



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
Ashgrove
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 1RY**

Date of inspection: January 2017

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:

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 date: 04/04/2017

Context

Parkfields playgroup meets in a community centre on the Bryn Gwalia estate in Mold, Flintshire. It opens on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 9.00am-11:30am and Wednesday afternoons from 1.15pm-3.45pm for 39 weeks of the year. The setting offers Flying Start and local authority funded education places, and is registered to take up to 25 children aged between two years old and eight years old. There are currently 11 children on the register, four of whom are funded by the local authority to receive early years' education.

English is the home language of nearly all the children attending the setting, and none of the children have additional learning needs.

There are three members of staff working in the playgroup, all of whom are suitably qualified and experienced to work with young children. The setting is led by a manager who has been in post since April 2015 and a supervisor who has held her position since 1996.

The setting was last inspected by Estyn in March 2012 and by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in February 2015.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- The setting provides a good range of interesting learning experiences that the children enjoy and engage with well
- The manager plans carefully to provide regular, worthwhile opportunities across all the Foundation Phase areas of learning
- There are good opportunities for children to develop their physical, thinking and creative skills
- Practitioners provide plenty of opportunities for children to make choices and develop their independent learning skills
- There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the setting
- Practitioners intervene sensitively to help children develop their communication skills well and to learn to play co-operatively
- The setting provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment inside and outside
- The setting has plenty of good quality and interesting resources, which address the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum well

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvements are good because:

- The setting leaders focus successfully on promoting children's wellbeing and ensuring that they make progress
- Roles and responsibilities are well defined and the setting is run effectively
- Practitioners work together well as a team
- The setting makes beneficial use of advice and support from other agencies, including the local authority link teacher, to sustain and promote improvements
- The setting benefits from a good range of partnerships
- Practitioners make the most of training opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding
- The supervisor manages the setting's accounts carefully and prioritises spending effectively

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen planning to ensure that individual children's knowledge and understanding build systematically over time
- R2 Implement effective systems for staff appraisal that link to the setting's priorities for improvement
- R3 Strengthen planning for improvement by making it a regular part of the setting's work, including suitable timescales and involving all practitioners to ensure sustained progress
- R4 Improve transition links with local schools

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	n/a
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Standards: Judgement

Wellbeing: Judgement

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

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

The setting provides a good range of interesting learning experiences that the children enjoy. These include meaningful opportunities to develop children's skills as they play independently, such as learning about matching and sorting while playing with colourful cotton reels. The setting manager plans carefully to provide worthwhile opportunities across all the Foundation Phase areas of learning. However, although planning is beginning to reflect individual children's needs, it does not yet build systematically enough on what children already know.

The setting promotes children's physical development well both indoors and outside, such as when they squeeze and roll out dough, and jump in and out of hoops. There are valuable opportunities for children to take risks, and develop as confident learners, including when they play 'hide and seek' outdoors. The setting helps children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them well. This includes helping them understand that they should treat living things with care and concern when they made a shelter for a hedgehog in the autumn. Practitioners encourage children to develop their thinking and creative skills effectively through careful questioning and allow them to experiment freely with different materials.

The setting focuses well on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. For example, practitioners develop children's speaking and listening skills successfully throughout the session. They make the most of opportunities to read stories to the children in the book corner and during 'together times', building strong foundations ready for them to learn to read. Children have useful opportunities to develop their numeracy skills when they count the pebbles in the sand, and begin to recognise the numbers on them. There are suitable opportunities for children to develop their information and communication technology skills (ICT) as they play independently. However, planning to develop children's ICT skills systematically overtime is less well developed.

Practitioners make sure that children hear Welsh spoken regularly, particularly during group times. They encourage them to talk about the weather in Welsh and to say 'diolch' at snack time. There is an appropriate Welsh ethos in the setting. This

helps children begin to identify with their Welsh culture, including Welsh books, signs and attractive photographs of Welsh places of interest.

Teaching: Good

In general, practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. They have up-to-date knowledge of child development and a thorough understanding of the importance of providing opportunities for children to learn through play and active involvement. Children have plentiful opportunities to choose what activities they want to engage in throughout the session. Practitioners regularly provide helpful support to move their learning forward by working sensitively alongside them.

Practitioners have high expectations of children's behaviour and involvement in play. They manage behaviour positively and constructively, contributing to a calm and purposeful working atmosphere in the setting. Practitioners intervene sensitively and skilfully to support children in their play, encouraging conversations, developing vocabulary and helping children develop their knowledge and understanding well. They question children carefully and this develops their thinking skills successfully.

Practitioners know the children well. They observe and assess their progress regularly, keeping useful records in attractive individual profiles. The setting manager has recently refined the system for collecting and recording observations with the aim of identifying and planning for individual next steps more effectively. Although this is beginning to have a positive effect, it is too soon to assess its full impact on children's learning.

Practitioners involve parents and carers in children's learning well, both formally and informally, providing regular opportunities for parents to see what their children are achieving at the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting welcomes children warmly and, as a result, they settle happily and participate fully in the activities. There are effective arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing. The setting provides healthy snacks, helps children understand about washing their hands, and gives them plenty of opportunities to run around in the fresh air.

Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, and social development. The daily snack time is a social occasion, which gives children meaningful opportunities to develop their independence, and learn to treat one another with respect and courtesy. Children have good opportunities to learn to share and co-operate, such as when they take turns to 'dry' each other's hair in the role-play area. The setting is beginning to help children develop a sense of curiosity about their own and other people's lives appropriately. Practitioners encourage the children to talk about what they have been doing at home, and about their pets and their interests. There is an appropriate focus on recycling at the end of snack time, when children collect the plastic yoghurt pots to recycle. This is beginning to develop their understanding of sustainability in a worthwhile and practical way.

The setting's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There are no children with additional needs currently attending the setting. However, the setting has effective arrangements to support children with additional learning needs. These include suitable procedures for early identification of needs and processes for identifying steps to help these children make progress. The setting has appropriate links with other professionals, such as the speech and language services.

Learning environment: Good

The ethos of the setting is inclusive, welcoming and positive. Practitioners promote diversity appropriately, such as by providing multi-cultural small world figures and books, and ensuring that all children have equal access to the different activities and play equipment.

The setting has plenty of good quality and interesting resources, which address the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum well. These support children's individual needs and interests effectively as well as challenging them to experiment with new experiences.

The indoor accommodation is safe and secure. It is set up daily to provide an attractive learning environment, which supports all areas of learning effectively. Practitioners ensure that there are interesting displays on the wall, including plenty of print and examples of numbers to help children begin to recognise these.

The setting makes good use of its two outdoor learning areas to provide children with valuable opportunities to enjoy learning in the fresh air. These include physical activities, and opportunities to practice their mark-making using rain water.

The setting makes suitable use of the local environment to enhance children's learning experiences, such as walking to the library to celebrate World Book Day.

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

Since taking up her post, the setting manager has built effectively on the developing culture of improvement in the setting. She works closely with the setting supervisor to create a positive ethos, which has children's wellbeing and progress at its heart. Together, they ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, including responsibility for financial management. As a result, the setting runs smoothly, with appropriate policies and procedures supporting practitioners to deliver good quality learning experiences.

Practitioners work together well as a team and support one another successfully. This contributes effectively to the calm and purposeful atmosphere in the setting. The setting manager has a strong sense of purpose, which promotes high standards and a worthwhile focus on children's learning. Leaders have established helpful links

with parents and carers, involving them well in their children's learning. While the setting does not currently have an effective management committee, leaders actively seek advice and support from other agencies. This helps sustain and improve their practice over time. The setting carries out appropriate staff appraisals with support from the Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA). These give practitioners a valuable opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify concerns and training needs. However, currently, the appraisals do not identify agreed targets for improvement, or link to the setting's improvement priorities well enough.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting leader has a good general understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development. She draws effectively on regular reviews from the local authority link teacher to help identify and work on current priorities for improvement. These include developing a more thorough understanding of the planning and assessment system, and using the new Foundation Phase Profile effectively to identify individual children's needs. Recent changes include involving all practitioners in observing and assessing the children's progress. This has improved practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase curriculum, and the progress made by children over time in the setting.

The setting makes appropriate use of the local authority's format to carry out a formal evaluation of standards and the quality of provision. Practitioners are beginning to reflect on the quality of the activities they provide for the children and to take suitable account of the views of parents and carers. However, although the setting leader's understanding is developing well, the setting's self-evaluation process is at a relatively early stage of development and it does not yet cover all aspects of the setting's work effectively. The leader is in the process of developing a suitable action plan, which identifies helpful steps towards achieving changes. However, it is not shared with other practitioners well enough to make it fully effective, and it does not yet include enough information about persons responsible and timescales.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has developed a useful range of partnerships that contribute well to children's wellbeing and the quality of the provision.

It has built a constructive partnership with parents. Practitioners share information about the setting's activities regularly through social media, regular newsletters and the setting's noticeboard. Parents find practitioners approachable. They are pleased to learn about their children's progress through regular informal feedback, and more formal opportunities to talk about their achievements with the setting leaders at the end of each term.

Practitioners use community links to support children's learning effectively. These include a visit from the local police officer as part of the 'people who help us' theme. The setting shares information about children's development appropriately as children move onto their next setting. However, partnerships with local schools are generally at an early stage of development.

The setting benefits from its constructive partnership with its advisory teacher and from the training provided by the local authority. This has contributed successfully to improvements over time in the quality of the learning experiences offered to the children. The setting's close partnership with the Wales Pre-school Providers' Association provides suitable support with management issues, such as carrying out regular staff appraisals.

Resource management: Good

The setting's staff are well qualified and experienced to teach the Foundation Phase curriculum effectively. They are open to new ideas and make the most of opportunities to acquire new knowledge and develop their expertise. Practitioners recently benefited from local authority training to promote their understanding of how to observe and assess children successfully. The setting leader benefited from a visit to a similar setting, helping her with organising the indoor learning environment to support children's independent learning. Through the appraisal system, practitioners are beginning to reflect on their own performance. However, in general, evaluating their practice and the impact of the training they receive on children's standards is at a very early stage of development.

The setting provides an interesting range of good quality resources that support children's learning well. These include attractive books and appealing small world toys that stimulate the children's interest. The practitioners are deployed well throughout the session, sharing responsibilities and making the most of their expertise.

The supervisor manages the setting's accounts carefully and prioritises spending well. She makes good use of grants to ensure that the setting has the resources it needs to deliver the curriculum. In view of the interesting and engaging learning experiences and the quality of teaching, the setting provides good value for money.

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 inspection team

Sheila Margaret Birkhead	Reporting Inspector
Margaret Gwenn Brockley	Team Inspector

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.