



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

**Kerry Playgroup
Kerry Village Hall
Common Road
Kerry
Newtown
Powys
SY16 4NX**

Date of inspection: March 2013

by

Mary Dyas

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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About the setting

Kerry Playgroup has been running since 1968 in the village hall of a rural village near Newtown. The playgroup opens for four sessions a week on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings. The setting also runs a Mother and Toddler group one morning a week which feeds into the playgroup.

On Thursday mornings the playgroup meets in the school hall for children over three years of age. On the other three mornings they meet in the large airy room in the village hall which has to be cleared after every session because it is used by many other groups in the community. They also have the use of a kitchen which opens into the hall through a large hatch. Since the last Estyn inspection, the setting has developed an outdoor area which is set up daily with a full range of activities to support the indoor learning. This area is accessed directly from the hall to provide children with free choices of activities both indoors and outdoors.

The playgroup is registered for up to twenty-four children in any session. At the time of the inspection there were 16 children on roll of which 13 were three-year-olds receiving funded educational provision. Children can enter the playgroup for three days a week at two and a half years. Most come from the local area and the leader describes the intake as being mainly from advantaged homes. Almost all children currently speak English as their first language and there are no children whose parents speak Welsh. Very few children have been identified with additional learning needs and there are robust procedures in place to support them.

The playgroup was very successfully inspected by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales in July 2012 and by Estyn in March 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the playgroup is good because:

- All children make good progress during their time in the playgroup;
- Practitioners provide a wide range of exciting and interesting experiences which engage and motivate all children;
- All staff understand their roles in supporting the children's learning; and
- Children are happy in the setting and form good relationships both with one another and with the practitioners who care for them.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- The leader and her staff are very enthusiastic and keen to provide the best experiences they can for the children;
- The setting is well supported by a pro-active management committee which provides practical support, a 'listening ear' and acts as a critical friend; and
- The setting has a proven record of self-evaluation leading to improved provision which impacts on children's learning.

Recommendations

R1. Provide more opportunities for children to make suggestions to input their ideas into planning activities. This has already been identified in the setting's improvement plan.

R2. Develop the recently introduced individual targets for children to enable children and their parents to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and understand what they need to do to improve.

R3. Make more use of visits from the community to contribute to children's learning and experiences. This has already been identified in the setting's improvement plan.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

All children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their age and stage of development. They demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding across the areas of learning and are eager to try new and varied activities. Most children are very articulate and express themselves well and most are able to make their feelings and needs understood. All children join in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes. They handle books correctly and know that words and pictures carry meaning and all enjoy listening to stories that are read to them. Many show their understanding by joining in with familiar passages and asking appropriate questions. All children experiment with mark making using a variety of instruments and use the skills they have developed in role play situations such as making appointments in the diary at the hairdresser's. Most can recognise their written name when they self register on arrival, when they describe how they are feeling and on their pegs when they find their coats to go outdoors.

Most children refer to numbers and use mathematical language correctly during the course of their play. Most are beginning to recognise written numbers and many are able to do so up to ten. All children are developing their understanding and use of ICT as they play confidently with a range of electronic toys, print out pictures they have drawn on a computer and use a camera to record interesting moments in their day.

All children show increasing understanding of familiar Welsh words and phrases, count to ten and are beginning to name basic colours. They understand simple instructions and use of individual words in Welsh but most do not yet use them spontaneously themselves.

Wellbeing: Good

All children are happy and confident in the setting. They come into the playgroup happily and settle immediately to an activity. All join in with activities and are interested to try out new experiences such as exploring the texture of cornflour mixed with brown dye to create 'mud' as part of their activities based around the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. They say that they enjoy coming to the group and have made friends that they look forward to seeing and playing with. They are developing responsibility and independence through taking their turn at being 'Helpwr Heddiw' and carrying out their tasks which include helping to wash, peel and cut up fruit for the morning snack.

Children all have good relationships with the adults in the setting. They show that they trust and care for them and freely ask for help. Behaviour in the setting is good. Children understand the need to share and to take turns and know that it is important to treat each other nicely.

All children know that it is important to have clean hands after using the toilet and before eating their snacks. They are beginning to understand that they need to eat certain foods such as fruit and vegetables to be healthy. They are developing good independent skills: all are able to cut fruit and to spread butter on toast at snack time and most can put their coats on independently.

Although children are not yet involved in helping to plan activities for the setting they do make decisions about what they would like to do and know that if they ask for a particular activity the practitioners will try to organise this for them.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Practitioners plan together a wide range of exciting and interesting activities for the children. Planning is based on the Foundation Phase principles and addresses all areas of learning. Planned adult-led activities include provision for extension activities for the more able. The setting makes very good use of the outside area to extend the planned activities indoors. The Welsh language is positively promoted through songs, rhymes and the use of simple words and phrases throughout the session. Both St Dwynwen's day and St David's day are positively used to introduce the children to Welsh traditions and customs such as food and songs.

All children recycle their uneaten food and plastic milk bottles at snack time and have visited the community recycling area to take their waste. Good experiences are provided for children to learn about the wider world; for example when they discuss celebrations such as Chinese New Year or Divali or look at the differences between the print in Russian and English text in their story books.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good and the setting provides a range of imaginative and stimulating activities. All practitioners are well qualified and experienced and demonstrate a sound understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. They ensure that all children are purposefully engaged and act as good models for role play and when introducing new equipment. Children are encouraged to be independent and practitioners are beginning to consider their comments and ideas when planning future activities. Staff work well together, and interact positively with the children. They intervene appropriately and know when to stand back and allow children to investigate and explore for themselves. Children behave well and staff respond kindly yet firmly to deal with any inappropriate behaviour.

All staff are involved in making observations of children's progress. These are useful and clearly linked to both learning intentions and children's individual targets. The identification of individual learning targets is a recent one and has already impacted on the quality of observations and assessments. Parents have been made aware of their children's targets and many report that they are supporting these at home. Information from observations and assessments is used to inform the completion of the Powys 3+ Learning Record and also to prepare the report given to parents and carers when their child moves on from the setting. This report gives good information about children's progress under the areas of learning of the Foundation Phase but does not yet include any suggestions for the child's next steps.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are good arrangements in place to ensure children's health and well being and these contribute positively to children's general development. Induction arrangements ensure children settle quickly into the setting. Practitioners are kind and caring and provide children with positive praise. Policies and procedures are in place to promote healthy living and well-being. Arrangements to ensure children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are good. They promote a sense of curiosity about the world and foster values such as honesty and fairness. Children are encouraged to share and to co-operate with one another.

Provision for children with additional learning needs is very good. Staff liaise with outside agencies and work hard to support integration and full access to all activities. Meticulous play plans are regularly reviewed with parents and have been used by the local authority to share with other settings as examples of good practice.

Procedures to ensure the setting is safe and secure are good. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no reason for concern. All practitioners are aware of their responsibilities. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are robust and adhered to and there are good procedures for managing children's arrival at and leaving the setting.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup is an inclusive community and children are encouraged to treat one another fairly. All children have access to the full range of activities. Displays of children's work reflect recent learning activities and help to create a bright and welcoming environment. Staff have worked hard on the outdoor provision to provide a learning environment which enables children to explore a wide range of interesting experiences. Children have free access to this area easily from the main hall.

The setting employs sufficient well-trained practitioners to meet the needs of all children. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase. All practitioners are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills through relevant training. There are ample good quality resources to support the planned activities.

Good use is made of the local area but there are not enough opportunities for children to expand their experiences through learning from visitors

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

Leadership: Good

The setting is strongly led and the leader makes good use of the experience and expertise of her staff team. There is a well established culture of self-improvement amongst practitioners which helps to develop and maintain the good work of the setting. The leader responds well to advice and support and ensures that changes impact positively upon children's standards and the quality of provision.

The playgroup is run by a voluntary committee comprising parents of children attending the setting who oversee the day to day management and provide practical support including fundraising and attending the setting as a 'mothers help' The current chair of the committee is exceptionally effective in quality improvement; acting as a critical friend to the leader and driving forward improvements to policies, performance management procedures and the self-evaluation process. This is a strong feature of the setting.

Documentation provided for parents clearly lists the main objectives of the setting and the provision available. Procedures for performance management are robust and individual targets are set for the staff which are reviewed regularly. A recent innovation has been the introduction of session observations and peer reviews. Practitioners respond appropriately to national and local priorities and are fully involved in training and developments connected with the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Excellent

The playgroup has a strong track record in improving the quality of its provision. This is an excellent feature of the setting and the leader's highly focussed and pro-active efforts to drive forward improvements in all aspects of management and provision are sector leading practice. Visits to other settings have brought about significant improvements, for example a visit by all practitioners to see the development of their outdoor provision led to an audit of the outdoors and an action plan to address areas that could be developed further. This has resulted in the current provision of a wide range of activities covering all areas of learning and providing children with many opportunities to explore and investigate their environment.

Effective procedures to identify the setting's strengths and areas for development are in place. Practitioners endeavour informally to take account of the views of parents and carers, and their children as much as possible. Self-evaluation is wide ranging and targets for improvement are realistic and ambitious. Responsibility for different areas of improvement in the setting is shared between the practitioners making use of individual strengths and interests. Targets for improvement identified in self-evaluation are reviewed regularly and any action or improvement noted. This has had a positive impact on the outcomes for children. Networks of professional practice support well practitioners' professional development. The setting has beneficial links

developed through a local cluster of settings and regular meetings successfully encourage the sharing of good practice.

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners have positive relationships with parents and carers. Newsletters and daily comments on the notice board keep them well informed and the setting offers opportunities for parents to come to discuss their children's progress. Almost all parents speak highly of the work of the setting and all say their children enjoy attending. An exceptional feature of the work of the setting is the meeting called by the leader for parents and carers in order to inform them of the activities planned for the children for the week ahead

The playgroup has good relationships with the school and almost all children move on to the nursery class. The setting uses the school hall and the early years outdoor area one morning a week which enables children to become familiar with the school environment before they move on. Children are regularly invited by the school to join in with events such as the annual harvest and Christingle services which take place in the village church.

The local authority support teacher works effectively with the setting and practitioners value the support they receive and are keen to respond to advice and guidance.

Resource management: Good

The playgroup has sufficient qualified and experienced practitioners and ensures that they are deployed appropriately to make the best use of their experience and expertise. The available space indoors and outdoors is well used to provide a wide range of interesting activities to encourage children to investigate and develop their skills.

The treasurer and committee manage the limited budget carefully and work hard to supplement it with fund raising and grant applications. Appropriate arrangements are in place to enable the leader to buy day to day items and any larger spending is considered by the committee. The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Parent questionnaires

From the questionnaires received, almost all parents are very satisfied with the setting. Parents spoken to during the inspection all said they felt that their children were very happy at the playgroup and were making good all round progress. They spoke highly of the care and support provided by all staff members.

Almost all parents feel that they are kept well informed about their child's progress and would feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.

Responses to discussions with children

Children say they enjoy coming to the playgroup. They look forward to playing with their friends and enjoy playing outside and in the role play area.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mary 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.uk)

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

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