



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Johnstown Playgroup
Johnstown Community Centre
Heol Kenyon
Johnstown
Wrexham
LL14 2BD**

Date of inspection: February 2016

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:

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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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Context

Johnstown Playgroup is a non-maintained English medium setting situated in Johnstown, near Wrexham. A voluntary committee runs the playgroup that is based in Johnstown Community Centre. It is registered to provide day care and education for a maximum of 30 children. Four morning sessions are provided each week during school terms.

At the time of the inspection 10 three year olds were registered. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership fund eight children, up to 10 hours per week. The children are English speaking and British born and none are from ethnic minorities. No families speak Welsh at home and none have additional learning needs.

The registered persons were appointed in September 2001. A manager was appointed as playgroup supervisor in September 2014. However, following staff changes the registered persons resumed the role of playgroup supervisors in September 2015. In total there are four appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners, including the playgroup supervisors. The playgroup participates in the Designed to Smile Dental health scheme and has received a gold award.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales last inspected the setting in June 2015 and Estyn in March 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

Performance is adequate

- a majority of children achieve well in a narrow range of skills
- children's personal development and wellbeing are strongly promoted
- teaching well promotes incidental learning
- practitioners and children have very good relationships
- the partnership with parents is good and
- the playgroup has a warm, friendly and inclusive ethos

However,

- around half of children have underdeveloped skills in literacy and numeracy
- nearly all children's skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are undeveloped and
- the planning of learning experiences is not sufficiently detailed to assure the progressive development of children's skills

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate

- the playgroup is well led, managed and organised on a day-to-day basis
- practitioners work well together to support children
- recent improvements in planning and organisation have a positive impact
- self-evaluation identifies what the setting does well and key areas to improve

However,

- strategic leadership, including the role of the committee, is insufficiently formalised
- planning to secure further improvement lacks rigour and
- there is little evidence of sustained improvement since the last inspection

Recommendations

R1 raise overall standards, placing strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy and ICT

R2 develop planning to ensure progression in learning and guide teaching

R3 establish effective strategic leadership

R4 formalise procedures for resource management

R5 develop planning to help achieve the goals identified in self-evaluation

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

Children come to the playgroup with a wide range of achievement and needs. Personal and social skills develop well and steady progress, in a narrow range of skills, is evident in other areas of learning.

Around half makes good progress in aspects of literacy, but progress for the remainder is variable. Many have good listening skills and a few speak confidently. They spontaneously initiate simple conversations, for example when working alongside an adult. They make their needs known and express themselves clearly. However, many have a limited vocabulary. With few exceptions children enjoy listening to stories, such as Jasper and the Beanstalk. They listen and eagerly anticipate what happens next in the story. Many enthusiastically recite familiar songs and action rhymes. A very few handle books as readers. A few recognise their name when prompted by a photograph, but few experiment with mark making.

Progress in early mathematical skills is widely variable. Numeracy skills steadily develop as children count as part of daily routines, sing rhymes and play number games. Around half count to at least five by rote. A few sort and count objects with an adult, but their skills in matching and ordering numbers are limited. Most children develop an appropriate awareness of time in the context of the playgroup's routines. However, many children lack appropriate mathematical vocabulary to name shapes and make comparisons, such as when filling and emptying containers. With few exceptions children's skills in ICT are not developed.

Children respond appropriately to everyday Welsh, such as during group activities, but they seldom speak Welsh spontaneously during play.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Most children have positive attitudes and clearly enjoy the play activities provided. They move between tasks with increasing confidence. With few exceptions children remain busy, sustaining interest and concentration for appropriate periods of time. Most are well motivated, happy and at ease in the playgroup.

Children have very good relationships with practitioners and with each other. Many increasingly show consideration and courtesy, such as when sharing resources and during snack time. Standards of behaviour are generally good. Most relate well to other children and play in a calm and settled manner. They respond extremely well to daily routines and participate enthusiastically in both whole group sessions and small group activities supported by an adult. However, their self-help and decision-making skills are generally undeveloped.

Practitioners encourage children to make choices as they play. Many develop greater self-confidence and most readily help tidy resources at the end of sessions.

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

The provision is broadly in line with children's needs and provides opportunities to effectively promote Foundation Phase outcomes. However, provision for outdoor learning is less well developed.

Practitioners regularly discuss activities. Medium and short term planning is well structured and suitable activities, including tasks led by adults, are planned each week. However, too few details are recorded to show what children can be expected to learn. Furthermore, planning for enhanced tasks provides little guidance on the use of resources.

Appropriate emphasis is placed on promoting literacy and numeracy skills. This is evident in activities that promote well a narrow range of skills in these areas. However, there is little evidence of planning for ICT.

Familiarity with the Foundation Phase is developing, but the setting is not yet confident in ensuring appropriate progression in learning. However, the topics chosen provide a good basis to ensure progression.

The provision for the Welsh language and to promote awareness of Welsh history and culture is steadily developing.

Teaching: Adequate

Practitioners increasingly promote learning through play. They have appropriate expectations of children and skilfully promote their personal and social development.

Practitioners have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Phase. They use a range of teaching approaches well to gain children's interest, for example when promoting role-play. Good efforts are made to ensure adult led activities engage children's interest. However, practitioners miss opportunities to develop teaching in line with children's needs. Levels of challenge and the pace of learning vary. In general, practitioners ensure an appropriate balance between child selected and adult led activities. Children are given plenty of time to complete an activity and practitioners intervene appropriately.

The setting has appropriate procedures for assessment, but the use of assessment information to help plan the next steps in children's learning is underdeveloped. Day-to-day observations of children's achievements and focused assessments are used appropriately to compile individual learning records. Parents value informal communication with practitioners about their child's progress before and after sessions.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Effective care and support impacts well on children's personal and social development. Arrangements to assure their health and wellbeing are implemented consistently. Appropriate emphasis is placed on healthy development, including healthy eating and regular exercise.

Procedures for wellbeing are securely based on positive relationships, structured routines and clear boundaries for behaviour. Strong emphasis is placed on moral and social development. This fosters positive values including, honesty and fairness and successfully promotes good behaviour. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is appropriate.

There is little evidence of provision to promote awareness of sustainability.

The playgroup liaises appropriately with community services to provide specialist support when required. However, the setting's special needs policy does not set out appropriate arrangements to support and integrate children who need extra help. 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. These arrangements give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The playgroup is a happy learning environment. It has an inclusive ethos and children have equal access to all activities. Practitioners are supportive and this helps ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety.

Practitioners skilfully manage any challenging behaviour. They know well children's needs and have a good understanding of their backgrounds and needs. Provision to raise awareness of diversity is limited. Policies do not include details of any steps to ensure that future children with disabilities do not suffer less favourable treatment.

There are sufficient appropriately qualified practitioners for the number of children. The provision of resources for the Foundation Phase is basic. The range for literacy and numeracy is narrow and the provision for ICT is limited.

The accommodation is adequate and provides a safe and secure environment for learning. The outdoor provision is not sufficiently developed. Good use is made of resources within the community to enhance learning experiences.

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

The setting is well led and managed on a day-to-day basis. The supervisors strive to provide well for children. A positive teamwork ethos is evident and practitioners have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Playgroup routines are well structured and the organisation of activities is improving.

A basic framework of policies and procedures, including a statement of purpose, are in place. A sense of purpose and shared values are evident in pastoral aspects, but strategic direction to improve educational provision lacks clarity. The committee's role in assuring accountability is not developed.

There are appropriate arrangements for appraisal, however individual staff targets are not implemented. Records show the training courses attended, but there is no record of planning for future training.

The provision is developing the Foundation Phase; there is appropriate emphasis on equality and combating disadvantage. However, too little attention is paid to promoting awareness of diversity and sustainability.

Improving quality: Adequate

Self-evaluation is successful in identifying what the playgroup does well and areas it needs to improve. Practitioners are appropriately involved in the process and the issues identified provide a good basis to improve provision. This is evident in a well-focused action plan.

The quality of self-evaluation is sound, but the process is not embedded. The playgroup has not developed forward planning to show how targets will be achieved. Furthermore, arrangements for monitoring are not established.

Improvement since the last inspection is limited. However, over the last term there is evidence of improvements in planning, the organisation of learning activities, promoting Welsh language development and in implementing assessments.

Informal account is taken of the views of parents and more formally through a questionnaire before a child transfers to school.

Partnership working: Good

Partnership working has a positive impact on children's development. The playgroup's relationship with parents is very positive. Informal and friendly day-to-day contacts encourage the exchange of information about the child. The playgroup provides an informative induction pack and works successfully to involve parents in supporting their children.

The playgroup has appropriate links with children's services in the community. When the need arises parents and children benefit from these networks of support. The playgroup liaises appropriately with the local school to which children transfer.

Practitioners work closely and effectively with an advisory teacher from the local authority. This impacts well on the range of experiences provided. Opportunities to share good practice and receive training with practitioners from other settings are taken by some practitioners.

The playgroup benefits from advice available from agencies such as the Wales Pre-school Providers Association.

Resource management: Adequate

Practitioners are well deployed. The organisation of areas of play and the accessibility of learning resources is improving. However, there is no evidence of formalised planning for future resource needs. On the one hand needs are clearly identified in self-evaluation, but there is no forward planning of expenditure. The impact is exemplified in the absence of well-resourced provision for outdoor learning.

Practitioners attend appropriate training opportunities, including updating their qualifications. The playgroup shares good practice with other settings through training events and is building well on the guidance provided by a link teacher.

There is little evidence of formalised financial procedures or oversight by the management committee. However, a voluntary treasurer conscientiously records and monitors income and expenditure.

Taken overall, playgroup supervisors organise the resources available to them well. This impacts positively on children's wellbeing. However, financial procedures fall short in demonstrating value for money in relation to the funding received.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Michael T Ridout	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.wales)

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>

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (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.