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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Presteigne Little Peoples Playgroup
Presteigne Primary School
Slough Road
Presteigne
Powys
LD8 2NH**

Date of inspection: July 2013

by

**Eifion R Morgan
Reporting Inspector**

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

Presteigne Little People's Playgroup is based in a classroom at Presteigne primary school. The playgroup was first registered with the Charities Commission in 1980 and has been in its current location since April 2007.

The setting is within the school grounds but is independent of the school in terms of funding and management, but enjoys access to the school's extensive playing fields and adjacent woodland. The playgroup also has a designated garden within the school grounds.

Presteigne is situated in mid Wales on the Welsh/English border. It is a rural area based largely on farming and associated industries. Children attending the playgroup come from the town and the immediate surrounding area- an area which is almost entirely English speaking. The playgroup reports that a small number of children come from socio-economic disadvantaged homes whilst the majority are from homes that are neither particularly advantaged nor disadvantaged. Four children are from an ethnic background and learning English as a second language. All other children come from English speaking homes. None speak Welsh and are unlikely to hear Welsh spoken in this locality. Currently one child has additional educational needs. There are 32 children on the attendance register. Twenty-two are 3 year olds of whom 15 are funded.

Children attend the playgroup from aged 2 years and move onto the next stage of their education in the term they are 3½ years old. However, this is entirely a parental decision as to when they leave the playgroup.

The setting provides the children with an attractive learning environment. The playgroup has its own entrance along side the school and there is a good parking area for parents. The teaching room is a large, well lit room, suitably differentiated into activity areas focused on the Foundation Phase curriculum. There are adjacent toilets and hand washing facilities and one corner of the room is designated for food preparation. Children have immediate access to the outside. There is a covered area so children use the outside whatever the weather. There is also a further outside area where children play and engage in activities such as water based play. Part of this area has a soft play surface. Some distance from the playgroup is a garden area, well designed with raised beds, a "bug hotel", composting facilities and garden shed.

A good and notable feature of the area used by the playgroup is the immediately adjacent reception classroom. This facilitates the transfer of the children to their infant education. Within the main teaching room is a parents notice board and after each session there is an outside white board giving parents details of the activities undertaken by the children.

The playgroup meets during school term times (40 weeks per annum) on four mornings a week 9 a.m. – 11.30 a.m. and from 1 p.m. – 3.30 p.m. The playgroup does not operate on Wednesday although staff have a planning meeting for two hours in the afternoon.

Since the last Estyn inspection in 2007, there has been a change of location, staffing and management. The playgroup moved to its current location in 2007, and the current leader has been in post for the last two years. During this time there have been staff changes and currently the leader is supported by two colleagues and two students on placements. Staff are well qualified.

The playgroup has, in the past, experienced periods of financial uncertainty. However, the current management committee have successfully seen the playgroup onto a secure financial footing. Currently the playgroup offers day care facilities for children aged 2-8 years old and longer sessions as a result of parental request. Overall the playgroup offers a flexible system that meets parent's needs.

The playgroup was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in February 2013. It is currently registered to provide care for a maximum of 18 children at any one time.

The recommendations in the last CSSIW report have been addressed. The playgroup has received the Quality Assured award by the Wales Pre-school Playgroup Association (WPPA).

Summary

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

Current performance

The playgroup's current performance is good because:

- the playgroup provides a wide range of stimulating activities and experiences for the children;
- all children make good progress and achieve well;
- the playgroup's very good ethos and attention given to ensure children's wellbeing;
- of the quality of teaching that supports every child;
- the consistently good provision and practice for care, support and guidance of the children;
- staff collaborate well in planning suitable activities for the children;
- the playgroup is well resourced and benefits from close liaison with the primary school;

the playgroup benefits from the support of an active management committee

Prospects for improvement

The playgroup's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the staff work together well as a team and all are actively involved in planning;
- the management committee are well informed and are fully focused on developing the playgroup and ensuring progress;
- the staff and management share a common aim and that is to maintain standards and improve where possible;
- the recent track record that has established the playgroup on a sound financial footing;
- the forward planning that has identified continual professional development as a key aim for improvement;
- the support provided by the local authority support officer and the Welsh Pre-school Playgroup Association.

Recommendations

To improve further the playgroup needs to:

R1. develop assessment procedures so as to identify the next steps in children's learning and to plan accordingly.

R2. inform parents of the children's achievement and the next steps in their learning so that parents can play an increasing role in their children's development.

R3. continue the programme of professional development outlined in the playgroup's development plan.

What happens next?

The playgroup will draw up an action plan showing 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 and achieve good standards. Children starting at the playgroup have substantially differing levels of knowledge, skills and understanding but the good teaching ensures that all progress well, both in their academic and social development. All children are constantly engaged in activities set out for them; they persevere for significant periods of time concentrating on their tasks.

Children's literacy skills are developing well and all children express themselves clearly. Children learning English as a second language are making commendable progress and are an integral part of the group and have little trouble making themselves understood. All children listen attentively and carry out instructions promptly and willingly. All are interested in stories told them by an adult. A significant feature is some children's recall of previous stories such as being able to name the stages in the life history of the butterfly from the story of the "Hungry Caterpillar". Many children look at books independently and more able children demonstrate good skills when handling books and follow the stories as they turn pages independently. These children recognise the characters in the story.

All children are beginning to experiment with mark-making using pencils, paint brushes and chalk. They know some of the functions of writing as when making a shopping list prior to a visit to the shops to purchase foods for their mid morning snacks.

All children have developing basic mathematical skills such as counting and matching shapes. More able children count accurately to 6 and beyond. A few children solve problems such as correctly subtracting 1 from the total. Most children recognise pattern such as when undertaking jigsaw puzzles and have a reasonable understanding of symmetry.

All children display good computer skills. They handle the computer mouse competently to move screen icons. They are able to select colour and produce their own individual images. Children are also familiar with digital technology such as using toy mobile phones and digital cameras.

Most children, in this totally English speaking location, understand basic Welsh words such as colour and respond to Welsh phrases as spoken by an adult. Welsh words and phrases are displayed in the classroom and children hear Welsh stories. A minority of children repeat Welsh words.

Wellbeing: Good

All children show a positive attitude to learning. Children arrive promptly and display a good deal of enthusiasm on entering the playgroup and are soon actively involved in activities set out for them. They converse freely with their friends showing considerate behaviour. Children sustain their concentration, are able to make choices. They are equally happy working independently or with a partner. Children are well behaved and relate very well to adults and visitors.

Children are developing an appropriate understanding, in line with their age, of the importance of a healthy diet. On Monday mornings when staffing allows, a group do the shopping for the mid-morning snacks. This involves discussing what they need to purchase and selecting the items from a local shop. The playgroup also benefits from having a garden in the school grounds where children grow their own vegetables. Plants are cared for by the children and harvested at the appropriate time. Snack time is a good social occasion when children take responsibility for distributing foods and clearing away. Adults sit with the children at their table and partake of the food. Overall, this is an excellent social learning activity.

There are ample opportunities for children to partake in physical activities and children, by their behaviour, show that they feel safe and free from physical and verbal abuse in the setting. Children are also involved in their own learning, in that they are consulted and discuss themes and topics that form their learning curriculum.

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

Day-to-day activities are well matched to children's interests and needs. Planning is successful in engaging all children and the learning experiences are well designed to enable children to progress towards achieving the Foundation Phase outcomes. Planning is done collaboratively so all staff contribute and know their roles and duties. Children's views and interests are taken into account and the curriculum builds systematically on children's knowledge, understanding and skills.

Learning activities are well designed to encourage children to work together and to form good relationships. Children learn to be tolerant and to respect each other whatever their background. A notable and good feature of the setting is the self-confidence displayed by the children. This enables them to have the ability to work independently and to talk to visitors about their work.

Learning activities successfully broaden children's experiences, including their creative and physical skills. The garden incorporates habitats for insects to hibernate

(bug hotel) and for composting waste plant materials. Simple magnifying equipment is regularly used by the children.

Children's skill development is given prominence and opportunities are provided to develop children's skills across all areas of learning. Sufficient time is also given for children to develop their thinking skills.

The Welsh language is used as much as possible with particular emphasis on the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales.

Good opportunities are provided for children to learn about recycling. Waste vegetable materials are collected and composted and plastics are collected separately.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are experienced and have a thorough knowledge and understanding of child development. They have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Staff have high expectations of all children both in terms of their academic and social development.

A good and notable feature is the appropriate balance between child-selected and adult-directed activities, both indoors and out of doors. Activities are well designed to meet individual needs and to motivate children. Questioning is well used to encourage children to think about their tasks and to challenge them.

Staff are good language models and use positive behaviour strategies, ensuring a calm and supportive working environment. All staff are actively engaged and this is facilitated by them having been actively involved in the planning and well briefed as to their roles.

Children are assessed regularly and comprehensively and observations recorded. This gives a good measure of children's progress. An outstanding feature of the observations is the focus on skill development in terms of each child's achievement. Staff are well aware of each child's capability and this forms the basis of future activities. However, this information is insufficiently used when planning future activities so that the work is well matched to children's needs and to challenge them. The next steps in children's learning are not clearly identified and planned for.

Whilst parents reported on their satisfaction with practically as aspects of the playgroup, they are not always kept informed about their child's progress. This also limits the extent to which they can help their children to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Day-to-day activities are well designed to develop children's sense of curiosity about the world and in particular their own community. The playgroup successfully fosters values such as honesty and respect for each other, and a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. Even at this age children are learning to take responsibility and are eager to help the staff, such as when clearing away and tidying up. Children show initiative, such as during snack time when they help each other. Rules of behaviour are explicit but underpin the social life of the group.

Specialist services are used appropriately. These include health visitors, speech therapists and the social services. The playgroup receives good support from the Welsh Pre-school Playgroup Association (WPPA). Children identified with additional learning needs (ALN) receive 1:1 support and have access to all areas of learning. In such instances regular reviews take place and the parents are fully involved. Children identified with ALN have their own individual educational programme and are monitored regularly.

Safeguarding arrangements are well established and understood by all staff. Policies and procedures are in place and meet the requirements of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. The leader has overall responsibility for dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues and all staff have received appropriate training. Overall, the setting's provision for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup is a fully inclusive community where all children have equality of access to activities and areas of the learning. A very good aspect is the respect with which each child is given and the staff's knowledge and understanding of each child's stage of development. Staff are experienced and well qualified and all are part of the team. All display a full understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and take an active part in planning. They create a stimulating environment for learning.

There is a good supply of quality resources that are accessible to the children and are well focused on supporting the learning. The accommodation is an attractive learning environment, supplemented by the easily accessible outside environment. There is also a designated garden area where children plant and grow their own vegetables, care for them and sample them in their snack time food. There are opportunities for children to look for and examine minibeasts and to observe them

using magnifying glasses. Apart from this the setting is adjacent to the rural environment comprising open fields and woodlands.

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

Staff work together well and plan learning experiences collaboratively. The time each week set aside for planning is very worthwhile and ensures that each member of staff is fully involved and know their roles and responsibilities. The leader provides the playgroup with a clear direction for their work and her quiet enthusiasm over the last two years has promoted a good standard of provision whilst being sensitive to what can be improved.

Practitioners share values, aims and objectives well focused on providing the best possible provision for the children. The leader has successfully created a positive ethos within the playgroup. She has high expectations for the children and these are largely achieved in practice.

Practitioners, once appointed become part of the team – induction has been effective and staff are appraised on a regular basis. Students on placement soon become active members of the team. The playgroup is efficiently organised and well supported by the parents.

Overall, the playgroup benefits from the effective leadership with its emphasis on meeting the needs of the children and staff who are committed to providing the best quality of provision for the children.

A notable and very good feature of the playgroup is the contribution of the management committee. This is a well informed active committee who over the last few years have ensured the continuation of the playgroup and have established it on a sound financial footing. The management committee are very well informed and the expertise of individual members have been and continue to be well used. They have overseen the expansion of the playgroup in response to parental requests and this has been successful. The committee work effectively with the local community and the school to bring about improvements for the benefit of the children. They fully fulfil their legal duties and have taken account of relevant legislation and guidance. This is an excellent example of a management committee committed to their role and illustrates well what can be achieved.

The playgroup has successfully responded to national priorities, such as implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum and taken note of such initiatives as “Healthy Eating”.

Improving quality: Good

The playgroup is self-evaluative and seeks every opportunity to improve its provision. This, over the last two years, has ensured a good and, at times, very good quality of education and has resulted in positive gains for the children. Self-evaluation procedures are well established and have identified strengths and areas for improvement. Planning has been well focused on securing improvement. The information derived from self-evaluation is prioritised and strategies and personnel identified to carry out improvements.

All staff have attended professional development courses and such courses have impacted well on current practice. Self-evaluation has highlighted the need to further extend the staff's professional competence through attendance at local authority courses and by visits to other settings. The current inspection supports this initiative and will enable staff to be involved in professional learning communities beyond the setting.

Partnership working: Good

There is an effective working relationship with parents based on trust and through knowing that children are well cared for. Parents reported on the helpful, supportive staff, particularly in terms of settling children into the playgroup when they begin attending. Parents spoke of the enjoyment children experience and the progress they are making, particularly since the current leader took over running the playgroup. Some parents would like more information about their child's progress and what they could do to help.

Very good links exist with the receiving primary school and the reception teacher. The playgroup benefits substantially from the support and advice provided by the Local Authority Early Years Development Officer and the backing provided by the Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association (WPPA). The local authority also provides professional development courses and report that playgroup staff make good use of such courses.

Overall, there is clear communication and mutual trust between partners and this contributes well to children's learning and the quality of provision.

Resource management: Good

Staff are well deployed. Planning is done collaboratively resulting in the active involvement of staff who know their roles. The playgroup is well resourced to meet the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum and to motivate the children. Children have immediate access to a covered area outside the main room and to a further well

resourced activity area. There is also a well designed garden where children can plant and care for plants. Very good use is made of the outdoors.

The outdoor resources are well used by the staff and the provision impacts well on children's learning. Overall, such activities impact well on children's skill development across all areas of learning.

The management committee and staff have, over recent years, managed the resources well and currently the playgroup provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Overall the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the playgroup and staff.

Eleven replies were received and parents/carers replied to each of the 16 statements.

Responses were on a 5 point scale, “strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagree, don’t know.”

All responses (100%) “strongly agreed” with the following statements:

Overall I am satisfied with the setting

My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.

My child is making good progress at the setting.

Children behave well in the setting.

Teaching is good.

Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.

My child is safe at the setting.

The setting is well run.

More than 75% “strongly agreed” and all “agreed” with the statements:

My child likes this setting.

My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.

My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.

I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.

I understand the setting’s procedures for dealing with complaints.

My child is well prepared for moving on to school.

A small minority indicated that they would like more information about their child’s progress.

Children

Children, in conversation, said that they were very happy at the playgroup and enjoyed coming. They liked the activities set out for them and particularly liked playing outside.

They said that staff helped them whenever they need help. Story telling and outside play were their favourites.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R Morgan	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.

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 partnership's 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>

National Childminding Association (NCMA)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National (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.