



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

**A report on**

**Llay Playgroup (Treasure Chest)  
Park CP School  
School Road  
Llay  
Wrexham  
LL12 0TR**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

**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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## Context

Little Treasures Playgroup is an English medium setting for three to four-year-old children in Llay in Wrexham local authority. It has recently re-registered as part of a new service, which includes flying start, wrap around day care and holiday club provision. Nearly all the children come from the local area. The setting is registered to take up to 24 children per session. At the time of the inspection there were 11 children in receipt of funded education. The setting meets for one session each day from 8.50am to 11.20am.

The playgroup is based in a classroom in Park County Primary School and has access to an outdoor area and the forest school. The setting has identified no children as having additional learning needs. All children speak English as their first language and very few children speak Welsh at home.

The present lead practitioner was appointed in 2007 and is supported by a deputy supervisor and one assistant.

The setting was last inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales in September 2017. It was last inspected by Estyn in April 2012.

## 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 current performance is good because:

- Nearly all children enjoy their time in the setting and behave well
- Most children's communication and numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points
- Most children co-operate well with each other and share toys and equipment readily
- Practitioners work together purposefully, and their caring approach creates an effective learning environment
- Arrangements for care, support and guidance are effective
- The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of its provision

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader is strongly committed to making improvements
- There are effective systems for identifying the setting's strengths and areas for improvement
- Practitioners work well together and understand their roles and responsibilities
- Practitioners use information from training well to improve the provision
- The partnership with the local school is strong and this helps improve standards of teaching and learning
- The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning well

## Recommendations

- R1 Identify next steps in learning consistently, in order to ensure that all children, including more able children, are challenged effectively
- R2 Improve strategic leadership by strengthening the clarity of senior roles and responsibilities and developing a shared vision between the lead practitioner and the management committee
- R3 Improve communication and strengthen partnerships with parents

### **What happens next?**

The setting will draw up an action plan that 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

Many children enter the setting with skills and knowledge below the levels expected for their age. During their time at the setting most children make good progress, particularly in the development of their personal and social skills. Most children listen attentively. They pay good attention when others are talking and allow other children to speak without interrupting them. They share resources, interact appropriately with each other and have good manners.

During story time, many children pay close attention and a few join in enthusiastically with aspects of the story. The majority speak clearly, and a few are happy to share information about what they are doing with adults. For example, they talk about what they are making in the mud kitchen. Most children enjoy mark making with a range of equipment on different surfaces. For example, they use tablets, felt tipped pens and shaving foam. With support, a few children pretend to write a shopping list in the role-play area.

Most children's numeracy skills are developing well from their starting points. A minority count spontaneously as part of their play. For example, they count how many currants are on a toy biscuit or how many socks they have collected. Many children say numbers in order up to three and a few count objects accurately to five. A few children match patterns accurately and around half of the children make good use of mathematical vocabulary, for example describing a bucket of sand as 'heavy' and a playdough snake as the 'longest'.

Overall, children's physical skills are developing well. Most children cope with fine motor tasks appropriately. For example, they cut toy fruit in the role play area and use pincers to collect toy mini beasts. Most children use a range of tools such as rakes, spades and brushes independently. A majority of children demonstrate good gross motor skills such as negotiating space on wheeled vehicles or balancing on outdoor equipment. A few children are making very good progress with their throwing and catching skills.

Nearly all children make decisions about the activities they undertake and the resources they will use. Many explore their environment confidently and a majority are developing their problem-solving skills appropriately. For example, children persist and try different approaches when trying to fit cars on the top tier of the toy garage. Most children access and use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment such as the interactive whiteboard and battery-operated toys independently.

Most children are developing their Welsh skills well in relation to their starting points. They respond positively to simple commands spoken in Welsh for daily routines. They say thank you and good morning in Welsh with encouragement and respond well to a range of Welsh songs and rhymes. A few children are beginning to use Welsh spontaneously, for example counting three adults during carpet time.

## **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all children settle well as soon as they arrive at the setting. They co-operate well with one another and share toys and equipment willingly. Most take good notice of instructions given by an adult and respond to requests. For example, they wash their hands and sit at the table ready for snack time. A majority help to tidy up with encouragement from practitioners.

Almost all children look after the setting's resources well and treat adults and each other respectfully. Children listen carefully when adults explain why they need to look after each other and how to look after the toys. A few are beginning to show concern for others when they are hurt or upset. Nearly all children are developing their independence such as pouring their own drink and cleaning their teeth.

Most children sustain interest in activities and move confidently to another activity when ready. Nearly all children make independent choices about what they want to play with from activities offered. A few children show resilience. For example, they remake a puzzle when it is accidentally broken by another child. Nearly all children showed interest in the activities offered outside and particularly enjoyed the opportunity to run and jump in puddles.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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## **Learning experiences: Good**

Practitioners provide a good range of interesting learning experiences indoors and outdoors that engage most children successfully. Long term plans cover all areas of the foundation phase curriculum and medium-term plans identify the cross curricular skills that children can develop in each area of provision. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning through play and first-hand experiences.

Provision for developing thinking skills is appropriate. For example, children explore what happens when they mix bark chippings with cereal and water when playing outdoors in the mud kitchen. The setting makes effective use of visitors to enhance the curriculum such as a local police officer. However, children do not have regular opportunities to go on local visits to enrich their learning.

Practitioners provide good opportunities for children to develop their physical skills throughout the setting. These include a slide, trikes, an outdoor tunnel, mark making and puzzles. They use action songs well to engage children in a range of whole body movements. The popular physical play area provides opportunities for balancing, crawling, climbing and ball skills. It presents children with appropriate challenge and enables them to develop their confidence successfully.

There is good provision to develop numeracy skills. Children have regular opportunities to match, count and recognise numbers and patterns. Resources available, such as a toy till, clocks and sorting activities, provide children with a wide range of experiences that develop mathematical concepts effectively. Numbers are displayed throughout the environment both indoors and outdoors, to support worthwhile counting opportunities.

Practitioners provide many opportunities for children to develop their communication skills effectively. They support children to join in with conversations and ask appropriate questions. Practitioners model talking for different purposes, for example giving messages over the toy telephone. They provide cosy spaces that promote children's communication very effectively.

Practitioners share books and stories with children and model how to handle books with care. The environment is full of examples of written language, with many captions and labels written in both English and Welsh. Practitioners provide effective opportunities for children to take part in mark making activities, using note pads, clip boards, and painting with water. Practitioners use tablets well to support children in developing their ICT skills. Other opportunities to use ICT are available, such as the interactive whiteboard and a toy keyboard.

Practitioners plan effectively to support children's skills in Welsh. They model Welsh through singing songs, reading stories, counting and using Welsh words and phrases throughout the session. They use Welsh to greet children on arrival and during other routines such as snack time. Children have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage and celebrate St David's Day. For example, they learn about Welsh symbols through craft activities, which are added to their Welsh themed display board.

### **Teaching: Good**

Practitioners have a sound understanding of foundation phase practice. They use a useful range of strategies to encourage and to motivate children to learn. They combine focused tasks with children's free play effectively. As a result, children sustain interest in tasks and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning. Practitioners have very good working relationships with the children and manage their behaviour sensitively and effectively.

Activities build suitably on children's interests as practitioners observe how well children have engaged with different resources and activities. For example, one practitioner ensured that paint was available after a child had particularly enjoyed this area of provision. Practitioners have requested that children bring their favourite toy to the setting as a way of introducing children's interests into the planning. However, this is at an early stage and is not yet an established way of working.

All practitioners provide beneficial challenge and support to individual children, for example showing one child how to use the pedals on the trike rather than pushing himself along. Practitioners explain things clearly, model activities and question children appropriately. The use of open ended questions is evident but does not always challenge children to extend their thinking well enough.

The setting has a satisfactory range of assessment procedures. For example, practitioners observe children during their first four weeks at the setting and identify what they can already do. They also record useful ongoing observations on the weekly planning to show children's progress and responses to provision. However, this information is not being used consistently to identify next steps in learning for individual children and provide sufficient challenge for the more able.

All practitioners make good use of specific feedback to encourage children, for example 'good cutting' and 'good counting'. However, practitioners do not always keep parents and carers well enough informed about how their children are progressing.

The setting has developed a good range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and children respond to these well. All practitioners have clear expectations and explain rules to children appropriately. For example, they explain why we don't drop toys on the floor. This ensures a team approach and consistency for the children.

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

The setting has successful arrangements to support children's healthy eating and drinking. During snack time, practitioners encourage children to eat a range of foods and provide water or milk to drink. Most food options are healthy. Children make choices about what they would like to eat and are encouraged to try new foods such as chantenay carrots.

The setting provides valuable opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise. Children take part in healthy community events such as Sports Day. Practitioners are good role-models and successfully support children to develop respect for others and a sense of right and wrong. They encourage children to share equipment and to take care of resources effectively.

A beneficial range of learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder in children through encouraging them to plant seeds and bulbs and observe them growing. Children have appropriate opportunities to find out about other cultures through, for example, learning about Chinese New Year and Diwali. Practitioners provide meaningful opportunities for children to learn about sustainability. For example, children are encouraged to turn off taps and sort their recycling in the recycling area.

There are sound processes to support children with additional learning needs. The setting has effective links with a range of support agencies to ensure that children's individual needs are met appropriately.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and do not give cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is welcoming, and practitioners are friendly and approachable. It is an inclusive community where all children are encouraged to take part and have equal access to all areas of the setting's provision. Practitioners lead by example in encouraging children to show tolerance towards one another and respect for the setting's equipment. For example, they explain why we shouldn't sit too close to our friends on the carpet. As a result, all children play and learn happily.

The setting has suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the foundation phase. The setting is situated within the school and benefits from access to the forest school. The setting's accommodation is secure and well maintained. There are plenty of good quality resources across the areas of learning, which meet the needs of the children well.

The lead practitioner makes creative use of the space indoors, which is attractive and welcoming. Resources and furniture are generally of good quality and appropriate. Designated learning areas make resources easily accessible for children.

The popular outdoor area has been developed successfully into a valuable learning environment. It supports the development of children's literacy, numeracy and physical skills well.

The accommodation is well maintained and secure.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Leadership: Adequate**

The lead practitioner works effectively with setting staff to provide a caring and nurturing environment for all children. She manages practitioners and children appropriately to ensure that the setting runs smoothly, following well established routines. Practitioners work well together and understand their roles and responsibilities. However, there have been recent changes to the management structure and the lead practitioner is no longer sure of her role in relation to the manager and the management committee. There is no clear, shared vision for the setting and its place within the new, larger service yet.

The setting has effective arrangements to manage the performance of staff. All staff have good opportunities to discuss and reflect on their performance. The lead practitioner supports staff effectively in developing their knowledge of the foundation phase and improving their skills in delivering it. All staff take advantage of opportunities for continuous professional development and strive to improve their performance. This has a positive impact on the quality of the provision, for example by improving opportunities for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

There are a range of beneficial policies and procedures in place to support the organisation of the setting. However, not all policies are written clearly enough or communicated to practitioners effectively. As a result, practitioners do not understand a few important procedures well enough.

The management committee provides valuable support, particularly with managing the setting's finances. However, communication between the lead practitioner and the management committee is not well developed. The management committee is not clear about the setting's current areas for improvement and its role in supporting continuous improvement is underdeveloped.

The lead practitioner is aware of local and national priorities and there is a successful focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The setting's systems for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement are effective and all practitioners are committed to improving quality. The lead practitioner makes good use of information from external reviews and support from the link teacher to inform the self-evaluation process. Practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to improve. They explain clearly what

they have identified as priorities in order to raise standards. However, the setting needs to consult parents and carers more to ensure that their views are taken into account.

The self-evaluation document clearly identifies well considered areas for improvement. However, it does not always identify what the children can do well and what they need more help with. The improvement plan sets out clearly what the setting needs to improve. The targets in the plan come directly from the self-evaluation process and form suitable priorities for the setting. The improvement plan is a well-organised document that sets out appropriate actions, success criteria, time-scales and staff responsibilities.

Practitioners are open to new ideas and respond to support from a range of sources. This results in improvements to the quality of learning experiences, for example the successful development of numeracy and ICT provision.

The setting has made beneficial progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting has an effective range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Useful information is given to parents when their children register at the setting. The link teacher keeps parents and carers well informed about the foundation phase curriculum through a welcome meeting. This is well attended, and parents find it interesting and useful. However, parents are not always informed well enough about what their child is learning, or the topics being covered.

The setting has very well-established links with the local school in which it is situated. Practitioners benefit from being able to access useful advice and support as they need it from the link teacher who is based on site. Children become familiar with the school building and staff during settling in visits to the classrooms, which prepare them well for the move on to the next stage in their education. The setting has access to the school's facilities, such as the forest school, which it uses well to support children's learning. There are strong links with the on-site Flying Start provision, which helps children moving into the playgroup to settle well.

The setting has useful links with the local authority and receives regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. It makes suitable use of its connections with Wales Preschool Providers Association (WPPA) and other external agencies.

### **Resource management: Good**

The setting makes good use of staffing and resources to support children's learning well. Leaders and managers make sure that the setting has enough suitably qualified and well-trained practitioners to support the effective delivery of the foundation phase curriculum. Resources are plentiful and of good quality, for example the wide range of equipment to support mark making.

The setting ensures that staff can access training based on needs identified through the appraisal process. Practitioners make good use of training to improve provision, for example by developing the use of ICT within the setting.

Leaders have supported the development of priority areas through ensuring they are resourced appropriately. The committee manages the setting's budget suitably and has appropriate systems for keeping spending under review.

Due to the good quality of teaching, the quality of provision and the progress children make, the setting provides good value for money.

## 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>	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	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.
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	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
<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 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