



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

**Buttington Trewern Playgroup
The Community Centre
Cefn Road
Trewern
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 8TB**

Date of inspection: October 2011

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

Buttington Trewern Playgroup is an English-medium setting. It is situated in the village of Trewern, close to the town of Welshpool in Powys and the border with England. The playgroup meets in the community centre alongside the primary school. It serves a wide rural area, including the villages of Buttington, Trewern and Middletown. Some children on roll live in Welshpool.

The children who attend the setting come from a range of backgrounds. The locality is described as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. A very few children speak English as an additional language. One family speaks Welsh, but nearly all children have English as their home language. A very few children have additional learning needs (ALN).

The setting is open four mornings each week during school terms. It is registered for 24 children between the age of two and a half and admission to school. At the time of the inspection there were twenty children on roll. The local authority (LA) funds ten children.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in November 2010 and the previous inspection by Estyn was in October 2005.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting is good because:

- it provides a wide range of stimulating learning experiences;
- the children are happy and well motivated;
- the quality of teaching is good;
- high quality support and guidance assures children's wellbeing, and;
- the playgroup is skilfully led and managed.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- leadership provides clear direction;
- strong teamwork and a shared sense of purpose are evident;
- the setting improvement plan (SIP) is well structured; and
- there is an established record of improvement.

Recommendations

In order to improve further the setting should:

R1 identify the small steps in learning to achieve objectives in planning;

R2 sharpen the focus of teaching and assessment strategies;

R3 improve resources for information and communications technology (ICT); and

R4 formalise plans of action to help implement the SIP.

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	N/A
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Standards: 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 at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

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 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

The setting successfully engages children in a wide range of stimulating learning experiences. Planning is securely based on Foundation Phase Child Development Profile and Skills Framework. Practitioners work closely together to plan imaginative activities and are flexible in their implementation, so that children learn effectively. Planning ensures a good balance of activities and builds well on children's prior knowledge and skills. Good emphasis is placed on promoting skills in literacy, numeracy and communication, but the focus on ICT is limited.

Carefully chosen topics provide a good framework for detailed weekly plans that include a strong focus on skills development for individual children. This is a strong feature. Planning indicates a good understanding of the Foundation Phase Outcomes and is a good basis to ensure the progressive development of children's skills. Practitioners show appropriate awareness of activities, but too few details of how learning outcomes might be achieved, such as the small steps in learning that promote progress towards an outcome, are identified to guide them.

Over time practitioners plan opportunities for children to solve problems, become independent, encounter new experiences and encourage them to think for themselves. They know the children very well and often match focused activities closely to their needs and abilities. Learning experiences foster positive relationships, nurture respect and tolerance and promote awareness of other cultures, such as through celebrating festivals. The integration of indoor and outdoor activities promotes well the consolidation of skills in different practical contexts. The use of visits and visitors encourages wider awareness of the natural and man made world. Use of the school grounds is a good feature in this regard. Furthermore, recycling and composting raises awareness of sustainability and the impact people have on the environment.

Provision to promote awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales is good. Practitioners, who are all learners of Welsh, promote the incidental use of the language well.

Teaching: Good

The impact of teaching is good. Practitioners know the details of planned activities and show a good understanding of the Foundation Phase. They use a range of approaches well to stimulate active learning through structured play. On occasions activities are over directed, but overall the emphasis on making learning fun is successful. This was clearly evident, for example, in the bread making activity observed. Children are given sufficient time to complete tasks and practitioners intervene appropriately when needed. In the best examples practitioners use open-ended questioning well to extend children's thinking. Teaching is most effective when practitioners challenge children to extend their learning and provide helpful oral feedback. Weekly planning provides sound guidance for teaching, but details of the expected steps in learning for different groups of children are not yet well enough defined.

Procedures for the assessment of learning are developing well and provide a good basis to plan children's next steps in learning. Good use is made of a skills checklist to compile individual profiles and structured assessments are implemented to monitor children's achievements. Day-to-day observations involve all practitioners, but these assessments are not always sharply enough focused on the learning and skills promoted by activities. Practitioners make time before and after sessions to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress. The setting provides a report of progress when children move to the primary school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The quality of care support and guidance is good. The setting's arrangements to ensure children's health and wellbeing are well established and the provision is effective in promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has a positive impact on children's personal and social development. It encourages a sense of curiosity about the world, fosters the values of honesty and fairness, promotes good behaviour and engages children in a range of community and cultural activities.

There are appropriate induction and transition arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting. Liaison with the primary school is sound. The setting has appropriate procedures to provide children with personal and specialist support when required. Liaison with LA services, including health, social services and education is effective. The arrangements to support and integrate children with ALN are appropriate. The provision to support more able children is developing.

Established procedures ensure the setting is safe and secure. Appropriate risk assessments are implemented and members of staff and regular volunteers have valid criminal records bureau checks. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides an inclusive ethos where children feel safe. It is a warm, friendly and supportive environment that values individual qualities. The excellent quality of relationships within the setting ensures children feel safe from undue anxiety. Practitioners promote awareness of diversity and encourage sensitivity and understanding towards others. They successfully encourage good behaviour and ensure equal access to all activities. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that any children with disabilities do not suffer disadvantage.

The setting is very well staffed for the number of children on roll. It is generally well resourced to meet the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum. However, the provision of ICT is limited. The accommodation provides well for indoor and outdoor learning although community use of the facilities for a variety of events imposes some constraints. Learning opportunities are considerably enhanced by regular use of the grounds and a good variety of visitors from the community.

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

The play leader successfully promotes a teamwork ethos based on shared values and high expectations. The quality of day-to-day management is excellent and practitioners have a good understanding of their roles. Parents are provided with a clear statement of purpose that includes a summary of the provision offered. A sense of purpose and clear educational direction permeates the setting and a range of clear policies and procedures are implemented well. A strong culture of self-reflection is promoted; this helps to develop and maintain the good work of the setting. Regular planning meetings ensure that practitioners contribute to strategic planning and the management committee is appropriately involved in supporting the setting. However, frameworks to guide and manage the work of achieving the setting's goals are not sufficiently focused.

Systematic arrangements for appraisal and to promote professional development are implemented and practitioners regard these as effective. The provision incorporates the Foundation Phase principles well and practitioners reflect on professional advice and have readily embraced national and local priorities.

Improving quality: Good

In recent years a culture of self-improvement has become established within the setting. This results in significant improvements in the quality of provision and a good measure of improvement since the last inspection. Practitioners take account of the views of parents, carers and children as much as possible. There are effective procedures to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The self-evaluation report is a useful document that links closely with the goals identified in the SIP. Good account is taken of an annual audit of provision and a good start has been made in recording evaluations of progress towards the setting's goals. For example, progress with planning, assessments and the organisation of resources. However, current planning does not include simple plans of action to clearly identify how further

improvements will be secured and resourced.

Networks of professional practice support practitioners' professional development well. In particular there are beneficial links with other settings and networking within the local cluster successfully encourages the sharing of good practice.

Partnership working: Good

The setting benefits from a range of beneficial partnerships that impact well on the quality of service it provides. Practitioners maintain very positive relationships with parents and carers. Good use is made of home/setting diaries and learning journals to promote parental involvement. Informal day-to-day communication is friendly and effective in keeping parents informed about their child's progress, the curriculum and planned activities. This partnership contributes well to children's progress and wellbeing.

Partnership working among practitioners is effective in developing the provision and appropriate links help to ensure a smooth transition to the primary school.

The setting makes good use of resources within the local community, including visits and visitors, to enhance provision. For example, a recent nature walk inspired the making of hedgehogs from natural materials.

Partnerships with the LA and the Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association (WPPA) provide effective professional support and challenge. The setting holds the latter's quality standard. Practitioners value and respond positively to the support and advice received from a range of external agencies. In particular they benefit from attending training provided by the LA.

Resource management: Good

The management of staff and resources impacts well on the quality of provision. Practitioners are appropriately qualified and experienced to meet the needs of children and the curriculum. They are well deployed and routines ensure that carefully chosen resources are set up each session to provide a good range of activities. Learning resources are well organised and the integration of indoor and outdoor 'continuous' activities is well established.

The management committee exercises appropriate oversight of the setting's finances. Its prudent approach, including the introduction of a staffing rota to keep expenditure in line with income has been successful. However, the costs of meeting important targets in the SIP are not identified. This limits the effectiveness of the SIP over the medium term.

The careful management of staff and resources impacts well on the quality of children's learning experiences. This represents good value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

Six questionnaires were received and three written comments stated high praise for the setting. Discussions with several parents during the inspection confirmed their appreciation of the good quality of care and education provided. Nearly all responses to the questionnaire indicated agreement or strong agreement. Around two thirds of respondents indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the setting, stated their children liked the setting and that they were helped to settle in when they first attended. They strongly agree that their children are safe in the setting and that they are encouraged to be healthy; they also say the setting is well run and that they feel comfortable about approaching practitioners with suggestions or problems. Levels of satisfaction were lower concerning the information provided about children's progress. However, most parents confirm feedback is provided on a daily basis. This was observed during the inspection.

Responses to discussions with children

During the sessions observed children quickly settled and happily engaged in activities. They have excellent relationships with practitioners and a warm, friendly ethos ensures children feel safe and secure. This was clearly evident in their confidence to initiate conversations with visitors. They know practitioners help them and that they must try to be kind and to behave well.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

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)