



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

**Parkfields Playgroup
Parkfields Community Centre
Ash Grove
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 6RY**

Date of inspection: March 2012

by

Mary Dyas

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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About the setting

Parkfields Playgroup is an English-medium setting which meets in a community centre on the Bryn Gwalia estate in Mold. This is a Communities First area. The playgroup has the use of a large airy room which is shared with other community groups so all equipment needs to be packed away several times a week. The playgroup is open for three mornings and one afternoon a week and has been part of the local community for more than 25 years.

Most children attending the setting come from the local estate and move on to the nearby primary school for nursery education. They are considered to come from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds and children whose parents are in receipt of benefits are able to apply for funding for two sessions a week from the Wales Pre-school Providers Association before they become eligible for Early entitlement funding from the Local Authority. At the time of the inspection there were 13 three-year-olds on roll of whom five were in receipt of funded educational provision.

The setting welcomes all children and makes appropriate provision for those with additional learning needs. No children have currently been identified with additional learning needs. All come from homes where the first language is English and no parents speak Welsh.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in November 2010 and this is the first time it has been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

Due to recent changes to staffing within the playgroup, the setting has gone through a difficult time but is now looking forward to a more stable structure. The overall judgement on the current performance of the provider, therefore, is that strengths outweigh areas for improvement.

Strengths

- Children are happy and relaxed in the setting;
- Relationships between staff and children are warm and caring;
- Children become involved in the activities provided for them and make appropriate progress; and
- Recent changes in staffing have brought about improvements to the provision

Areas for improvement

- Practitioners do not have up-to-date knowledge of the requirements of the Foundation Phase; and
- Recently established procedures for planning, and for observation and assessment of children's progress are not yet sufficiently embedded to impact on standards in teaching and learning.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- Practitioners show a good understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvements;
- The recently completed Self Evaluation for Improvement document indicates clearly targets for improvement;
- The action plans detail the steps to be taken and there is good evidence that progress has already been made; and
- Practitioners form a good team that works well together and are all committed to putting into place the targets identified in the action plans.

Recommendations

The recommendations for improvement are to:

- R1 Improve standards in, and provision for, Welsh language development;
- R2 Ensure all practitioners have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase
- R3 Continue to develop planning to ensure continuity and progress in children's learning
- R4 Continue to refine the systems for observation of children's progress to inform pupils' profiles and reporting to parents; and
- R5 Improve the quality of information parents receive about the activities which are offered to their children.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Most children make appropriate progress in relation to their starting points across the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning. Children acquire new knowledge and understanding and enjoy the challenge of new and varied activities but the majority are not sufficiently challenged to fully achieve their potential.

Many are beginning to use more complex sentence structures to express themselves. Most children join in with songs and rhymes with enthusiasm and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults and with their friends. A minority show an interest in writing and are beginning to recognise their own written name.

Many children count objects accurately to three and a few are able to do so to five. All join in with counting together to ten. Many children are beginning to use mathematical language in their play and can talk about objects being big or little and heavy or light. Their understanding of information and communications technology is developing through their use of range of electronic toys with buttons when they play in the home corner.

Children's progress in using the Welsh language is limited. While they respond appropriately to the use of Welsh during circle time, they are not yet able to use Welsh spontaneously in their play.

Wellbeing: Adequate

All children enter the setting happily, are welcomed by their friends and settle immediately into activities. Relationships between children are strong, they know each other well and most treat one another with affection and respect. Behaviour is generally good. Most children work well with others and understand the need to share and to take turns.

All children enjoy their healthy snacks and brush their teeth afterwards. However, they are not able to say why it is important to eat healthy food or why they should brush their teeth.

There are currently few opportunities for children to make decisions about their learning but practitioners have identified this and are beginning to plan for this.

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

Planning is still in the early stages of development. Learning experiences are focused on meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes and the activities are beginning to build on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Learning experiences are generally effective in developing children's basic skills, including their creative and physical skills. Planned focused activities are evaluated and are beginning to reflect the learning intentions. The setting's outdoor area is used regularly but planning does not yet provide for activities outdoors which support children's learning.

St David's Day is used to enhance the children's knowledge and understanding of Welsh customs and traditions. Adults in the setting occasionally use incidental Welsh when speaking to the children but many opportunities to reinforce this are missed. Children have opportunities to learn about other peoples and cultures through their celebrations of different festivals. Opportunities for children to learn about sustainability and recycling are limited.

Teaching: Unsatisfactory

Practitioners do not have an up-to-date understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Although they support the children in their learning there is little use of good questioning skills to develop children's thinking. There is an appropriate range of planned activities and all practitioners know the children well and adapt their interactions with individual children to suit their level of development. They do not, however, challenge or have high expectations of children.

Observations of children's learning and progress have been made for some years to inform the Local Authority's 'This Is Me' pupil profiles but they have not been linked to learning intentions and have not covered the whole range of areas of learning. Practitioners have recently come to an understanding of tracking children's progress and are considering the best way of moving forward. However this is not yet established and will need to be fully embedded before it has a positive effect.

There is time before and after the session for parents to come and talk to practitioners, to discuss any issues or concerns but there are no formal arrangements for them to discuss their children's progress. Parents and carers receive a copy of their child's completed 'This Is Me' documentation when their child moves on to the next stage of their education.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners are very concerned about the welfare of the children and provide a warm and caring environment which enables children to thrive and to make good all round progress.

Good procedures are in place to ensure children's health and wellbeing and these contribute well to the children's overall development. Induction into the group is effective in ensuring that children settle happily and is dependent on the individual needs of each child.

The setting does not have any children with additional learning needs at the moment but the staff are well aware of the procedures they would need to follow and have worked effectively with outside agencies in the past.

A good range of policies to ensure the children are safe is in place and appropriate risk assessments have been carried out. The setting has procedures and an appropriate police for safeguarding and staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Good attention is given to healthy eating and children enjoy a healthy snack every day. Learning experiences promote children's personal development effectively, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Learning environment: Good

A particularly strong feature of the setting is the very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. Behaviour is generally good and few examples of inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection. Most children share well and take an interest in each other.

All children have equal access to all areas of provision. The physical environment is appropriate for physical disabilities and would enable full participation in all activities. The setting makes appropriate use of the local environment to and a range of visitors support the children in learning about the world around them.

The setting employs sufficient appropriately qualified practitioners to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners work together as a strong team to create a stimulating learning environment and make effective use of the good range of available resources.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Adequate

The setting is used to be overseen by a management committee but latterly this has lapsed due to lack of interest on behalf of the parents and carers of the children attending the playgroup. The team is very close and all practitioners work well together. They are aware of the changes that need to take place and are keen to give the children the best experiences they can and to ensure that they themselves are doing their best. A system of annual appraisals has lapsed over recent years but plans are in place to reinstate this.

Practitioners respond to relevant national and local priorities and are currently taking part in a dental health initiative with the children.

Improving quality: Adequate

The current self-evaluation document was only completed recently following a number of changes in staff. It forms an honest and useful document which recognises the areas which need to be urgently addressed and targets have been set to increase familiarity with the Foundation Phase, develop Welsh language skills, review procedures for observation and assessment and review procedures for planning. There is evidence that steps have already been taken to address these and plans are in place for practitioners to attend relevant training to bring their knowledge and skills up-to-date.

Partnership working: Adequate

Relationships with parents and carers are positive and in questionnaires they express their satisfaction and appreciation of the care provided by the setting. Parents and carers are asked to help in the playgroup on a rota basis, when they would be able to observe their children's progress at first hand, but there are currently none wishing to take up this opportunity. Information about current planned activities is displayed for parents in the room.

The setting has good links with the other agencies in the building, in particular the Communities First Officer who provides opportunities such as a visit from 'Springy' the mascot who supports an annual spring clean of Mold. The local authority Early Entitlement link teacher provides good support and advice which is greatly appreciated by the developing team of practitioners.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup has a good range of resources which are used appropriately to support the planned activities. Practitioners work well together to ensure that the areas of learning both indoors and outdoors are effectively overseen to support children's learning.

The setting supervisor, who is also one of the two responsible persons, oversees the budget effectively and the setting provides 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.

Responses to discussions with children

Due to the small number of children present in the setting there is also no report on discussions with children.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Mary Dyas	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.