



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Acorns Playgroup
Community Church
15 Price's Lane
Rhosddu
Wrexham
LL11 2NB
United Kingdom**

Date of inspection: May 2014

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

Acorns Playgroup is based in the Community Church next to Rhosddu School in Wrexham. This English-medium playgroup is overseen by a qualified supervisor with practitioners and volunteers who carry out the day-to-day running of the group. The playgroup meets in premises which comprise of one large room divided into areas of play, a smaller room for together time and a hall which is used for physical play.

The playgroup is open for four mornings during term time and is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide care for up to 26 children.

Nearly all the children who attend the playgroup are British and nearly all use English as their first language. No children have additional learning needs.

The children who attend the group mostly live in the local area and come from a range of backgrounds.

The playgroup receives support from the Wrexham Early Education Team and is a member of Wales Pre-school Providers Association. There were six funded three-year-old children on the first inspection morning and six present on the second.

The last CSSIW inspection was in October 2013 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- children make good progress from their starting points;
- teaching is good;
- care, support and guidance are good; and
- learning experiences are varied and interesting.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the setting has made good progress since the last inspection;
- the setting makes good use of a range of visits and visitors to enhance the learning of the children;
- leadership and management of the setting are good; and
- practitioners reflect on their practice effectively and make changes to benefit the children.

Recommendations

- R1. To increase the focus on literacy and numeracy in planning and displays.
- R2. To maximise the learning potential of experiences outdoors by using suitable waterproof clothing.
- R3. To provide opportunities for the children to re-cycle.

What happens next?

'The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.'

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

All children make good progress from their starting points. They work effectively at full capacity and are constantly engaged in tasks and making choices about their learning. Without exception children are developing effective skills in literacy, numeracy and Information Communication Technology in order to access the wider curriculum.

Nearly all listen to instructions well and use appropriate language during play. All follow stories and show interest in books and experiment with mark making. The majority of children select and use mathematical ideas and can recognise and re create patterns. Most children successfully develop ICT skills through play, for example in the role play area where they operate buttons and switches and control battery operated toys.

Most children understand basic instructions in Welsh and can repeat familiar words and phrases. They show an interest in Welsh books and the Welsh bear who joins in with their learning and encourages the use of the Welsh language.

Wellbeing: Good

All children settle well and quickly to the activities when they arrive in playgroup and all are developing positive attitudes to learning. Without exception children are busy and show a good interest in their work both indoors and out.

Nearly all show good levels of self-esteem and are motivated and engaged in their activities. All concentrate well for example when observing the movement of snails and pouring water into small jugs and cups. Without exception they take part enthusiastically in different learning experiences such as visiting the school outdoor area. All children are happy and feel safe in the setting. Children are confident independent learners and are involved in making decisions and choices in the playgroup, for example pouring their own drinks at snack time and exploring outdoors.

All children demonstrate good behaviour and have successful relationships with each other and adults around them. They are starting to help their friends, for example when tidying away the equipment or looking at snails. Nearly all are kind and considerate and all are courteous towards each other and readily share and take turns with equipment and resources.

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

Planning includes a good range of interesting learning experiences that successfully engages all children, for example marble rolling in paint to create snail trails. Indoors and outdoors are used to develop skills successfully, and children make good progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes and develop appropriate skills as they are able to choose whether to play inside or out. Children have effective learning experiences outdoors, however lack of appropriate waterproof clothing means that they are not able to extend their activity and maximise the learning from the experience.

Good organisation ensures children settle very quickly to activities and learn successfully. Experiences effectively encourage children work together and co operate. They successfully form relationships with each other and with adults around them and show respect for all cultural backgrounds.

The curriculum builds appropriately on children's existing knowledge and understanding and provides opportunities to develop thinking skills across all areas of learning. Skills in literacy and numeracy although embedded successfully into the experiences of the children are not always clearly shown on plans or noted in the displays of the children's work. A good range of information communication technology including a camera successfully ensures that the children develop effective skills.

Practitioners develop children's literacy skills by sharing books including those written in Welsh and by story telling. There are good opportunities to develop early mark making through a range of different medium including making tyre marks in the sand and opportunities for children to recognise their own names on their placemats.

All practitioners use a good level and frequency of Welsh and they encourage the children effectively both during circle time and throughout the session and when the children say a short prayer before snack. As a result children respond well. They share traditions and festivals with their friends such as St David's Day and Chinese New Year.

Children have opportunities to learn effectively about caring for living things by observing snails as part of their topic, finding mini beasts and caring for plants in their garden.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners including volunteers are well briefed and deployed. They have up to date knowledge of child development and the requirements of the Foundation Phase and as a result move all the children's learning forward. All practitioners are good language models and use language effectively to develop learning. Practitioners all employ positive strategies such as encouragement, praise and negotiation to encourage the children to learn, join in and to share equipment.

Without exception practitioners are skilled at knowing when to intervene in children's play and when to let them discover independently. Practitioners successfully plan activities and use indoors and outdoors for a good range of activities that meet the needs of the children.

All practitioners know the children well and as a result there are high expectations. Without exception practitioners extend children's play successfully using an effective range of teaching strategies that promote independent learning and provide opportunities for the children to develop their thinking skills, for example when filling and transferring water into different containers. Adult support for the children is well focused and makes a good contribution to the quality of the children's learning.

Most practitioners use a good level of Welsh with the children and successfully encourage the children to listen and respond. Circle times are used highly effectively to share books and stories both fiction and non fiction, develop the Welsh language, re-cap on the session and listen to the views of others.

Practitioners carry out useful observations of the children that inform assessment records and parents are appropriately involved in supporting the learning of their children.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The playgroup has a good range of policies and procedures to support the children and effectively promote their health and wellbeing including their moral, social and cultural development, for example the Designed to Smile initiative. The spiritual development of the children is successfully nurtured by a short prayer before snack time that includes simple signing.

There are appropriate policies and procedures in respect of safeguarding and the practitioners have undertaken training. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

Children learn very effectively about simple rules such as sharing and successfully learn to distinguish right from wrong. The playgroup successfully fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect and effectively develops a good understanding of living and sharing with others and as a result children are confident learners who are happy to ask for help.

The children are starting to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world in which they live by growing plants in the garden, observing living things such as snails, tadpoles and mini beasts and using a range of technology. Children are involved in caring for their environment with opportunities for caring for their plants, but opportunities to be involved in simple re-cycling are missed.

Practitioners employ positive behaviour strategies using effective explanations and praise to encourage the children to successfully take turns and listen. They provide

consistency and individual support and work well with parents and other professionals. As a result all children achieve, make good progress and their families are well supported.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup has effectively developed a well established ethos that is inclusive and values the diversity of the children's backgrounds. The setting actively develops tolerant attitudes through a range of different learning experiences and good day-to-day practice. Equal access to the curriculum is offered. There is an effective range of policies and procedures that actively support the children, and promote their health and wellbeing.

There are sufficient, valued practitioners and volunteers who have knowledge and expertise with relevant, appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children. Without exception practitioners create a stimulating environment for learning indoors and out and are well informed about what they need to do to help the children to succeed.

There are good opportunities for safe outdoor play and resources are used effectively. They are appropriate and sufficient to address the requirements of the Foundation Phase and successfully support the needs of the children in all areas of learning. The accommodation is used effectively, secure and well maintained to support the learning of the children.

The local environment, community and visitors to the setting including the Mayor and Lady Mayor are used consistently well to enhance the facilities at the setting and enrich and extend the experiences of the children.

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

The setting is well managed and there is a positive ethos, clear direction and sense of purpose that effectively promotes and sustains improvement. Implementation of policies and initiatives is effective. Leaders have high expectations for improvement and development and ensure that the Foundation Phase is successfully delivered.

Values, aims and objectives are shared and all are working for the benefit of the children. Practitioners and volunteers are exceptionally well deployed and their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. There are high expectations and the focus is on the children making progress in their learning.

The leaders fully understand their roles and are effectively informed about the performance of the setting by quality review and self evaluation. Relevant legislation and guidance are taken into account and leaders are involved in national and local

priorities such as Grow with Me and Designed to Smile that impacts very positively on the health of the children.

Learning and teaching are organised well with good parental links to support the progress of the children. An effective training programme and appraisals ensure that practitioners are aware of what they need to do and can improve their knowledge and practice.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation effectively identifies areas for improvement. Practitioners know the setting exceptionally well and as a result strengths and areas for development are recognised and action is taken to implement good practice and make changes that ensure positive gains and successful improvements for the children. For example, the changes to the outdoor area have enabled more independence, choice and further skill development opportunities for the children. Visits to the school outdoor area and the nursery garden have further enhanced the range of outdoor learning opportunities.

The setting has made good progress since their previous Estyn inspection and has satisfactorily addressed all the recommendations. The setting has also achieved Highly Commended in the Wales Pre-school Providers scheme Quality for All. Practitioners, the responsible individuals and person in charge and local authority teacher are able to evidence how the provision and standards have been improved as a result. There is effective leadership, and the children have continuity of care and learn successfully in the playgroup.

There is a highly effective culture of self-reflection and practitioners are open to new ideas and try different ways of working. All practitioners are engaged in professional development and attend courses that effectively raise standards and highly successfully support the wellbeing of the children. They actively share their expertise and knowledge to benefit each other and ensure a positive impact on the setting.

Partnership working: Good

There is clear communication between parents and the playgroup and they have an effective level of information about the setting and are involved in supporting the learning of their children and the work of the playgroup. Parents are also successfully informed of their child's progress by speaking to the practitioners, by an on going assessment record and by taking a turn on rota duty where they can see first hand the progress and development of their children. A notice board includes early education information, Welsh phrases and parent helper advice and as a result parents are kept effectively up to date with what is happening in the playgroup and successfully know what they can do to help their children to learn.

The playgroup works effectively with partners for the benefit of the children and a range of partnerships makes a good contribution to the progress of the children and their wellbeing and successfully enhances and supports their learning.

There is a highly successful relationship with the school to include a transition policy that ensures an effective transition to support the children. Resources are shared, for example the nursery outdoor area and this helps the children to become familiar with the school. There is an effective partnership with the local authority advisory teacher who visits the setting, providing guidance, which impacts positively on the achievements of the children and enhances the work of the setting.

Partnerships within the local community and church such as the visits from the church leader who helps the children to take care of their garden, police, and road safety successfully add another dimension to the children's learning and experience of the world of work.

The setting has an effective partnership with other professionals to ensure a good level of support for any children with additional learning needs. Practitioners work exceptionally well together as a team, are very well briefed before the start of the session and highly effectively share information for the benefit of all the children.

Resource management: Good

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of budget matters and future resource needs are well planned for and prioritised to develop the provision and improve outcomes and the wellbeing of the children.

All practitioners and parents on rota duty are exceptionally well deployed and manage a good range of resources successfully to motivate and encourage the children to learn.

There are good opportunities for a range of learning experiences both indoors and in the outdoor environment where the playgroup are able to access school resources to effectively develop different skills, for example the climbing wall. Learning outdoors is effective and the doors are open so that the children can decide for themselves whether to learn indoors or out. A good supply of high quality resources is well matched to the stages of development of the children and meets any additional learning needs.

The funding that is received is used effectively and 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 reporting inspector

Mrs Anne Elizabeth 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)

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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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 partnership's conditions of registration.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.