



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

**Arcville Playgroup
Tynewydd Church
Tynewydd Road
Rhyl
Denbighshire
LL18 3ST**

Date of inspection: May 2013

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

Arcville playgroup is a long established playgroup for children from two-and-a-half years to four years of age. It meets in a church hall on the outskirts of Rhyl and opens four mornings each week. There are five experienced practitioners supported by regular volunteers.

Children who attend the playgroup come from a wide variety of family backgrounds. The playgroup is registered to take up to 32 children. At the time of the inspection, 29 children attended, of whom 19 are aged three and funded by the local authority. Almost all children speak English as their first language. There are very few children with additional learning needs.

The leader has been in post since September 2011.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in May 2011. The setting was last inspected by Estyn in July 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

Overall the setting's current performance is good because:

- most children make good progress in their learning in line with their age and ability;
- almost all children have high standards of wellbeing;
- practitioners provide a wide range of interesting and engaging activities; and
- the setting gives valuable support to children who need extra help with their learning.

Prospects for improvement

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

- the leader is a good role model for practitioners and provides effective leadership and management;
- the setting is keen to develop its provision to improve children's outcomes;
- the setting makes effective use of self-evaluation to identify improvements;
- the setting has a sound record of improving provision and management; and
- partnerships with parents and the community are good.

Recommendations

R1 Use children's outcomes to set clear learning outcomes when planning children's work and to accurately assess their progress

R2 Provide greater challenge for more able children, particularly in focused activities

R3 Address shortcomings in safeguarding

R4 Within the setting's development plan, set targets for improvement in terms of children's outcomes

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?

Good

Standards: Good

Most children make good progress during their time in the setting, in line with their age and stage of development. Most have a good recall of previous learning and are keen to learn. Many sustain their concentration for a suitable length of time, such as when building a model railway or acting in the role-play area.

Most children's literacy skills are developing well. During story time and circle time they listen with interest and ask appropriate questions. Many speak confidently to adults and other children using a suitably wide and interesting vocabulary. They retell tales they know well and give clear accounts of their news and family events. Many children enjoy looking at books on their own or with an adult. A few are able to identify that the printed word has meaning. Most children are at an early stage in developing their writing skills. Most are keen to make marks and a few are able to copy their own name accurately and recognise the sounds that letters make. Not all hold their pencils or crayons correctly, which slows their progress in writing.

Most children can count to ten correctly and many count beyond this number. More able children match numbers to symbols correctly. Many have a good idea of size and use the words bigger and smaller and higher and lower correctly such as "Jack's beanstalk was higher than you, it was higher than a house." They know the names of regular flat shapes including star, triangle, rectangle, circle, and square.

Most children's use of information and communication technology (ICT) is developing well. They use resources such as programmable toys, recording devices, calculators and cash registers with interest and purpose.

The Welsh language skills of many children are developing suitably. These children join in enthusiastically with Welsh songs, count to ten in Welsh and can name common colours correctly.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children are well behaved, settle easily at the beginning of the session and show that they can share and take turns. Many children show enthusiasm for their tasks and an eagerness to play, listen and learn. These children show confidence and enjoyment in a variety of tasks.

Most children choose what they would like to learn and where they would like to play. As a result, play is purposeful and most children concentrate for a reasonable amount of time. Many work independently or in groups' well, play happily with other children and show that they can help each other to complete tasks, such as supporting another child balance on the tree trunk.

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

The setting offers a broad range of stimulating experiences both indoors and outdoors, across all areas of the Foundation Phase. Practitioners organise activities well to ensure sufficient choice of engaging and motivating learning experiences for children. They ensure that children's skills are developed well.

Children have suitable opportunities to develop their speaking skills, for example through role-play, sharing news and reciting nursery rhymes. They benefit from purposeful writing tasks, for example, a letter to Bear. Practitioners provide good opportunities for children to see a wide variety of printed texts for example from the playgroup library, displays, labels and nametags. They ensure good opportunities for children to develop their number work through counting, playing games, and ordering. The setting provides many occasions for children to apply number skills in other areas of learning, for example counting and ordering in the outdoor garden and sea life world.

Practitioners provide suitable opportunities for children to use ICT in a range of situations, for example recording equipment, an electronic till, calculator and control toys.

Children benefit from a daily Welsh focus. Practitioners use Welsh songs such as as 'Bore Da' and 'Amser Tacluso' well to reinforce vocabulary. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions when they celebrate St David's Day. Practitioners' use of Welsh is developing slowly.

Teaching: Adequate

Very good relationships exist between all practitioners and children. They are sensitive to children's needs and provide a good level of care establishing a suitable balance between adult-led and child-led activities. All practitioners work well together to take responsibility for the different activities or to deal with individual children. Most provide good language role models to suit the age of children and give clear instructions for tasks. They encourage children thoughtfully to take on or try out new activities. Practitioners explain well to children why they need to take turns, wear an apron or wait until another child has finished speaking.

Practitioners promote all the Foundation Phase areas of learning well. They plan activities carefully but make limited reference to specific learning outcomes, which means that practitioners are not always sure about what children are expected to achieve or what needs to be done to extend and challenge more able learners.

Practitioners manage behaviour very well. However, on a few occasions, practitioners intervene too quickly in children's activities and this stops children having a chance to answer questions independently and fully developing their problem solving and enquiry skills.

Practitioners make useful observations to record children's progress. They identify appropriate next steps for children in individual profiles. This is beginning to have an

effect on planning to meet the needs of all children. However, because the learning outcomes for session are unclear, assessments do not always focus sharply enough on exactly what progress the children are making. As a result, planning for focused tasks does not generally provide enough challenge, particularly for the more able.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

There is a suitable nurturing ethos in the setting and, as a result, children settle well each morning. Practitioners promote good daily routines that have a positive effect on children's wellbeing.

The setting has suitable arrangements for ensuring children's health and wellbeing. All children at the setting enjoy eating healthy snacks. They get plenty of physical exercise through active games and activities such as gardening. All children are developing good hygiene habits through the 'Designed to Smile' tooth brushing programme. Children's curiosity about their world is fostered appropriately by caring for the environment, growing plants in the garden and making compost from grass cuttings.

Practitioners encourage children to co-operate with others effectively. There are worthwhile systems in place for developing children's personal and social skills. For example, practitioners are particularly successful in promoting children's self-esteem through careful praise and in encouraging children's honesty through explaining wrongdoing and fairness when playing games.

Children with additional needs have suitable individual plans and activities to meet their needs. There are good links with parents and specialist services to support these children.

The settings arrangements for safeguarding children do not meet requirements and are a cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a supportive and nurturing ethos where children are valued and practitioners show care and attentiveness to children's needs. It provides for boys and girls on an equal basis and celebrates other cultures appropriately, for example in learning about the festival of Diwali.

The building is well maintained and secure and provides an appropriate physical space. The setting makes good use of the outdoor grassy area to improve children's learning and wellbeing for example by using wood to explore texture, crabs to understand sea life and for planting flowers and herbs. There is a good supply of play equipment and resources to help children learn effectively, including good examples of re-cycled materials such as wellington boots and boxes to develop imaginative play.

The setting has bright displays that celebrate children's work well.

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

Leadership: Good

The lead practitioner provides effective leadership for the setting. Working with other practitioners, she has established a clear vision for the setting that is shared successfully. Her eagerness to develop the quality of provision for children is central to this vision.

The lead practitioner is enthusiastic and committed to improving the setting, and provides a very good role model for practitioners. She actively challenges practitioners to do their best, for example by modelling good practice. Day-to-day management of routines is sound and practitioners are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The lead practitioner generally monitors the provision and management of the setting well and acts quickly in addressing necessary improvements.

The setting has an appropriate system for practitioners' appraisal that links to training and development opportunities successfully. The setting of clear measurable targets for practitioners is insufficiently well established

The setting's manager is suitably informed about the setting's provision and its links with the local community.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has a good understanding of the quality of its provision and leadership and suitable knowledge of the standards children achieve. It has a good range of procedures for self-evaluation. The use of external audits to benchmark performance is a strong feature in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. These have led to improvements in planning, and the creation of specific areas for each of the Foundation Phase areas of learning. The setting has made good use of parental questionnaires, for example to improve the quality of information it gives parents, especially through social media.

The leader has made good use of visits to other settings to improve the quality of the outdoor area, and most recently to introduce the 'key worker' system to support children's wellbeing.

The setting has a clear and focused development plan with appropriate priorities for improvement. However, targets relate almost entirely to improvements in provision and management and make little reference to improving children's standards. The setting monitors the effectiveness of the plan at regular intervals well.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a good partnership with parents. They value the range of opportunities and guidance that their children get, effective communication systems and the support that the setting accesses from specialist services. Many parents visit the setting as volunteers and follow the helpful guidance that the setting gives them

to perform their roles effectively. Parents regularly help on trips and outings to the locality, with gardening and Welsh language provision. Practitioners give parents and children valuable starter sessions before their children begin in the setting.

There are good partnerships between the setting and local community. Visits by the fire service, police, crossing warden and vicar, improve provision and engage children well. The teacher from the local school, to which most children transfer, visits sessions to meet parents and children to aid smooth transition to full-time schooling.

Resource management: Good

Good use is made of available practitioners and resources. The setting deploys practitioners successfully to support children's learning effectively. All practitioners are encouraged to develop their skills through a wide range of training courses that match personal and organisational needs suitably.

The management committee monitors the settings finances appropriately and spending is targeted suitably to meet priorities.

In view of the fact that outcomes for children are good, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Richard Hawkey	Reporting Inspector
Helen Morgan-Rees	Team Inspector

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

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)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

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.