



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

A report on

**Penycae Playgroup
Penycae Community Centre
Hall Street
Penycae
Wrexham
LL14 2RU**

Date of inspection: July 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 Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

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

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Context

Penycae Playgroup is an English medium setting, which meets in a community hall in Penycae, in Wrexham local authority. The playgroup serves the village and the surrounding areas.

The playgroup is registered for 26 children, 17 of whom receive early years funding from the local authority. It offers early education sessions Monday to Thursday from 8.50 am until 11.20 am, during term time only.

At the time of the inspection the setting identified a few children as having additional learning needs. All children have English as their home language.

There are three members of staff. All staff are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children. The playgroup leader has been in post since 2012.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in February 2016 and it was last inspected by Estyn in 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- Many children make good progress from their differing starting points
- Many children talk confidently about their learning activities
- Many children use mathematical language correctly
- Most children are developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well
- Many children demonstrate appropriate thinking skills
- All children enjoy coming to the setting and settle quickly
- Most children confidently choose resources and activities independently
- All practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase
- Nearly all practitioners manage children's behaviour consistently well
- The setting has an inclusive and friendly ethos where all children are valued

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team
- The setting's aims, plans and policies focus appropriately on ensuring effective provision to meet children's needs
- All practitioners are committed to making regular improvements
- Leaders work appropriately with the local authority link teacher to develop and monitor regular improvement targets
- Nearly all practitioners access a worthwhile range of training opportunities and implement ideas to improve children's learning experiences well

However:

- The current self-evaluation document does not focus on children's outcomes well enough, in order to identify the most appropriate priorities for improvement
- Improvement plans do not prioritise targets or identify costings and monitoring opportunities clearly enough
- Performance management systems are not fully effective due to the absence of a management committee

Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's Welsh skills
- R2 Ensure that planning develops the full range of children's skills effectively and includes children's suggestions
- R3 Ensure that practitioners challenge children in line with their abilities
- R4 Establish secure leadership practices within the setting
- R5 Ensure that self-evaluation and action planning focus on outcomes for children

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that 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?

Good

Standards: Good

Many children make good progress from their differing starting points. Most children display high levels of engagement and concentration when involved in independent learning tasks.

Many children are developing good communication skills. They listen carefully to simple instructions and at story time. Many children talk confidently about their learning activities. Most join in enthusiastically when singing familiar songs and rhymes, in both English and Welsh. Many children are developing early reading skills successfully when enjoying a storybook with an adult and handling a book as a reader independently. Many children make marks to convey meaning effectively, for example when painting with different sized paintbrushes and when using large rollers in the outdoors. A few children are beginning to write recognisable letters.

Many children are developing effective numeracy skills. For example, most children join in when counting the number of children present at 'together time'. Many children name simple shapes accurately, and a very few recognise the properties of shapes such as cylinders. Many children use mathematical language correctly, such as full and empty, and find and identify big and small spiders in the garden. Most children match objects and colours correctly and many sort these independently when threading beads onto a frame and sorting plastic fruit. Many children know when it is time for snack and outdoor sessions. Around half the children join in with singing the days of the week song and a few correctly name the day of the week.

Many children are developing satisfactory Welsh skills. Children use simple words during routine activities with adult encouragement. For example, they say what drink they would like and answer if they are present, successfully. Many children respond correctly to songs and instructions such as 'amser tacluso'. However, nearly all children do not use simple Welsh words naturally during their play

Most children are developing their ICT skills well. They competently use a variety of resources in their daily activities, for example toy mobile phones and digital cameras. Most children use computer tablets appropriately and can select tools and create a picture with support from their peers

Most children are developing their fine motor skills well, and use small tools with increasing control when decorating a necklace and creating patterns in dough. Most children demonstrate good levels of co-ordination when pedalling wheeled toys and playing games with balls and hoops outdoors.

Many children are developing their thinking skills appropriately and use these well to work out how to put on their coats correctly. Nearly all children select resources independently, for example when choosing collage materials for an African necklace. A few children show suitable levels of persistence when building a high tower with blocks.

Wellbeing: Good

All children enjoy coming to the setting and settle quickly. Most children show a suitable awareness of the expectations of the setting, such as when sharing and taking turns, and behave well. Many children demonstrate good levels of independence, helping to tidy up resources and trying to put on their coats before going outside.

Most children confidently chose resources and activities independently. They maintain their focus on tasks for appropriate periods, for example when building towers with blocks. Nearly all children sit sensibly and enjoy talking with peers and adults during snack time. Following the use of the toilet, and after painting, many children wash their hands without too much adult prompting.

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

The setting provides a suitable range of stimulating learning experiences across all areas of learning, both indoors and outside. However, practitioners do not plan for the progression of skills well enough. All practitioners ensure that there is a suitable emphasis on learning through play, for example when building a castle from different sized blocks.

Practitioners plan a range of interesting topics throughout the year. However, they do not always take into account children's ideas or individual interests regularly enough. In general, practitioners plan well together as a team and make effective use of information from assessments. However, on occasions, practitioners do not always challenge more able children successfully.

Practitioners provide useful opportunities to develop children's literacy skills. The printed word is highly visible at the setting in both English and Welsh. There are many valuable opportunities to develop children's early mark making skills indoors and outdoors, for example when using large brushes and rollers.

There are worthwhile opportunities to develop children's numeracy skills. For example, children count how many are present and sing number songs daily. The outdoor learning area provides valuable opportunities to learn about capacity as children fill and empty containers with water, and find different sized spiders in the mini-garden.

The setting provides good opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills, for example using a camera to take a photograph of their peers and pressing buttons on telephones in the role-play area. The sharing of computer tablets with the school has a positive impact on the development of children's ICT skills.

Nearly all practitioners make good use of Welsh throughout the session. There are worthwhile opportunities for children to hear Welsh regularly. However, practitioners do not have high enough expectations when encouraging children to use simple Welsh words independently. There are appropriate opportunities for children to learn about Wales and its traditions when making leek soup to celebrate St David's Day.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and provide interesting learning experiences across all areas of learning.

There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities, both indoors and outdoors. This gives children suitable choice in their learning and helps to develop their independent skills successfully.

All practitioners intervene sensitively and most question children appropriately to develop their language skills, for example when talking about the spiders found outdoors.

All practitioners greet the children warmly as they arrive. Nearly all practitioners manage children's behaviour consistently well, gently reminding them of the rules and expectations of the setting.

Nearly all practitioners contribute purposefully to the assessment process and evaluate children's progress suitably, through both planned and spontaneous observations. This enables them to plan future learning activities accordingly. However, practitioners do not always challenge more able children well enough.

There are regular opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress both informally and formally. For example, practitioners use the Foundation Phase Profile well and share findings with parents and the school effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Good

All children are well cared for and benefit from positive working relationships with practitioners. The setting promotes children's understanding of healthy living well. For example, children understand the importance of washing their hands before snack time and after messy play. Practitioners provide a suitable range of healthy foods and drink at snack time. They encourage children to recycle food waste and offer recycled materials for junk modelling. This promotes children's understanding of sustainability successfully.

The setting encourage children's spiritual, moral and social skills effectively. For example, children learn to share and take turns through the effective use of a sand timer. This fosters values such as fairness effectively.

Practitioners offer regular opportunities for children to learn about the world around them, when growing flowers and carefully collecting minibeasts. There is a worthwhile range of activities for children to learn about other cultures, for example listening to stories from around the world, tasting foods to celebrate Chinese New Year and making African necklaces.

There are beneficial arrangements to support children with additional learning needs. Practitioners use advice from outside agencies well to ensure that they provide appropriate support for these children and their families.

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

Learning environment: Good

The setting has an inclusive and friendly ethos where all children are valued and have equal access to resources and activities.

The indoor and outdoor learning environments are safe, secure and well maintained. There is a range of good quality resources, including natural materials, and these are easily accessible to children.

The hall is a large space and practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating learning environment. The outdoor area is spacious and offers a wide range of opportunities to develop a variety of skills successfully. Examples include exploring the properties of water when filling and emptying containers, messy mark making with a variety of tools and physical activities such as pedalling bikes, running and jumping.

The setting makes effective use of the local environment to enhance children's learning, for example visits to the local park and local school library.

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

The setting's aims, plans and policies focus appropriately on ensuring effective provision to meet children's needs. All practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team. They establish strong working relationships with the children. As a result, children are happy and engage well with the activities offered.

The setting leader works co-operatively with the support teacher and local authority to address targets to improve the work of the setting. For example, support provided to implement the assessment process is improving the accuracy of the assessments. However, the absence of a management committee means that there are few effective leadership practices currently in place, and a lack of regular staff supervisions and appraisals.

Leaders share a worthwhile sense of purpose that promotes regular improvements, for example when planning continuous provision areas in the outdoors. This ensures that the setting meets the requirements of the Foundation Phase well.

Improving quality: Adequate

All practitioners are committed to making regular improvements. They contribute informally to assessing how well the setting is progressing. The setting consults with parents appropriately and is beginning to respond to suggestions. For example, sharing information about the daily activities offered via social media. However, the current self-evaluation document does not focus on children's outcomes well enough. As a result, the setting does not always identify the most appropriate priorities for improvement.

Leaders work suitably with the local authority link teacher to develop and monitor improvement targets regularly. This helps the setting to strengthen its focus on developing the outdoor area and to use the Foundation Phase Profile to support assessment successfully.

The setting has suitable action plans for improvement. These have led to helpful improvements over time, which have a positive impact on children's wellbeing and the quality of provision. These include improving transition and enhancing the indoor learning environment. However, these plans do not prioritise targets or identify costings and monitoring opportunities clearly enough.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of effective partnerships that benefit children well. For example, positive links with the local school enable the setting to share ICT equipment, which is helping to improve children's ICT skills.

There are worthwhile links with parents. Practitioners keep them well informed about the daily life of the setting via social media, newsletters and useful information boards. There are frequent informal and formal opportunities for parents to learn about their child's progress.

The setting uses community links purposefully to support children's learning. For example, visits from a police officer, fire fighter and road safety officer enable children to learn about people's jobs and how to keep safe. The setting uses the local community well. Visits to the local park allow children to develop their physical skills and knowledge of the local area successfully.

Practitioners make effective use of their partnership with the local authority link teacher and a teacher from the school. They provide valuable support and guidance and, as a result, provision in the outdoor environment is improving.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes good use of qualified staff and resources to support teaching and learning. Nearly all practitioners access a worthwhile range of training and implement ideas well to improve children's learning experiences. For example, following training, practitioners reviewed their provision to promote children's problem solving skills. This led to improvements in children's thinking skills and levels of independence. Practitioners attend local authority events to share good practice, for example their use of computer tablets to support the development of children's ICT skills.

The setting has an effective range of resources to support children's learning across areas of learning. Resources are readily accessible to the children and this encourages their independence.

However, performance management systems for practitioners are not fully effective due to the absence of a management committee.

The setting has a clear understanding of its budget and prioritises spending well. As a result of the good standards that children achieve, the effective teaching, and the quality of care, support and guidance, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

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

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Sharon Hughes	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 that 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 three to seven 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 that 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 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