



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

**St Joseph's Play Group
St Joseph's School
Brackley Avenue
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 7UU**

Date of inspection: September 2012

by

Anne Manning

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

St Joseph's Play Group meets in a classroom in St Joseph's Primary School in the seaside town of Colwyn Bay, North Wales and serves the parishes of St Joseph's and the Sacred Heart in Old Colwyn. The playgroup cares for children from the age of two and a half up to part time school age. The children use the nursery classroom with toilets and washing facilities at one side of the room. Outside; the children are able to use the different areas of the school including two school yards, a quiet garden, and a space just outside the classroom. There are good opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities.

The playgroup was established in 1990 and the running of the group is carried out by 5 practitioners, all of whom, including the nursery teacher, also work within the school. The head teacher is the registered person for the group.

The playgroup is open during term time from 1.00pm until 3.10pm. The group is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide sessional care for up to 30 children. The last Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales inspection was in May 2011 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

At the time of the inspection there were two children present aged three, neither of whom were eligible for funding during this Autumn term.

The group is English speaking, with some Welsh, providing care and education for children from families for whom nearly all, English is their first language.

The children are nearly all White British and one child has an additional learning need.

The playgroup has an equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children both catholic and non catholic. The children attending come from a range of backgrounds in the local area and nearly all children move on from the playgroup to attend the school.

St Joseph's Play Group is a member of Wales Pre-School Providers Association and receives support from Conwy Early Education.

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:

All teaching is good.

Learning experiences are varied and interesting.

Care, support and guidance for the children are good.

A good level of resources including ICT, support the learning of the children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

There is a good relationship with the school and other partners for the benefit of the children.

Leadership and management of the setting are good.

Self evaluation is effective and identifies areas for development.

Transition from the playgroup to school is good.

Recommendations

R1. Make more use of the local environment and extend the range of visitors to the setting to develop and enhance the learning of the children.

R2. Ensure that the next steps of learning for individual children are always recorded, reviewed and link clearly to planning.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it 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

Effective and comprehensive planning, both indoor and outdoor, including a good evaluation, successfully engages and includes all children. There is a mid term overview that is split into focus tasks and free choice with skill development opportunities identified. The practitioners meet weekly and plan innovative activities for the children, for example, using blackberry juice to make patterns the same as in a story about Ticw the Welsh bear or by putting the days of the week into a song to help the children to remember them more easily.

There are opportunities for children to do things for themselves and all children make good progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes.

The curriculum builds on children's existing knowledge and understanding and most are beginning to acquire good thinking skills across all areas of learning and make decisions. Children are confident to try new experiences and activities and experiences effectively encourage them to form good relationships with each other and with adults around them. Children learn to show respect for all cultural backgrounds.

Practitioners provide good opportunities to look at books including those written in Welsh. They use a good level and frequency of Welsh and effectively encourage the children during circle and story time and throughout the session. The children are confident and keen to respond in Welsh. There are good opportunities for mark making with a range of methods including using coffee and blackberries.

There are good opportunities for the children to develop their skills in ICT using a computer, a CD player, an interactive white board, remote control and simple programmable toys such as Bee Bot and a camera.

Learning experiences actively enable children to develop literacy, numeracy and creative skills and to widen their understanding of the world around them as they look at henna hand printing and celebrate festivals such as St David's Day and Chinese New Year in a simple but meaningful way. There are good opportunities for outdoor play in the school grounds and garden and children learn effectively about caring for

living things by planting flowers, and helping to grow vegetables and herbs. They have experienced giant snails and have hatched eggs in an incubator to expand their knowledge of the world around them.

Although there have been visitors to the setting such as the police and the school nurse, opportunities for children to extend their learning about other people and the role they play in society are too few. Children learn about re-cycling in a simple way through their junk modelling.

Teaching: Good

There are five practitioners working in the group, three qualified to level 3, one qualified to level 2 and the Playgroup Leader is a qualified teacher. All practitioners use a good level of Welsh particularly as part of circle time when children have opportunities to count their friends in English and in Welsh. Practitioners use circle time very effectively to let children know what is planned for the afternoon and consolidate and re-cap on previous learning. Practitioners are flexible and constantly review and adapt the session, for example, reducing the time spent on an activity when a few of the younger children became restless.

Practitioners are good role models and manage the behaviour of the children well. Questioning techniques are effective and extend the learning of the children. They ask the children what they have done and what they think in order to effectively develop their thinking skills. They make helpful suggestions as to how the children may improve. All practitioners are sensitive to the needs of the children and they know when to intervene and when to let the children discover for themselves, for example, when painting with chocolate and coffee. Practitioners use language well and all are skilled in extending the children's play and use good teaching strategies that promote independent learning.

Together every week, all practitioners plan a good range of interesting and innovative activities both indoors and outdoors that meet the needs of the children and the requirements of the Foundation Phase, for example, making and bottling perfume from fruit and flowers. There is a good balance between child initiated and adult directed play.

Children have an individual target set each term, notes are made of incidental observations and their achievements are recorded in 'Me' and in 'Treasure Books'. Practitioners are aware of the next steps of learning for individual children but these are not always noted, reviewed or clearly linked to planning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

A consistent team of practitioners in the setting effectively provides consistency and the playgroup has a range of policies and procedures to support the children that actively promotes their health and wellbeing. A variety of learning experiences develops their moral, social and cultural development. The children are starting to have a sense of awe and wonder about the world in which they live and their spiritual development is taken into account by saying a short prayer before eating snack.

There are appropriate risk assessments, policies and procedures in respect of safeguarding and child protection and practitioners have undertaken training.

The group encourages the children to distinguish right from wrong and fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect and effectively develops an understanding of living and sharing with others.

There are effective strategies for working with children who have additional needs, their families and other professionals. Children and their families are well supported because there is a named special needs/behaviour co-ordinator in the school who advises on appropriate strategies. Individual Play Plans are in place and there is good support for the learning of the children from the Conwy Development Centre. Practitioners are also able to use simple sign language such as Makaton to ensure that children settle and make the most of all learning opportunities.

Learning environment: Good

In the afternoon the playgroup meets in the classroom that has been used for the nursery children in the morning. Leading directly from the room is a covered outdoor area for the children so they can extend their learning outdoors in a variety of weather. The children also have use of the school hall, two yards and a garden as well as their own area where they have been learning effectively about the world around them by planting herbs and flowers and digging.

There is a well established ethos and the group provides an inclusive setting that values the diversity of background of the children and helps them to develop tolerant attitudes to all. Equal access to the curriculum is offered and there is a range of policies and procedures to actively support the children in their learning.

There are sufficient practitioners with relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children. Plenty of interesting and challenging resources are very effectively shared by the school. All of the resources used both indoor and outside are appropriate, suitable and sufficient to address the requirements of the Foundation Phase and the needs of the children attending the playgroup. Accommodation is suitable and used effectively. Although the children have made a visit to the Early Years Outdoor Learning Centre at Eirias Park Tu Mewn Tu Allan, opportunities for visits in the local environment are insufficient to enhance the facilities at the setting.

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

Leadership of the setting is good because practitioners and children are valued and the playgroup is managed well by a very consistent team. A daily schedule includes the organisation of the practitioners to ensure that they are effectively deployed within the group. The space including outdoors is divided into four areas. Each practitioner will stay in a learning area for a week and one practitioner will be available to cover and assist as needed.

The majority of the practitioners have been in the setting for many years. There is a positive ethos, clear direction and purpose that effectively promotes and sustains improvement. Practitioners have ownership of the playgroup and meet every Thursday to share ideas, update assessment records and discuss planning. Their ideas and feedback are valued.

Values, aims and objectives are shared and all are working for the benefit of the children. The focus is clearly on the needs of the children and there are high expectations and well established links with parents that effectively support the learning of the children. Annual appraisals ensure that practitioners can develop and improve their practice.

The leaders fully understand their role, are involved in the day to day running of the playgroup and are well informed about the performance of the setting. Relevant legislation and guidance are taken into account and information is used well to make informed decisions. Leaders work to national and local priorities, for example, healthy eating and Healthy Pre-School initiatives.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has made good progress since their previous Estyn inspection and has satisfactorily addressed the four recommendations.

Self-evaluation involves practitioners, parents and children and is carried out effectively to identify strengths in the playgroup and areas for improvement. The setting actively uses this information to prioritise and make changes. Practitioners attend courses and engage in professional development that effectively raises standards and supports the well being and learning of the children.

Practitioners share their expertise and knowledge to benefit each other and ensure a positive impact on the setting. Development programmes for the practitioners and the provision result in positive gains for the children.

Partnership working: Good

The playgroup meets in the afternoon in the nursery classroom of the school. There is effective support for the playgroup and an excellent relationship with the school with which the playgroup shares resources. As a result there are sound transition arrangements for the children to move on to the school nursery when they leave the playgroup. The head teacher spoke of the positive way the children enter school because of the time they have spent in the playgroup.

Parents have a very good level of information about the playgroup and the Foundation Phase that is displayed for them in the entrance including the different areas of learning and the 'experiences of the week'. There is a news letter about each topic that effectively lets parents know what is happening in the group. Parents complete questionnaires about the playgroup and are actively informed of their children's progress by speaking to the practitioners and a completed assessment booklet, Me and a Treasure Book.

Partnership working effectively enhances and supports the learning of the children and improves standards. There is a good working relationship with the local authority teacher who visits the setting on a regular basis, providing valuable support and guidance and suggesting learning experiences and resources that impact positively on the progress and achievements of the children.

The playgroup is an active member of the Wales Pre-School Providers Association, and partnership working with other professionals ensures active support for any children with additional needs.

Practitioners undertake training and meet up with colleagues from other groups and share good practice. The group have recently developed their outdoor space and have visited a resource centre to get ideas to effectively develop this provision.

Resource management: Good

The funding that is received from the local authority is used well and the playgroup provides good value for money. All practitioners are well deployed in the setting and resources are used effectively in motivating and supporting the children to learn.

Resources are shared with the school to good effect to maximise the learning and extend the experiences of the children. There is a good understanding of budget matters and spending is prioritised to develop the setting and improve outcomes for the children. Future resource needs are planned for and take into account the developing learning needs of the children.

The immediate outdoor environment and school grounds are used well to develop the skills of the children across the areas of learning.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. (This is because there were only a small number of relevant children at the time of the inspection.)

Responses to discussions with children

Children are happy in the playgroup.
They like all the staff and being able to play.

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.

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.