



world. Cultural awareness is appropriately promoted through celebrating festivals and sampling foods from other countries.

The setting has good procedures to provide children with specialist support when required and liaises well with agencies in the community. This includes well implemented arrangements to support and integrate children who need extra help with their learning.

Established procedures ensure the setting is safe and secure. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented and members of staff have a valid criminal records disclosure. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is a happy, lively learning environment with a welcoming and inclusive ethos. Appropriate account is taken of children's backgrounds. Practitioners treat all children equally and with respect. They are strongly supportive and foster good relationships. This helps ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety.

Practitioners strongly encourage sensitivity and understanding towards others and skillfully manage occasional incidents of challenging behaviour. Equal opportunities are well promoted, but arrangements to ensure any child with disabilities does not suffer disadvantage are not sufficiently formalised.

There are sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners for the number of children. There are sufficient learning resources to deliver the Foundation Phase, although provision for ICT and outdoor learning is limited. Imaginative use is made of available resources and the local environment to enrich learning. The indoor accommodation is spacious and includes a large hall. The phased development of an outdoor area for learning is underway and this provision is now in partial use.

|  |             |
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| <b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|--|-------------|

### **Leadership: Good**

The setting is well led and managed. Leadership communicates high expectations, provides clear direction and communicates effectively with parents. Practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A purposeful teamwork ethos, a strong sense of purpose and shared values are embedded in the life and work of the setting. An appropriate range of policies and procedures are in place. Leadership successfully provides strategic direction and sustains improvements in educational provision. Day-to-day routines are well structured and organisation of the playgroup is effective.

The management committee is well informed and is strongly supportive of the setting's goals. It is increasingly involved in monitoring developments, ensuring accountability and reviewing strategic priorities.

Practitioners contribute to an annual appraisal. This process identifies individual needs and sets appropriate targets. Strong emphasis is placed on practitioners' professional development.

The setting takes forward national and local priorities well. The provision embraces well the Foundation Phase philosophy and approach. There is strong emphasis on equality and improving outcomes for children.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The setting has systematic procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. A culture of reflection is evident. All practitioners are involved in the process and good account is taken of the views of parents, carers and stakeholders. Strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified and detailed plans of action implemented. The setting leader monitors the implementation of initiatives and knows well their impact. However, evaluations are not always sufficiently formalised.

There is a good track record of improvement in meeting the recommendations from the last inspection. The phased development of the provision for outdoor learning is proceeding well, links with the community are good and self-evaluation is consistently implemented. This results in positive gains for children.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Partnership working has a positive impact on children's learning. The setting's partnership with parents and carers is successful. Informal and friendly day-to-day contacts encourage the informal exchange of information. Informative newsletters are provided and regular coffee mornings are used well to exchange information about children's progress. There is a rota of parent volunteers and all parents are strongly encouraged to participate in playgroup events. The setting is proactive in seeking the views of parents through an annual questionnaire.

When children join the setting, parents are invited to open mornings and they are provided with an informative induction pack. Liaison with receiving primary schools is appropriate when children transfer to the next stage of their education.

Links with the community are used well to enhance children's learning experiences. For example, a pet store provides resources for a topic.

The partnership with the local authority and other agencies, including the Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association, is beneficial. The impact of support and quality assurance provided by the local authority is appropriate.

**Resource management: Good**

Practitioners are well deployed, playgroup sessions are well structured and learning resources are efficiently organised. The management of resources is successful in motivating children to learn. Good use is made of a work experience placement and regular volunteers to enhance the provision. Practitioners take advantage of opportunities for professional development, including a diploma course tutored at the setting and training in Forest Schools' approaches. However, some opportunities are missed to encourage practitioners in gaining greater confidence in speaking Welsh.

Planning for future resource needs is evident in plans of action that include appropriate details of cost. The impact of resources on learning and teaching is reviewed informally. The management committee and setting leader ensure the setting's resources and finance are deployed to positive effect. This aspect is carefully planned and procedures to monitor income and expenditure are secure. However, these procedures are insufficiently formalised. An annual summary of accounts is published for parents.

Taking account of the positive impact of resources on learning, teaching and outcomes for children, the setting provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

*denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.*

|  | Number of responses<br>Nifer o ymatebion | Strongly Agree<br>Cytuno'n gryf | Agree<br>Cytuno | Disagree<br>Anghytuno | Strongly disagree<br>Anghytuno'n gryf | Don't know<br>Ddim yn gwybod |  |
|--|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Overall I am satisfied with the setting.   | 12                                       | 10<br>83%                       | 2<br>17%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.  |
|  |  | 80%                             | 19%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| My child likes this setting.   | 12                                       | 11<br>92%                       | 1<br>8%         | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Mae fy mhentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.  |
|  |  | 85%                             | 15%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.                     | 12                                       | 11<br>92%                       | 1<br>8%         | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Cafodd fy mhentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.                          |
|  |  | 86%                             | 13%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| My child is making good progress at the setting.   | 12                                       | 10<br>83%                       | 2<br>17%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Mae fy mhentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.   |
|  |  | 80%                             | 18%             | 1%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| Children behave well in the setting.   | 12                                       | 8<br>67%                        | 2<br>17%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 2                            | Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.   |
|  |  | 70%                             | 26%             | 1%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| Teaching is good.  | 12                                       | 10<br>83%                       | 2<br>17%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Mae'r addysgu yn dda.  |
|  |  | 79%                             | 17%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.  | 12                                       | 11<br>92%                       | 1<br>8%         | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.  |
|  |  | 82%                             | 16%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.                               | 12                                       | 8<br>67%                        | 2<br>17%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 2                            | Caiff fy mhentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.                       |
|  |  | 73%                             | 22%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| My child is safe at the setting.   | 12                                       | 10<br>83%                       | 2<br>17%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 0                            | Mae fy mhentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.   |
|  |  | 85%                             | 14%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs. | 9  | 6<br>67%                        | 2<br>22%        | 0<br>0%               | 0<br>0%                               | 1                            | Mae fy mhentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol. |
|  |  | 65%                             | 24%             | 1%                    | 0%                                    |                              |  |
| I am kept well informed  | 12                                       | 8                               | 3               | 0                     | 0                                     | 1                            | Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth  |

|  | Number of responses<br>Nifer o ymatebion | Strongly Agree<br>Cytuno'n gryf | Agree<br>Cytuno | Disagree<br>Anghytuno | Strongly disagree<br>Anghytuno'n gryf | Don't know<br>Ddim yn gwybod |   |
|--|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| about my child's progress.   |  | 67%                             | 25%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              | gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.   |
|  |  | 63%                             | 30%             | 5%                    | 1%                                    |                              |   |
| I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem. | 12                                       | 9                               | 3               | 0                     | 0                                     | 0                            | Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem. |
|  |  | 75%                             | 25%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
|  |  | 80%                             | 18%             | 1%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
| I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.                          | 12                                       | 7                               | 3               | 0                     | 0                                     | 2                            | Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.   |
|  |  | 58%                             | 25%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
|  |  | 62%                             | 29%             | 3%                    | 1%                                    |                              |   |
| My child is well prepared for moving on to school.   | 12                                       | 10                              | 2               | 0                     | 0                                     | 0                            | Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.                             |
|  |  | 83%                             | 17%             | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
|  |  | 71%                             | 23%             | 1%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
| There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.                             | 12                                       | 11                              | 1               | 0                     | 0                                     | 0                            | Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.                          |
|  |  | 92%                             | 8%              | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
|  |  | 62%                             | 30%             | 4%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
| The setting is well run.   | 12                                       | 11                              | 1               | 0                     | 0                                     | 0                            | Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.   |
|  |  | 92%                             | 8%              | 0%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |
|  |  | 82%                             | 16%             | 1%                    | 0%                                    |                              |   |

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Mr Michael T. Ridout | Reporting Inspector |
|----------------------|---------------------|

### Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

## Glossary of terms

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Areas of Learning</b>  | <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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul> |
| <b>CSSIW</b>  | <p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>   |
| <b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>    | <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>  |
| <b>Foundation Phase</b>   | <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>   |
| <b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b> | <p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>  |
| <b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>                             | <p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>  |
| <b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>  | <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>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)</b> | This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support. |
| <b>National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)</b>                      | This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.                        |
| <b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>                  | An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.  |