



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

**Rhos Methodist Playgroup
St Georges Road
Rhos-on-Sea
Conwy
L28 4RS**

Date of inspection: March 2012

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

Rhos Methodist Playgroup is an English-medium setting. It is situated in Rhos-on-Sea, at the western end of Colwyn Bay in Conwy and meets in premises belonging to the Methodist Church.

The families served by the playgroup have a range of backgrounds and most live in Rhos-on-Sea, which is generally considered a socially and economically advantaged community.

The setting is registered to provide care and early years education for 42 children from the age of two to admission to school. It provides morning sessions daily during term time and has 29 children on roll, including six three year olds. The local authority (LA) funds places for these children up to 10 hours per week.

All children attending are English speaking and a very few are from ethnic minorities. No families speak Welsh at home. No children have additional learning needs (ALN).

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in January 2012 and Estyn in February 2006. There have been few changes since the last inspection.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's performance is generally good because:

- children achieve well;
- positive relationships and high standards of care assure children's wellbeing;
- a wide range of learning experiences is provided;
- teaching is often good; but
- some aspects of planning are adequate.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are generally good because:

- leadership is enthusiastic, sets high expectations and organisation is effective;
- there is a strong teamwork ethos among practitioners;
- over time the setting is successful in maintaining good quality provision; and
- although evaluation identifies relevant areas for improvement, planning to secure achievement of the setting's goals is not formalised.

Recommendations

In order to improve further the setting should:

R1 improve provision and outcomes in information and communications technology (ICT);

R2 sharpen the focus on learning objectives in planning and make effective use of assessment to guide the next steps in learning;

R3 formalise strategies for evaluation and develop plans of action to help ensure progress towards the setting's goals.

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?	Good
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Standards: Good

Nearly all children come to the setting with very well developed skills for their age and stage of development. In general, most make realistic progress across areas of learning, especially in the creative and personal aspects of development. Children steadily acquire new knowledge, develop their skills and appear happy, confident learners as they explore their surroundings and try out new experiences. All apply their skills well to an appropriate range of structured play activities.

Nearly all children have very good communication skills. They listen attentively, use a rich vocabulary and speak in simple sentences. Most express themselves clearly. They are inquisitive; readily ask questions and initiate simple conversations. A few engage in extended conversations about what they are doing. Most readily contribute to group discussions, sing familiar songs and engage in role play. They enjoy listening to stories, recall what happens next to their favourite characters and show good awareness that text and pictures convey the story. Most steadily develop early writing skills through mark making, for example when playing in the baby clinic.

Children make generally good progress in early mathematical skills. Most confidently count to at least five. Understanding of one-to-one correspondence develops slowly and a few are less secure in matching and ordering numbers. Most use appropriate mathematical language to name and describe common shapes including, square, rectangle, triangle and circle, and develop a sense of time based on everyday routines. They steadily develop their understanding of appropriate mathematical concepts through structured activities.

Progress in knowledge and understanding and in physical development is generally good, but children's skills in using a range of ICT are undeveloped.

Children's progress in Welsh language is good. All show good awareness of everyday greetings and they join in familiar songs and rhymes with enthusiasm. Their competence in counting, naming colours and describing the weather is often good, but few use Welsh spontaneously when playing.

Wellbeing: Good

Supportive relationships nurture a strong sense of wellbeing. Nearly all children enter the setting confidently and readily engage in activities. For their ages almost all children show very good levels of independence. They are well motivated, have good attitudes and sustain interest and concentration well. Most readily make choices about how and what they learn within the setting, but their involvement in decision making about life in the setting is limited.

In line with their age nearly all children have an appropriate understanding that exercise and the foods they eat help them become healthy. They are aware of the need to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Nearly all develop good social skills, eat a range of healthy foods prepared for them and participate

enthusiastically in energetic activities.

All children demonstrate high levels of confidence and self-esteem. They have friendly relationships with adults and their peers and often demonstrate good collaborative skills during play. The positive role models provided by adults helps children feel safe and secure. They participate enthusiastically in structured games and their behaviour is very good. Nearly all show courtesy and appropriate consideration for others. They take turns, share equipment, look after resources and develop responsibility, for example when helping to put resources away.

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

The setting provides a good range of stimulating learning experiences that encourage realistic progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes, but planning offers too little guidance to practitioners in developing knowledge and skills through the chosen contexts.

Recently introduced weekly planning provides good details of the provision, but there is too little emphasis on what and how children might learn. Basic details of focused and continuous activities are shared with practitioners. The organisation of activities is good, but the learning objectives are not clearly defined. Too few details of how and what children of different abilities may achieve are identified to ensure more able children are provided with enough challenge.

Practitioners work very well together to develop the range of activities to stimulate learning and engage children's interest. They promote opportunities to solve problems, be independent and experiment with new experiences. They know the children very well and respond to their varying needs spontaneously and appropriately during activities.

The setting leader ensures appropriate progression in children's skills through careful reference to the Foundation Phase Child Development Profile and Skills Framework. Practitioners collaborate successfully to provide children with learning experiences that appropriately develop skills in literacy and numeracy. The provision for creative skills is a good feature, but the focus on skills in ICT is very limited.

Planning to encourage choice and free movement between activities in different rooms is good. The provision includes good opportunities to be noisy, take risks and learn through experience. Use of the outdoor area to promote continuous activities is steadily developing.

Practitioners promote children's Welsh language skills well through regular structured activities. The provision to promote their awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales is adequate.

The setting provides few opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, recycling or the impact we have on the world.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is imaginative, uses a good range of strategies and is often intuitive in developing the learning potential of tasks. The setting leader provides a good role model. Practitioners are aware of the activities planned and in line with their experience have a sound understanding of the Foundation Phase and child development. They manage behaviour sensitively, provide good models of language and use a range of approaches well to stimulate play. Activities are well organised and children are given sufficient time to complete tasks. Practitioners intervene appropriately when needed. Teaching is most effective when questioning is used well to check and extend learning. In general, there is an appropriate balance between child selected and practitioner led activities, but although practitioners informally discuss how to develop activities, planning does not clearly identify the expected steps in learning for children of different abilities.

There are appropriate procedures to exemplify and assess children's learning. Practitioners record day-to-day observations and the setting leader implements a range of focused assessments. The information gathered provides the basis of individual learning records. An individual profile of achievement is also completed and this is a useful transfer document. The records compiled provide a good basis to link assessments to the learning objectives for different activities and to help plan the next steps in learning.

Practitioners make time, on an informal basis, to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress before and after sessions.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting successfully promotes children's health, safety and wellbeing. It provides very good care and support. The provision for personal development is generally good. Moral and social development is very well promoted, but less emphasis is placed on spiritual and cultural development.

Friendly and supportive relationships within the setting have a positive impact on children's personal and social development. Practitioners foster the values of honesty and fairness, promote rules to guide good behaviour and sensitively encourage courtesy and consideration towards others.

There are appropriate induction and transition arrangements for children entering or leaving the setting. Liaison procedures with a nearby school are effective. The setting has appropriate procedures to provide children with personal and specialist support when required. It is aware of the services provided by agencies including the LA, health and social services. An appropriate policy to support and integrate children with ALN is in place, but the effectiveness of educational guidance for more able children is variable. However, the strong focus on building up the skills of older children during the term before they go to school is a positive feature.

Everyday procedures ensure the setting is safe and secure. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented. Practitioners are trained in first aid and all have a valid criminal records bureau disclosure.

The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has an inclusive ethos and provides a safe and secure learning environment. This helps to ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive and children are treated as individuals. Good relationships permeate the setting and practitioners skilfully foster tolerant attitudes. They value the diversity of children's backgrounds and sensitively encourage understanding towards others. They consistently promote good behaviour and ensure equal opportunities. Appropriate consideration has been given to arrangements to ensure that any children with disabilities are not disadvantaged.

There are sufficient practitioners for the number of children. The setting is generally well resourced for the Foundation Phase curriculum, although provision for ICT is very limited. Displays of children's work considerably enhance the environment and learning resources are accessible. Good use is made of adjoining rooms to provide enhanced activities, to promote the integration of learning activities and to encourage children to make choices. Within the constraints of the site opportunities for outdoor learning are developing well. Appropriate use is made of some resources in the community, for example the post office. Self-evaluation identifies this as an area for development.

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

Leadership is enthusiastic and effective management ensures good teamwork among practitioners. The setting is skilfully led; high expectations and a positive ethos are evident. Practitioners are clearly directed. Day-to-day discussions of the planning and organisation of tasks help to promote a shared sense of purpose and maintain the good work of the setting. Practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Strategic direction to improve educational provision is becoming established. The setting leader has recently identified appropriate areas for improvement, but the strategies to achieve these aspirations are not formalised.

Parents are provided with a summary of the provision offered. The setting has clear aims and objectives, its policies and procedures are implemented consistently and its statement of purpose is well defined.

A management committee has responsibility to oversee the work of the setting, but there is little evidence of its involvement in strategic planning or monitoring the setting's work.

Arrangements for appraisal and to promote professional development are established and regarded as effective by practitioners. The setting reflects on professional advice and readily embraces national and local priorities. Practitioners often implement the Foundation Phase philosophy well.

Improving quality: Adequate

Procedures to promote self-evaluation are insufficiently formalised and planning to improve provision is at an early stage of development. There is a reflective culture within the setting and a strong commitment to take account of the views of parents, carers and children as much as possible.

Good use has been made of Foundation Phase training and external advice to develop the provision. Since the last inspection in 2006 plans to provide outdoor learning opportunities have been implemented, but progress in formalising planning into a working document is slow.

The setting leader articulates her aspirations for further improvement clearly, but strategies, including an audit of provision and plans of action to prioritise, guide and resource initiatives are not in place. The self-evaluation and improving the setting documents provide a good basis to plan further improvements, but the absence of plans to secure the next steps hinders progress.

Networks of professional practice support practitioners' professional development well, but their awareness of innovative approaches to learning and teaching in other settings is limited.

Partnership working: Good

Partnership working has a positive impact on the provision and outcomes for children. The partnership with parents is a particular strength. This is achieved through an informative welcome pack provided when children join the setting, effective day-to-day contacts, a suggestions box, occasional newsletters and a notice board. Friendly, informal relationships with parents and carers help to promote effective day-to-day communication. Parents are encouraged to voice their views informally and also through an annual questionnaire.

Established links with the receiving school help to ensure a smooth transition. Appropriate information is exchanged and members of staff from the school visit the setting.

The setting has links with some community organisations and benefits from advice and managerial resources provided by the Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA).

A constructive partnership with the LA is well established. An advisory teacher is a critical and supportive partner and is strongly supportive in encouraging the further development of educational provision.

Resource management: Good

The management of staff and resources is efficient and this impacts well on the quality of provision. Practitioners are well deployed; they all lead activities and opportunities are taken to guide and monitor their work.

Carefully chosen resources are set up each session to provide a good range of activities. Learning resources are generally of good quality. The integration of

indoor activities is well established and regular use of a separate outdoor area is well organised.

The management committee exercises limited oversight of the setting's finances. There is no formalised plan to purchase resources or to evaluate the impact of spending decisions.

The careful management of staff and resources is good. This impacts well on the quality of provision and represents value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report:

Learners:

Children confidently and happily settle and engage in activities. They have positive relationships with their peers and with the adults. They benefit from an inclusive, welcoming ethos and clearly feel safe and secure. This was evident in their confidence to move between activities, to make choices and to initiate conversations. All children demonstrate a strong sense of trust and know that practitioners help and guide them. They confirm that they enjoy craft activities and energetic play.

Parents:

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received.

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Michael T. Ridout	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	<p>This is a professional membership association working</p>

Association (NCMA)	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.