



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**St Asaph Community Playgroup
The Canteen
St Asaph Infant School
Upper Denbigh Rd
St Asaph
LL17 0RL**

Date of inspection: March 2017

by

**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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Publication date: 22/05/2017

Context

St Asaph Community Playgroup is situated in the grounds of St Asaph VP Infant School in Denbighshire local authority. The setting is registered to provide full day care for up to 26 children from the age of two years and three months to three years of age. There are currently nine children on roll, including four three-year-olds who receive funded early years education in the setting.

All children speak English as their first language. There are no children from ethnic minorities. The setting has identified a very few children as having additional learning needs.

A suitably qualified lead practitioner leads the education sessions. Two further part-time practitioners are deployed when required.

The setting was last inspected by Estyn in June 2011 and by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in October 2015.

Summary

The setting's current performance	Adequate
The setting's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

The setting's current performance is adequate because:

- Practitioners have very good relationships with the children and provide a worthwhile range of interesting experiences that encourage and motivate them to learn
- Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of the Foundation Phase curriculum
- Practitioners plan effectively for children to develop their Welsh language skills during the sessions
- Planning to develop children's creative skills is a particularly strength and provides valuable opportunities for them to experiment with different ways of expressing themselves through art
- Practitioners have appropriate expectations of children's standards of wellbeing and promote their personal and social development well
- Nearly all children have worthwhile opportunities to develop their independence through suitable activities that require them to make choices and to find their own solutions to problems

However:

- Practitioners' short and long term planning does not ensure that the children have sufficient opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills progressively across all areas of learning
- Planning does not ensure that more able children are challenged well enough to develop their skills
- opportunities to develop children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills are weak
- Assessment does not focus well enough on evaluating children's skills development or attainment across the areas of learning and does not lead to their next steps in learning

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- The setting has a broad range of worthwhile partnerships that contribute to children's progress and wellbeing successfully
- Practitioners work closely with parents and carers to involve them in their children's education
- The setting's leader has a clear sense of purpose and provides good quality

learning experiences in a happy environment giving children a good start to their education

- Practitioners have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and support one another effectively; they show a willingness to improve their practice and reflect regularly on daily sessions, noting suitably when activities have been successful or where they need to improve them
- The management committee is supportive of the settings work
- The setting responds positively to external advice about how to improve a few aspects of its provision

However:

- Leaders do not have a clear plan to ensure that they evaluate all the areas of the setting's work systematically so that they identify its priorities for improvement
- Planning for improvement is not sufficiently formalised and is at an early stage of development
- The link between the setting's self-evaluation document and the improvement plan is not always clear
- Processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning do not focus well enough on the standards that children achieve, the development of their skills and their progress during their time at the setting

Recommendations

- R1 Plan to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills progressively across all areas of learning
- R2 Plan regular opportunities to develop children's information and communication technology skills systematically
- R3 Improve the setting's use of assessment to evaluate children's attainment and measure their progress accurately to inform their next steps in learning
- R4 Strengthen the role of the management committee to fulfil their responsibilities as an effective critical friend
- R5 Develop rigorous self-evaluation procedures that focus clearly on teaching and learning to identify the setting's strengths and areas for development clearly
- R6 Establish clear links between the self-evaluation document and the setting's development plan and ensure that all actions for improvement are monitored and evaluated effectively

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

N/A

Standards: N/A

Wellbeing: N/A

There is no report on children's progress, standards and their skills 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?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

Practitioners ensure that most children are suitably engaged in indoor and outdoor activities. They provide regular opportunities for them to experience a worthwhile range of interesting tasks that keep them busy throughout the session.

Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of the Foundation Phase curriculum. They use suitable questioning regularly to develop numeracy skills during focused activities. For example, they encourage children to count how many wheels there are on different vehicles, how many eggs the chickens have laid and discuss the properties of two-dimensional shapes. Practitioners encourage children to talk about what they do and develop their communication skills effectively. However, short and long term planning does not ensure that the children have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills progressively across all areas of learning. Planning to develop the children's reading and writing skills is inconsistent, and activities are not matched closely enough to the needs of individual children. Generally, planning does not ensure that more able children are challenged well enough to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

Opportunities to develop children's skills in using ICT are weak. The setting has recently invested in a limited range of suitable equipment. However, practitioners do not plan worthwhile activities for children to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum.

Practitioners place a strong emphasis on learning through play and first-hand experiences. Nearly all children have worthwhile opportunities to develop their independence, for example by dressing and undressing themselves, setting out resources and serving food and drink during snack time. Practitioners also plan suitable activities that require the children to make choices and to find their own solutions to problems. Planning to develop children's creative skills is a particular strength and provides valuable opportunities for them to experiment with different ways of expressing themselves through art.

Planned visits from the local fire service and road safety officer enable children to learn about the world they live in and to appreciate the people that help them. The setting shares events with the local school such as performances by a wildlife theatre. Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities for the children to make visits within the wider community to the Cathedral and library. Children also visit the local grocery shop to buy their own snacks and drinks and take part in the city's annual gala parade. These activities develop a good sense of understanding of community involvement. Children have beneficial opportunities to develop their physical skills through visiting the local park and by using an appropriate range of wheeled toys in the setting's outside area.

Practitioners plan effectively for children to develop their Welsh language skills during the sessions. They use Welsh regularly in conversation with the children during activities and encourage them to respond in Welsh. They provide suitable opportunities for children to sing a range of Welsh songs. Children learn about Welsh heritage and customs through preparing traditional Welsh food and dressing up to celebrate St David's Day. There are also suitable opportunities for children to learn about other cultures, such as the Chinese New Year and Diwali's festival of light.

Teaching: Adequate

All practitioners have very good relationships with the children. The setting has well-established routines and ensures a consistent approach that enables children to feel happy and safe. Practitioners work particularly well together as a team and use a suitable range of strategies to encourage and motivate children to learn. They ensure that most tasks engage children's interest and encourage them to persevere when they begin to lose interest.

Practitioners ensure that activities build suitably on children's interests and involve them when planning activities around a particular theme. They have appropriate expectations of children standards of behaviour, know the children well and generally manage their behaviour effectively. As a result, most children have good social and independent skills. Practitioners make appropriate use of questioning to extend children's thinking and problem solving skills well. They use circle time in the cosy area appropriately to ensure that children's listening skills are developing appropriately and remind them successfully to allow others to talk and express themselves. However, teaching does not place a strong enough emphasis on developing the children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills progressively.

Practitioners use suitable procedures to record when children have completed their activities. These records focus appropriately on children's standards of wellbeing and practitioners share them daily to ensure that all staff know about children's achievements and interests. However, assessments are generally too descriptive and practitioners do not focus well enough on assessing children's skills development or attainment across the areas of learning. As a result, practitioners do not use assessment information effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning.

The setting keeps parents well informed about their child's progress through informal communication with practitioners before and after sessions.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners' effective care and support has a positive impact on children's personal and social development. They use worthwhile arrangements to promote children's health and wellbeing by focusing on providing valuable opportunities for them to develop a sound understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. These procedures are based securely on positive relationships, structured routines and clear boundaries for behaviour.

Practitioners use effective ways of rewarding the children's achievements and inform the school and parents of the children's efforts. Planned activities place a strong emphasis on fostering positive values including, honesty and fairness. As a result, nearly all children have a good sense of what is acceptable and un acceptable behaviour. This supports their awareness of being caring citizens very successfully. Practitioners provide appropriate opportunities to develop children's spiritual, moral and social education. For example, children are encouraged to tidy, share and take turns throughout the session and to say thank you for their snack.

Children have regular opportunities to develop a good understanding of recycling by feeding food waste to the chickens that they help to care for.

Practitioners respond quickly to individuals' specific needs. The setting works closely with community and education support services to provide specialist intervention when required to meet children's additional learning needs.

Appropriate risk assessments are in place and the setting has suitable processes to ensure safe recruitment of staff. The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding, first aid and for the safe administration of medication for children. These arrangements give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community and children feel valued and cared for. It has a warm and welcoming ethos where all children are treated equally and with respect. Practitioners make sure that all children have equal access to activities, such as having a turn to be 'Helpwr Heddiw'. Practitioners are good role models and encourage children to treat each other with respect and kindness whatever their race, gender or background. They encourage children to help each other appropriately, such as when tidying and when they put on their coats to go outside. The setting has sufficient suitably qualified practitioners to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase

The indoor accommodation and outdoor areas are secure and well maintained. The children benefit from the many stimulating, good quality resources provided for them, such as the challenging outside building area and the play shed. Practitioners use the outdoor area effectively to provide continuous, un-hindered access for the children, which allows them to make increasingly worthwhile use of the space available.

There are attractive wall displays that celebrate the children's work and support their learning. The building is clean, generally well maintained and safe and secure for the children.

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

The setting's leader has a clear sense of purpose and provides good quality learning experiences in a happy environment. She ensures that the setting's daily routines are well established and implemented efficiently and consistently. She makes appropriate use of practitioners' expertise and experience to provide worthwhile activities for the children. Practitioners work together well as a team, have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and support one another effectively. As a result, staff and children feel valued. However, the setting does not work strategically enough to raise standards and planning is not purposeful enough or sufficiently formalised.

The management committee is supportive of the setting's work and members actively engage in raising money and the setting's profile within the community. The committee receives appropriate information about the setting's progress. Members support the setting well in developing a few aspects of provision. For example, they have identified the need to improve opportunities to develop children's ICT skills. Although their role as a critical friend is developing, they do not always challenge the setting well enough to secure improvement.

Practitioners contribute useful ideas and suggestions informally to day-to-day planning. However, as yet, they have little involvement in formal evaluation or strategic planning about how to take the setting forward. The setting leader pays good attention to local and national priorities such as healthy living, and makes sure that there is a strong focus on developing children's Welsh language skills.

The setting has satisfactory processes to manage the performance of staff. As a result, practitioners are beginning to develop their professional skills appropriately through visits to other settings and worthwhile training. However, the setting does not always direct their professional development purposefully enough to support the setting's areas for improvement.

Improving quality: Adequate

All practitioners at the setting show a willingness to improve their practice. They reflect regularly on daily sessions and note suitably when activities have been successful or where they need to improve them. Practitioners are open to new ideas and are ready to try out new methods of working.

The leader uses a range of informal processes to evaluate the setting's performance and regularly consults staff, parents and carers about the setting's practices. She uses this information appropriately to identify its strengths. However, the setting is less efficient at identifying its priorities for improvement. It does not yet have a clear plan to ensure that it evaluates all the areas of its work systematically. Processes to

evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning do not focus well enough on the standards that children achieve, the development of their skills and their progress during their time at the setting.

Planning for improvement is at an early stage of development and the link between the setting's self-evaluation document and the improvement plan is not always clear. The improvement plan includes relevant targets, costing and timeframes but progress in working towards achieving them are not monitored systematically. As a result, the leaders do not conduct regular evaluations to ensure that improvement targets are met in full. Recent improvements have included enhancing Welsh language provision and improving the outdoor learning areas. However, strategies to develop children's number and writing skills lack the rigour to ensure consistent progress.

While the leadership has overseen the improvement in the provision, it currently does not monitor the educational provision effectively enough nor use first hand evidence and appraisal constructively. The setting has addressed a few of the recommendations of the previous report. However, it is yet to strengthen assessment procedures and opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills remain underdeveloped.

The setting responds positively to external advice about how to improve a few aspects of its provision. The setting leader works conscientiously to provide an appropriate range of resources and experiences for children and to improve the environment of the setting.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a broad range of worthwhile partnerships that contribute to children's progress and wellbeing successfully. Practitioners work closely with parents and carers to involve them in their children's education. This has a positive effect on improving provision and the children's standards of wellbeing. Practitioners ensure that all stakeholders receive useful information about the work of the setting via newsletters.

The setting has a positive link with the school to which nearly all children transfer at the end of their time at the setting. The children spend two sessions in the nursery class before they transfer. There are suitable arrangements for the transfer of information regarding individual's strengths and areas for development. These processes support children's transition well and help them to settle quickly on entry to school.

Parents receive useful information before their child starts at the setting and practitioners show them examples of their child's work regularly so that they can see the progress that they are making. They are also encouraged to offer their own opinions on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions. The setting's community links support children's learning appropriately. These include regular visits to the town's parks and public amenities. In addition, the setting supports local and national charities, which fosters care and concern for others among the children.

Resource management: Adequate

Practitioners collaborate well to develop and share their professional knowledge and expertise and work closely as a strong team. They deploy themselves appropriately during the sessions and support one another well. Most practitioners are well qualified and the setting is developing suitable opportunities for further professional development and a worthwhile range of valuable training. Although there are no formal procedures to share and evaluate the impact of training, practitioners do so informally as part of their daily interactions.

Children benefit from a well-maintained room equipped with good quality resources that meet the learning needs of many. The resources available for outside activities are of a good quality. The treasurer oversees the budget successfully and requests for spending are discussed with the leader and the chair of the management committee. However, they do not always link the budget to improvement priorities well enough and, as a result, do not evaluate how well spending decisions impact on children's outcomes. The management committee is pro-active at trying to secure further funding and has recently been successful in gaining a sustainability grant to buy useful outside learning resources.

In view of the adequate judgements for teaching and leadership, the setting provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received was fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Dyfrig Wyn Ellis	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.wales)

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 partnerships 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>

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 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