



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

A report on

**St. Gwynan's Playgroup
Early Years Unit
Ysgol Capelulo
Treforis Road
Dwygyfylchi
LL34 6RA**

Date of inspection: January 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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Context

St Gwynan's Playgroup is an English medium setting in the village of Dwygyfylchi in Conwy local authority. The playgroup is located in the early year's unit of the local primary school and shares much of its equipment and outdoor space with the nursery class who use the facilities in the afternoon. Most children attending the setting come from the local village with a few travelling in from the nearby village of Penmaenmawr.

The setting is registered for up to 26 children and is overseen by a management committee. The leader has worked in the setting since 2009, taking up the leadership role in January 2015. A deputy and three staff members, supported by occasional volunteers, make up the staff team. The setting meets every week day morning and provides a lunch club facility.

There are currently 26 children on roll aged from two and a half to four years, of which very few are aged three and in receipt of funding from the local authority. At the time of the inspection the setting identified that there were no children with additional learning needs. All children speak English as their home language and no children speak Welsh at home.

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

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:

- Practitioners provide a range of interesting learning experiences, which motivate and interest children successfully
- Practitioners are very experienced and have a secure knowledge and understanding of Foundation Phase practice
- The warm and caring ethos ensures that nearly all children enjoy their time in the setting
- Most children make good progress in the development of their communication and numeracy skills
- Nearly all children behave well
- Practitioners know the children well and provide effective challenge suited to the needs and ability of each child
- There are good arrangements for the care, support and guidance of the children
- There is a good range of accessible and useful resources to support children's learning

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader and deputy provide clear direction
- Practitioners work together well to evaluate the provision and the standards that children achieve
- The setting works purposefully towards meeting the targets in their development plan
- The setting is very much part of the local community and partnership with parents and carers is strong
- Practitioners are committed towards staff development and training
- The setting provides good value for money

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation to identify areas for improvement that link clearly to the setting's development plan
- R2 Plan regular opportunities to develop children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R3 Provide specific opportunities for parents and carers to know how well their child is doing and how they can help them to improve

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?

N/A

Standards: N/A

Wellbeing: N/A

There is no report on children's progress, standards in 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?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Practitioners plan together as a team well and provide a range of interesting learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, that engage most children successfully. The setting gives good attention to the philosophy and ethos of the Foundation Phase. There is a suitable emphasis on learning through first hand experiences. This develops children's independence and thinking skills effectively. For example, children investigate what happens when they put containers of water into a freezer and then experiment to see how they can rescue the penguins trapped inside the ice. There is appropriate provision for the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills. Children have beneficial opportunities to develop their writing, speaking and listening skills through a mixture of both play and well-planned adult led activities. Practitioners successfully promote children's interest in books and stories. There are regular opportunities for children to count and to recognise numbers and shapes. For example, as part of their topic on winter they match 'snowballs' to pictures and numerals. However, provision for the development of children's ICT skills is not systematically planned for and, as a result, children's use of equipment is limited.

The setting makes beneficial use of the local environment when visiting the local shop to buy a stamp and to post Christmas cards. Visitors such as a firefighter and a local dance teacher further enrich children's learning experiences and understanding of the world of work.

Practitioners promote the use of the Welsh language consistently well. They encourage children to respond to familiar vocabulary and to sing Welsh songs enthusiastically. The setting provides interesting opportunities for children to learn about the culture and traditions of Wales through celebrations of St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day. Practitioners develop children's awareness of other cultures effectively through looking at traditions such as Chinese New Year and Divali.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are very experienced and have a secure knowledge and understanding of Foundation Phase practice. Sessions are well organised and provide children with

a good range of planned activities and free choice. Practitioners use open-ended questions skilfully to move children's learning on, and intervene sensitively to encourage children to take part, for example when large-scale mark making in the outdoor area with powder paint and water to develop children's early writing skills. Relationships between adults and children are strong. Practitioners know the children well and adapt the levels of support and challenge they offer to meet the specific needs of each child successfully.

Practitioners have begun to consult children about what they would like to learn and, at Christmas, the children decided together what they would like to have in Santa's Grotto. However, this is at an early stage of development.

The setting has an effective range of assessment procedures. Practitioners record instances of children's progress and achievements regularly. These, together with useful and beneficial notes taken during adult-led activities, inform the children's individual assessment profiles purposefully. They also help to identify next steps in individual children's learning well. When children leave the setting, their parents receive an informative record of their time in the playgroup and the progress they have made. However, although the setting informs parents that they are free to view their children's records at any time, there are no formal opportunities for parents to view these and to discuss their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes children's understanding of healthy eating and drinking well. During snack time, children enjoy a varied selection of healthy fruits and snacks with a choice of milk or water to drink. There are good opportunities for children to take regular physical exercise, for example rolling down grassy slopes, riding scooters and digging and planting in the garden. Children recycle paper in the setting and use waste materials in their craft activities. This begins to develop their understanding of sustainability effectively.

Practitioners encourage children to share equipment and to take turns. They ensure daily that children understand and are able to articulate the setting's rules. Practitioners manage any occasional lapses in behaviour calmly and firmly. Children are developing a suitable sense of independence and responsibility as they make decisions about what they would like to eat and drink and when they help to tidy up at the end of the session.

There are positive opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, practitioners foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect and provide children with opportunities to reflect on their feelings. Children say a prayer of thanks before their snack. The local school also includes the children in any plays or concerts that take place.

Children are safe in the setting. Practitioners ensure doors are secure and visitors must ring the bell for admission. Staff are experienced in the early identification of children with additional learning needs and have effective links with a range of support agencies should the need for advice arise. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community and children feel valued and cared for. Practitioners are good role models. They treat the children fairly and with respect, which influences the caring ethos that pervades the setting. The setting benefits from sharing the learning spaces and equipment with the school's nursery class. The classroom is set out with clearly designated areas of learning and equipment is easily accessible to the children.

The indoor accommodation and outdoor areas are secure and well maintained. Bright and colourful displays of children's work create an attractive and welcoming environment. The plentiful resources are of good quality and used well to support planned learning activities. The outdoor area has a variety of different zones including hard and soft surfaces, a mud kitchen and a garden for growing and planting. A local woodland provides an additional area for children to explore the natural environment.

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

The setting leader and her staff are very experienced in working with young children. They are committed to providing a calm and happy environment where children are able to develop to their full potential. Practitioners value one another's strengths and work closely together towards shared aims, with the learning and wellbeing of the children at the centre of all they do. Clear job descriptions ensure that all practitioners clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. The leader ensures appropriate processes are in place to manage the performance of staff. This enables practitioners to identify their strengths and to set targets for future training effectively.

Daily informal discussions between practitioners ensure the setting runs smoothly. Regular staff meetings focus on relevant priorities such as planning children's learning and monitoring the progress they are making towards meeting their targets in the setting's development plan. As a result, practitioners are well informed and equipped to support the children in their learning.

The setting pays good attention to local and national priorities such as healthy living and places a strong focus on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Improving quality: Adequate

The setting's self-evaluation successfully identifies what the playgroup does well. Suitable assessments of children's learning show that practitioners have a good understanding of what is required to help them move forward. Practitioners are appropriately involved in this process and discussions form a regular part of their staff meetings. Practitioners are beginning to evaluate how actions taken will impact on improving outcomes for children. However, this is at an early stage of development and as such is not always evaluative enough.

The setting seeks parents' views through a short annual questionnaire. As a result, the setting has recently set up a social media page to keep parents better informed. The setting's development plan is a useful document with appropriate targets for improvement. It identifies what they need to do, how they intend to do it and the persons responsible. There are, however, no indications of cost and timescales are too vague. While the targets are relevant to the needs of the setting, there is no clear link between the findings from self-evaluation and the development plan.

Partnership working: Good

The setting is very much part of the local community and partnership with parents and carers is strong. Parents speak highly of the practitioners and feel that their children are happy and eager to attend the setting. Practitioners keep them well informed about what their children are learning through a regular newsletter that gives helpful information about current themes, and through informal discussions at the beginning and end of the sessions. Parents are encouraged to become involved with the current topic by contributing items of interest. The setting's development of its social media page has enhanced the level of communication to parents. This has a positive impact on children's wellbeing and their engagement in learning, as parents feel more informed and involved.

Partnerships with the school where the setting meets are very positive. The setting has strong links with the leader of the nursery class. This ensures a smooth transition for the children as they move on to school. New equipment is shared and both settings share responsibility for replacing or mending broken items. The setting's positive partnerships with the local authority's advisory teacher are constructive and support the continuing improvements successfully.

Support from the local community is strong. A recent sponsored walk by a staff member raised considerable funds towards the purchase of new ICT equipment, including a grant from the local town council.

Resource management: Good

The setting has a sufficient number of experienced, qualified staff to support children's learning well. Practitioners develop their professional knowledge effectively through a range of training linked to their performance management targets and they use this knowledge successfully within the setting to bring about improvements, for example in developing the outdoor environment to support children's literacy and numeracy skills.

The chair of the management committee has a clear understanding of the budget and ensures that good procedures are in place to support the targets for improvement identified in the setting's development plan.

The quality of the provision and the commitment of the leader and practitioners clearly demonstrate that the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

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

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mary Elspeth Dyas	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 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.