



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

A report on

**Little Acorns
Derwendeg Primary School
Hengoed Road
Cefn Hengoed
Hengoed
CF82 7HP**

Date of inspection: February 2016

by

**Peter Roach
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

Little Acorns playgroup first opened in 2010. The playgroup is registered by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) for a maximum of 28 children. The setting operates every afternoon five days a week, during term time in the nursery classroom of Derwen Deg school in Hengoed, Caerphilly.

At the time of the inspection 19 children attended. The local authority funds a very few of these children. Nearly all speak English as their first language. There are a very few children who have additional learning needs. Nearly all pupils who attend the playgroup come from the local area.

One of the teachers in the school is the registered person and a fully qualified playgroup manager, who has been in post since 2010, runs the playgroup.

The setting was last inspected by CSSIW in March 2014 and by Estyn in June 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Learning experiences are well planned
- Children settle quickly and are happy in the setting
- Practitioners provide a high level of care, support and guidance to pupils
- Practitioners and children interact well together
- All children have good opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles
- The setting offers a wide range of learning experiences.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because the:

- Leader provides purposeful leadership
- Practitioners fulfil their roles well and work effectively as a team
- Setting's has an appropriate development plan which secures improvement
- Partnership arrangements are effective
- Management committee is well informed
- Setting provides good value for money.

Recommendations

R1. Ensure consistency in the delivery of Welsh activities.

R2. Ensure planned activities are fully evaluated on a regular basis in order to enhance the next steps in children's learning.

R3. Develop clearer links between the self-evaluation document and setting's development plan

R4. Develop the role of the management committee to ensure they evaluate and monitor the setting's practices regularly.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	N/A
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Standards:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in the development of their skills, the Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection upon whom to report without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in the development of their skills, the Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection upon whom to report without identifying individual children.

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

Leaders and managers plan the curriculum well and share planned activities with all practitioners. Children's learning is based on effective curricular plans, which strongly reflect the philosophy of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Time is set aside, on a fortnightly basis, for all practitioners to discuss the planned activities. However, opportunities to evaluate the activities on a regular basis are underdeveloped. Practitioners use the indoor and outdoor environment imaginatively to encourage children to experiment with new experiences and to develop their skills effectively.

Practitioners provide good quality opportunities for children to develop their literacy, thinking skills and information technology skills (ICT). These include role-play situations, listening to stories, mark making for different purposes and experimenting with ICT equipment. Opportunities to develop children's early numeracy skills are progressing well.

The majority of Practitioners provide children with good opportunities to hear, to learn and to understand new Welsh words and sentences. However, a minority of practitioners do not always consistently use Welsh on a day-to-day basis. The setting places suitable emphasis on celebrating St. David's day every year. However, opportunities to fully understand Welsh culture and history are underdeveloped.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Phase and a good understanding of child development. As a result they deliver suitable activities, which challenge the different ages and abilities well within the setting. There is a close and positive relationship between all practitioners and children. Practitioners actively encourage children to persevere and concentrate on their tasks. They use praise effectively and manage inappropriate behaviour well.

There is a good balance between practitioner led and child led activities. All children have the freedom to choose adult led activities or to work independently.

Practitioners are good language role models. They take every opportunity to speak clearly to the children ensuring correct pronunciation and intonation. Practitioners know when it is appropriate to intervene in children's learning and do so effectively through skilful questioning and suggesting ways of moving the learning forward.

Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are completed effectively. Practitioners monitor regularly how well children are doing based on useful observations. There are good arrangements in place for practitioners to share children's achievements with their parents or carers.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Children's health and wellbeing is promoted well throughout the setting. It provides good opportunities to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children and parents or carers say they feel happy in the setting and are willing to ask for help and support if needed. Good opportunities are provided for children to reflect, discuss feelings, and enhance their manners and to pray. A good example of this is the way in which the children sit around a table to eat their healthy snack and to drink water or milk while they learn the important skills of cooperation, independence and speaking and listening. The setting has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Children's knowledge of sustainability is at an early stage of development.

Children are encouraged to wash their hands prior to sitting at the table to enjoy their snack. They also brush their teeth on a daily basis as part of the local health board initiative.

Practitioners make effective use of the positive behaviour strategies in place at the setting. These strategies reduce the incidents of aggressive or disruptive behaviour. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The setting is secure with all doors and entrances locked. Practitioners know their parents and children well. They are always vigilant and ensure that the children are in the care of their parents or carer before anyone leaves.

There are good arrangements in place for the support of children with additional learning needs. Practitioners work closely with professionals such as the health visitor, speech and language teacher, and the local authority additional learning needs team. All these partners enhance the setting's additional learning needs provision.

Children learn about the world they live in and other cultures and customs by celebrating events such as Chinese New Year and Diwali.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community, where children have equal access to all the areas of learning and activities provided for them. Practitioners welcome children as they arrive showing care and concern for all children and ensuring they settle quickly. They encourage children to share and to develop tolerant attitudes towards each other. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

There are sufficient practitioners, who have sufficient knowledge and expertise, to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. They make effective use of the resources and make best use of the space available.

Both the indoor and outdoor areas are secure and well maintained. Practitioners make effective use of wall space to celebrate children's work through attractive, colourful and stimulating displays.

Resources throughout the setting are generally of good quality. These are accessible to all children, which promotes the children's sense of responsibility well.

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

Within the setting there is an ethos where children and staff feel valued and appreciated. The leader has a clear vision for the setting, sets high expectations and challenges everyone to do their best. All practitioners share this vision and undertake their roles and responsibilities conscientiously. They work effectively as a team giving strategic direction to the setting's development. Their relationships with the children, parents and the school are very positive.

Leaders and managers ensure policies and initiatives, including those that meet local and national priorities, are implemented appropriately.

The setting's appraisal system is directly linked to the setting's improvement plan and is highly effective in identifying practitioner's further training needs.

Members of the management committee are regular visitors to the setting, which provides a useful link with the school. There are informal arrangements where committee members monitor performance. However, there are no formal arrangements in place to monitor the setting's overall performance against the setting's priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know their setting well. There are good processes in place to identify strengths and areas for development. Leaders regularly consult parents, carers and children about aspects of the provision, giving them useful opportunities to contribute to views and ideas. The leader together with the practitioners reflect regularly on the daily provision and discuss issues that arise during their staff meetings.

The self-evaluation document is a detailed document which identifies strengths and in a few cases areas for development. However, it is unclear at times where these areas for development emanate from. Areas for development become targets for improvement in the setting development plan. This plan is an useful document in identifying what needs to be done, by whom and by when. These targets are correctly costed together with measurable success criteria. The main focus of this plan is to improve children's literacy and numeracy skills.

Through good evaluative processes practitioners are able to show that they have improved provision and standards of children's achievement and wellbeing over the last few years.

Partnership working: Good

An effective range of partnership arrangements contributes well to children's progress and wellbeing. Practitioners take positive steps to involve parents and carers in the setting. Parents are kept well informed about all aspects of the setting's activities. They value this link and feel it impacts significantly on their children's happiness within the setting.

The playgroup has good relationships with the feeder school. The setting shares the room and the outdoor facilities with the school's nursery class. This provides good continuity between the setting and the school and ensures a smooth transition from one to the other.

There is an effective working relationship between practitioners and the local authority Foundation Phase teacher. Practitioners respond positively to the support and advice provided.

The setting makes good use of visitors from the local community to support children's learning. For example, the visit by the local police officers enhanced the children's understanding of their role in helping people within the community and further afield.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup leader together with the management committee manages practitioners and resources effectively. Practitioners are suitably qualified and deployed appropriately. They make a significant contribution to the progress made by the children. Opportunities for further professional development link strongly to the setting's priorities for improvement and practitioners outcomes from their own appraisal interviews.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of their budget and prioritise spending in line with their planned actions for improvement. The leader evaluates all spending decisions to ensure there is a direct impact on children's outcomes. For example, the recent investment in information communication technology equipment has had a positive impact on practitioners planning and children's understanding of how remote control vehicles move.

The setting makes effective use of the pupil deprivation grant to support and improve children's early literacy skills.

In view of the effective provision and good leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	20	17 85%	3 15%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		80%	20%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	20	16 80%	4 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	20	18 90%	2 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	13%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	20	18 90%	2 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	18	16 89%	2 11%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		72%	27%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	20	18 90%	2 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	20	18 90%	2 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		84%	16%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	17	15 88%	2 12%	0 0%	0 0%	3	Caiff fy mhentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		76%	23%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	20	18 90%	2 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	18	14 78%	4 22%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		72%	27%	1%	0%		
I am kept well informed	20	16	4	0	0	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
about my child's progress.		80%	20%	0%	0%		gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		63%	30%	6%	1%		
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	20	18	2	0	0	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		90%	10%	0%	0%		
		80%	18%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	20	12	8	0	0	0	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		60%	40%	0%	0%		
		65%	31%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	19	16	2	1	0	0	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		84%	11%	5%	0%		
		74%	25%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	18	10	8	0	0	2	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		56%	44%	0%	0%		
		63%	32%	4%	1%		
The setting is well run.	20	18	2	0	0	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		90%	10%	0%	0%		
		82%	17%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Peter Anthony Roach	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.