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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Holt Under 5s Playgroup
Holt Community Centre
Chapel Street
Holt
LL13 9DJ**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

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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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Context

Holt Under 5s Playgroup is located in the heart of Holt, a small Welsh border village near Wrexham, North Wales. The medium-sized playgroup has been running for 40 years and is managed by a voluntary committee with the general day to day running carried out by the supervisor and practitioners.

The playgroup is based in the Community Centre next to the school. There is an entrance leading into the playgroup room that has detailed information displayed for parents to view when they drop off or collect their children. Inside, the spacious hall is divided into activity areas in keeping with the Foundation Phase philosophy. To the front of the premises the group have a small garden, but there is also shared access to a very special place in the school grounds, Rebecca's Garden ensuring good opportunities for different outdoor activities.

The playgroup operates during term time and is open from 9.15am to 11.45am Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On the first Friday of the month there is an afternoon session from 12.15pm to 2.45pm.

Holt Under 5s is registered with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide sessional care for 26 children. Two places are kept for children with additional needs. The children attending the playgroup are aged between two and a half and three years.

The last CSSIW inspection was in November 2009 and this is the first inspection by Estyn.

Four practitioners work in the playgroup, three are qualified to level 3 and one is working towards this level. There were five children present aged three who were eligible for funding during this Summer term.

The playgroup is English speaking, providing care and education for children from families for whom this is their first language.

Ethnicity is all White British and no children have additional needs.

The playgroup has an equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children. The area served by the playgroup is considered to be advantaged. All children attending the playgroup are from the village or the local area.

Holt Under 5s receives support from Wrexham Early Education.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the playgroup is good because:

All teaching is good.

The children are happy, settled and safe.

There are good opportunities provided for children to access a range of interesting and varied activities.

The children are confident and independent learners.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for the improvement of the playgroup are good because:

The playgroup is committed to improving and there are clear priorities and targets for improvement.

There is a strong working relationship with Early Education to develop the setting.

Effective self evaluation and reflective practice is well embedded in the ethos of the group.

Recommendations

R1. Provide more opportunities for children to access ICT.

R2. Continue to develop the Welsh language, by maximising informal opportunities.

R3. Further strengthen planning and assessment .

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how the setting will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	N/A
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There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill 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 children with a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities across all areas of learning. Planning successfully engages all children and actively encourages them to become confident and independent learners. Although planning and organisation ensure there is challenge, continuity and progression, written records do not always show where individual learning needs have been taken into account.

Communication and numeracy are well embedded into the activities and experiences provided but there are too few opportunities for the children to use ICT.

Practitioners use the indoor and outdoor environment in an imaginative and effective way that encourage children to experiment and to find out for themselves. The local environment is used well to extend the learning and experiences of the children, for example picking strawberries and visiting Rebecca's Garden and by going further afield to the library and an art exhibition in Wrexham.

There are good opportunities for children to develop their personal and cultural identity. The children celebrate and learn about Welsh festivals such as St David's day and those of other cultures in a simple and meaningful way that is within their understanding.

They are involved in re-cycling, for example using boxes to create insect houses.

Teaching: Good

Four experienced practitioners work in the playgroup, three are qualified to level 3 and one is working towards the same advanced level.

Practitioners have a sound knowledge of Foundation Phase outcomes and of the stages of child development. They have high expectations and use appropriate questioning techniques to successfully extend the learning of the children through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities and experiences.

All practitioners are good language models for the children and intervene appropriately. They let the children develop their play and understand fully the

importance of providing opportunities for the children to learn through exploration and discovery.

Practitioners manage behaviour well and the children are effectively organised to help them to progress. Adult support is well focussed and makes a significant contribution to the learning of the children.

Children are encouraged to help each other and work together, for example tidying away the toys and equipment in small teams or pairs. Questioning is well used to develop children's thinking skills and practitioners give good explanations to enable the children to consider what they are doing.

The use of resources to enhance the learning of the children through the medium of Welsh is good, particularly during Ticw Time, when the Welsh bear Ticw makes an appearance. The playgroup however need to continue to make more effective use of informal opportunities to develop the language with the children, for example during snack time.

Practitioners keep parents well informed about what is happening in the playgroup and the achievements, wellbeing and development of their children. There is time before and after the session for parents to come and talk to practitioners, to discuss any issues or concerns. Progress and achievements are tracked, but how this links to planning for the next steps for individual children is not always clearly noted.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is a range of policies and procedures that reflect clear aims, promote good values, support the well being of the children and keep them from harm. An appropriate policy links to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures to safeguard the children. Practitioners efficiently undertake risk assessments and minimise any potential hazards. They are well trained and know how to respond effectively if any challenges arise in relation to bullying or poor behaviour.

The setting promotes the spiritual development of the children when they sing a short prayer before eating snack. Practitioners and children get on well and are happy in each other's company. They work together as a group and the setting successfully fosters values such as honesty, fairness, kindness and respect including diversity of belief and attitude.

Children behave well and are encouraged and supported to differentiate between right and wrong and to follow simple rules, for example when walking through the school to access the garden. Opportunities are provided to share and take turns when using the magnifying glass. Children were observed to help each other, particularly the older children who were supporting their younger friends.

The setting effectively provides an environment and learning experiences that promote the moral and social development of the children. They feel safe, confident to ask for help and can say what they think. Children spoke to the inspector about what they were doing and about the things they enjoy whilst in the playgroup.

The playgroup identifies any additional needs that children may have. There are good planning and support systems for working in conjunction with parents and with other professionals to provide personal and specialist help. Reviews and regular meetings are included in the plan.

The children learn about other cultures in a simple way that is within their understanding through a good range of activities. All practitioners were observed to put into practice equal opportunities and treat the children on an individual basis with equal concern.

Holt under 5s promotes the health and wellbeing of the children by providing a healthy snack each day comprising of fruit or cereal and plenty of exercise through outdoor play.

The setting provides many good opportunities for the children to effectively learn about living things whilst visiting Rebecca's garden. Here they find out about mini beasts and how to be gentle and take care of them.

Learning environment: Good

Holt under 5s offers equal access to the provision and the curriculum for all children. The ethos of the playgroup is to include all children and to value diverse backgrounds. A complaint procedure ensures that parents are effectively able to raise any issues or concerns.

Children settle well and quickly to the activities as the resources are well placed for them to help themselves, enabling them to become competent and independent learners.

Practitioners are welcoming, relaxed and friendly and this effectively ensures a good learning environment. Sufficient qualified practitioners work with the children and they are experienced to meet their learning needs.

Accommodation is used effectively and there are plenty of varied, suitable resources that contribute well to the learning of the children. Practitioners have undertaken training relevant to aspects of the Foundation Phase to improve their own knowledge and skills and support the learning and development of the children.

The outside environment is a good resource enabling children to experiment and explore, to grow plants including fruit and vegetables and to care for them, to find insects and examine them carefully using magnifying glasses.

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

Leadership: Good

Leaders have a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement. Learning and teaching are well managed with high expectations. Practitioners understand and fulfil their roles well. The committee is influential in moving the setting forward. Appraisals and inductions are carried out and practitioners effectively reflect on their practice. There are good links with parents to support the learning of the children and as a result of parental feedback, termly reports have been introduced.

The playgroup has a clear direction that promotes the development of the group. Relationships with the children and their parents and the committee are very positive and contribute very effectively to the sense of community. The practitioners and children are well managed and supported. All are valued and all roles and responsibilities are clear. There is a positive ethos and practitioners have high expectations of the children. The focus is firmly on the children and their needs. Outcomes for the children are good.

Policies and initiatives are implemented effectively and leaders ensure that the Foundation Phase is successfully delivered. Practitioners respond positively to relevant national and local priorities for example they have achieved a Quality Assurance award from the Wales Pre-School Providers Association (WPPA).

There is a strong emphasis on training and development within the Foundation Phase and practitioners effectively share their expertise with each other to further the experiences of the children, benefit the service and raise standards of provision.

Improving quality: Good

A positive culture of self reflection and self evaluation is evident throughout the day to day running of the setting and the work of the practitioners. Holt under 5s has undertaken effective self evaluation for improvement that involves all practitioners, identifies strengths, areas for improvement and tracks successful changes.

Practitioners know the playgroup well and can effectively show how they have improved the standards and provision within the group as result of self evaluation.

Parents and children are consulted, their views are valued in moving the playgroup forward and information is efficiently used to prioritise areas for improvement.

The playgroup uses comments and suggestions to improve the setting and practitioners are open to new ideas, share their knowledge and expertise and have made very good use of Foundation Phase training to improve curriculum planning and organisation within the group.

Partnership working: Good

A good range of effective partnership working makes a strong contribution to the children's progress and wellbeing. The playgroup works in conjunction with parents to achieve the full potential of their children. There are good relationships with parents and carers and they stated to the inspector that they are kept well informed regarding the learning of their child and every aspect of the work of the setting. Newsletters, fundraising, including Bags for Life, planning sheets and information displayed on the notice board about the playgroup, effectively keep parents up to date with what is happening.

The relationship between practitioners in the playgroup and Early Education teachers is purposeful and beneficial to all, enhancing the work of the setting. Practitioners value the support they receive and respond very positively to any suggestions, advice and guidance.

There are developing links with the school. Further nurturing and extending this relationship including sharing more resources will be of positive benefit to all and also will ensure effective transition arrangements when the children leave the playgroup to go to school.

The playgroup is a member of the Wales Pre-School Providers Association and an effective partnership with them enables support to be provided to the group for children with additional needs..

The practitioners work well together sharing information and they know who to contact if there are any issues.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup provides good value for money. Practitioners are deployed effectively and are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the setting. The group has a good range of up-to-date, quality resources that practitioners use well indoors and outdoors to help the children to learn, make progress and develop appropriate skills across all areas of the curriculum.

The resources are well used to motivate the children.

Although the playgroup has a good relationship with the school, this could be further developed to include sharing more resources to extend the experiences of the children and maximise different learning opportunities.

The management have an appropriate understanding of budget matters and any financial decisions regarding resources are evaluated to ensure they have a positive impact on standards of achievement, progress and well being.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There was very positive feedback received from all parents about the playgroup. All the responses either strongly agreed or agreed that the setting is good.

100% parents strongly agreed that the setting is well run and that their children are safe. 100% parents also strongly agreed that their child likes the playgroup. They also stated that their child was helped to settle and 86% parents strongly agreed that the teaching in the playgroup was good.

The inspector also spoke directly to parents who confirmed they were very happy with the setting and the provision offered.

Responses to discussions with children

The children told the inspector they like coming to the group.

They like the staff and enjoy the activities, particularly playing outside and going to the special garden.

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Anne Manning	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.