



*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**

**Little Learners Gronant Pre-School Playgroup  
Rural North Flintshire Family Centre  
Gronant  
Flintshire  
LL19 9YP**

**Date of inspection: February 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:

| <b>Judgement</b>      | <b>What the judgement means</b>   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Excellent</b>      | Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice |
| <b>Good</b>           | Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement   |
| <b>Adequate</b>       | Strengths outweigh areas for improvement                                  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory</b> | Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths                        |

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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## Context

Little Learners Playgroup was first established about 26 years ago. In 2006 this medium-sized English-medium setting relocated next to the primary school in Gronant near to Prestatyn in North Wales. It is managed by a committee and the general day to day running is carried out by a team of practitioners.

There were two funded three-year-old children on the first inspection afternoon and one present on the second afternoon. Nearly all children attending the setting are from the local area and come from a range of social backgrounds. All children are from a white British background and at present no children have additional support for their learning.

Little Learners Playgroup receives support from Flintshire Early Education and is a member of Wales Pre-School Providers Association.

The setting is open during term time only and is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales to provide care for up to 32 children aged from two to four years of age who attend a varying number of sessions.

The last CSSIW inspection was in October 2010 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

## Summary

|  |             |
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| <b>The setting's current performance</b>       | <b>Good</b> |
| <b>The setting's prospects for improvement</b> | <b>Good</b> |

### Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- care support and guidance for the children and their families are good;
- practitioners use very effective strategies to support the children's individual needs;
- practitioners know the children well; and
- there is an extensive range of resources to sustain the children's interest.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- there is an effective partnership with the local authority link teacher;
- there is a good relationship with the school;
- the setting has identified strengths and areas for improvement; and
- the playgroup has developed the outdoor area well to provide more varied experiences for children.

## Recommendations

R1 Provide more opportunities for children to hear and use the Welsh language

R2 Plan more effectively to identify clearly the learning outcomes expected for children

R3 Use observations more effectively to assess children's progress accurately

R4 Improve quality through the greater sharing of resources and expertise with other partners

### 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

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| <b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b> | <b>N/A</b> |
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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.

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| <b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|---|-------------|

### **Learning experiences: Adequate**

The setting provides an appropriate range of learning experiences both indoors and outdoors, which encourages children to work together well and form good relationships, for example through the doctor's surgery role-play and the water play with pipes.

Practitioners plan a wide range of suitable activities on a weekly basis that engage all children and are flexible enough to take into account the weather and the interests of the children. However, they do not consistently identify or record what the children are expected to achieve in each activity and do not always provide enough opportunities for children to make decisions about creating or developing their play.

Learning experiences build well on children's existing skills and understanding. Practitioners provide interesting activities that effectively develop children's communication, literacy and mark making skills, by engaging them in early writing in different situations, looking at books and listening to stories. Games and stories effectively develop numeracy skills and enable children to learn to count and understand simple addition and subtraction.

Practitioners plan suitable opportunities for children to learn about the traditions, cultures and celebrations of Wales including St David's Day but there are too few opportunities for children to hear or use the Welsh language. All children learn about other cultures by looking at books and sharing stories.

There are good opportunities for children to learn about information and communication technology, to include using simple voice recorders and programmable toys. Children re-use materials in their model making but are not yet involved in other types of re-cycling in the playgroup such as composting their fruit peel. Children learn to take care of living things, for example by tending their apple tree and growing strawberries and herbs.

Learning experiences include a few visitors such as the Community Police to actively extend the knowledge and understanding of the children.

### **Teaching: Good**

All practitioners know the children well, and respond effectively to their differing individual needs.

All practitioners are good language models and nearly all use questioning well to check the children's understanding and extend their learning. They generally know when to intervene and when to let the play develop. All provide helpful oral feedback and spend time with individual children discussing what they are doing and how it may be improved, for example how to pour water into pipes with minimum spillage.

On a few occasions practitioners miss informal opportunities for observation and for children to develop independence and skills such as pouring their own drinks and giving out plates and beakers.

Observations of the children are carried out regularly and assessment booklets are successfully completed. However, because learning outcomes are not always recorded on planning documentation, opportunities for observations are often missed. Practitioners record if any of the children need more skill development opportunities but these are not always followed up or reviewed.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

There are a useful range of policies and procedures to effectively support children and their families and promote children's health and wellbeing. Learning experiences encourage children's personal, moral, social, spiritual and cultural development.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The playgroup effectively helps children to distinguish right from wrong. All practitioners are good role models and the playgroup promotes the values of honesty, fairness and respect well. Practitioners encourage children consistently to take turns and share possessions. The setting provides good opportunities for children to work together such as when pouring water through pipes.

The setting has appropriate policies and procedures in place to support children with additional needs successfully. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well. There are individual plans and practitioners work closely with parents and professionals in support of these children.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The large entrance has a good range of information for parents when they drop off or collect their children. This ensures that parents are kept well informed about what is happening in the group.

The provision is well set out in one large room that is divided into areas for play and learning and welcomes all children, offers equal access and provides a fully inclusive setting. The group takes into account and values the diversity of the children's backgrounds. There is an effective equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children.

The setting provides plenty of resources that are well matched to the needs of all children. However, practitioners make limited use of the local community to enhance and extend the learning experiences of the children. Outside, practitioners make good use of this area for a range of interesting activities that engage the children well.

There are sufficient practitioners with relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children.

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| <b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
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**Leadership: Good**

The supervisor is an effective registered person for the group, which is led by a voluntary committee. Leaders successfully understand their roles and responsibilities and take into account relevant legislation and guidance. National and local priorities are actively met, for example 'Designed to Smile', a programme to encourage children to learn how to take care of their teeth.

Leaders create a positive ethos within the playgroup with the focus on the needs of the children. The supervisor supports successfully the practitioners and children. All are valued and respected and there are effective established links with parents to support the learning of their children.

There is clear direction and purpose and an understanding of what the setting needs to do to make improvements, for example developing the outdoors.

Leaders ensure that any changes to the running of the group impact positively on the quality of provision and standards of achievement.

**Improving quality: Adequate**

The playgroup's self-evaluation involves the views of practitioners, parents and children and is carried out effectively to identify strengths in the playgroup and areas for improvement. The setting actively uses this information to prioritise, make changes and develop play and learning.

Practitioners share their expertise and knowledge to benefit each other and ensure a positive impact on the setting.

Practitioners have visited another setting that has resulted in active changes to the provision, for example the introduction of a digging patch and garden, which have had positive gains for children's play and learning by providing more varied learning experiences for the children. However, practitioners do not have sufficient opportunities to be involved in professional learning communities, or have enough access to training or regular appraisals to consistently further their knowledge and improve their practice.

The setting has made acceptable progress since the last Estyn inspection.

**Partnership working: Good**

There are good relationships with parents, and information displayed in the entrance to the centre keeps them up to date with what is happening, strengthening effectively the partnership with parents and developing links between home and playgroup. Parents are made well aware of how and what their children are learning by having the opportunity each day to speak to practitioners when they drop off or collect their children and by written information about their progress.

The playgroup has an effective partnership with the Wales Pre-School Providers Association. It uses guidance well to actively support children, especially those with additional needs, and to improve the running of the group.

The setting works well with the local authority's early education teacher to develop the provision, and there is a good relationship with the local authority. All practitioners value and make use of the support they receive to develop effectively the provision and learning of the children, for example by using recommended planning and assessment documentation.

Good relationships with the school next door support children's wellbeing successfully. However, this partnership makes limited use of opportunities to share resources and expertise.

The playgroup works effectively with other groups who use the centre including the out of school and holiday club with whom they successfully share equipment. A food co-op every Tuesday where the playgroup practitioners order fruit and vegetables ensures that the children are involved in choosing healthy snacks that promote their wellbeing.

A few visitors to the setting, including the police and the lady with the 'Brush Bus', part of the Designed to Smile initiative, actively extend the learning of the children and have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

### **Resource management: Good**

There are plenty of good quality resources to deliver successfully the Foundation Phase. The playgroup practitioners use resources well, including those provided by the local authority. The range of equipment and activities interest the children and motivate them all to learn.

All practitioners know the children in their care well, and respond effectively to the differing individual needs of the children. Practitioners are well deployed and move around to extend the learning and the language development of the children. They use outdoors to actively develop the skills of the children across all areas of learning.

The playgroup plans well for future resource needs.

Overall, because provision and leadership are both judged good, the playgroup provides value for money.



## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. (This is because there were only a small number of relevant children at the time of the inspection.)

### Responses to discussions with children

Children are happy at the playgroup and busy.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

|              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Anne Manning | Reporting Inspector |
|--------------|---------------------|

### Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

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

## Glossary of terms

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| <b>Areas of Learning</b>  | <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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul> |
| <b>CSSIW</b>  | <p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>   |
| <b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>    | <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>  |
| <b>Foundation Phase</b>   | <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>   |
| <b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b> | <p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>  |
| <b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>                             | <p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>  |
| <b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>  | <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>   |
| <b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>                     | <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>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>National (NDNA)</b>                               | This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members. |
| <b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b> | An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.   |