



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

**Whitton Playgroup
Dame Anna Child's Endowed Primary School
Penybont Road
Whitton
Knighton
Powys
LD7 1NP**

Date of inspection: May 2012

by

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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

Whitton Playgroup is an English-medium setting. It meets in the Community Hall, which adjoins the primary school, in the centre of the village. Whitton is situated four miles from Knighton and four miles from Presteigne, close to the Welsh/English border. The locality is described as neither prosperous nor disadvantaged.

The setting provides care and education for children aged between two and four years old. It offers morning sessions on Tuesdays to Fridays during term time and is registered for 12 children. At the time of the inspection there were four children on roll, including two three year olds funded up to 10 hours per week by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. All children attending are English speaking and British born. No families speak Welsh at home. No children have additional learning needs (ALN).

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in May 2012. This is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's performance is good because:

- a good range of imaginative learning experiences is offered;
- healthy development and wellbeing are well promoted;
- practitioners have high expectations and teaching is good;
- the learning environment is supportive and well resourced;
- partnerships with parents and the school are very good; and
- the setting is well led and organised.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for further improvement are good because:

- good quality provision is maintained despite changes in personnel and fewer children attending the playgroup;
- there are established procedures for evaluation and improving quality;
- the setting has clear direction and a shared sense of purpose;
- improvements in planning and the use of resources are evident; and
- self-evaluation provides a good basis to focus further strategic development.

Recommendations

In order to improve further the setting should:

R1 enhance provision for Welsh, information and communication technology (ICT) and to promote cultural development;

R2 sharpen planning to improve guidance for teaching; and

R3 develop strategies and plans of action to secure the setting's goals.

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 offers a wide range of imaginative and engaging learning experiences. Planning is securely based on Foundation Phase Child Development Profile and Skills Framework. Practitioners plan activities that meet well the needs of children and the community. Planning ensures a good balance of activities that build well on children's prior knowledge and skills. In response to children's interests planning is implemented flexibly so that they learn effectively. The focus on developing skills in literacy and numeracy is good. The provision encompasses all areas of learning and recent improvements in provision for Welsh, ICT and creative development are evident. However, these aspects are not fully developed.

Carefully chosen topics provide a sound framework for detailed weekly plans that include a strong focus on skills development for individual children. 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.

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 and nurture respect and tolerance, but opportunities to promote awareness of other cultures are limited.

Indoor and outdoor activities promote well the consolidation of skills in different practical contexts. Use of the school grounds and occasional visits encourages

awareness of the natural and man-made world. Furthermore, recycling and composting raises awareness of sustainability and the impact people have on the environment.

Provision to promote the Welsh language is developing well, but too little emphasis is given to celebrating Welsh culture and traditions.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is skillful in meeting children's needs and planning shows a clear focus on the development of skills in imaginative contexts. However, the emphasis on how to develop an activity to guide teaching is less evident.

The recently appointed setting leader is skillful in motivating children to learn in ways that they enjoy. Good knowledge of the Foundation Phase is evident in the range of strategies used to stimulate play and structure learning. Good examples of modeling activities were observed and children were given sufficient time to complete tasks. In general, practitioners observe and intervene appropriately, encourage children to make choices and often use questioning well. Teaching is most effective where resources are used well to extend learning, such as through focused activities. Planning provides a sound framework for teaching, but details of the expected steps in learning for different children are not always clearly enough defined.

Assessment for learning is developing well. An appropriate on-entry assessment is implemented and day-to-day observations of individual achievement are noted. There is systematic reference to the skills framework and focused observations, together with evaluations of learning, contribute to detailed individual learning profiles. The information gathered provides a good basis to help plan the next steps in learning.

Practitioners readily make time to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress before and after sessions. A detailed report of progress is provided when children leave the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The quality of care support and guidance is good. Policies and procedures are appropriate and matched well to the setting. The arrangements to promote children's healthy development and wellbeing are effective. 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 activities. The promotion of moral and social development is very good, but less emphasis is given to spiritual and cultural development.

There are appropriate induction and transition arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting. Liaison with the primary school is a particularly strong feature. The setting has appropriate procedures to provide children with personal and specialist support when required. Liaison with local authority (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 have a valid criminal records bureau disclosure. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides an inclusive and friendly ethos where children feel safe. It is a warm and supportive environment where individual qualities are valued. Very good relationships help to ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety. Practitioners appropriately promote awareness of diversity and encourage understanding towards others. They successfully promote good behaviour and ensure equal opportunities.

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, resources for Welsh and ICT are limited. The accommodation provides well for indoor and outdoor learning, although use of the community hall for a variety of activities imposes some constraints. Learning opportunities are considerably enhanced by participation in events with the school, regular use of the grounds, including the outdoor classroom, and occasional visits to the wider community.

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

There have been several changes of leader in recent years. The recently appointed setting leader builds well on established practice and strategic planning to provide clear direction. The setting is well led and organised. Leadership is enthusiastic, resourceful and has a positive impact. This is evident in high expectations and the strong emphasis placed on individual learning and the provision of exciting activities, including visits. Both practitioners have a clear understanding of their role and good teamwork ensures a positive ethos where children are valued and respected.

The setting has a clear statement of purpose and appropriate policies and routines are implemented well. Annual procedures to promote strategic planning are implemented and leaders communicate their vision for the setting clearly. Parents are provided with good quality information about the setting, including a summary of the provision offered.

The headteacher, who is the Registered Person, liaises closely with practitioners and maintains appropriate professional oversight of the setting. Suitable procedures for appraisal and to promote practitioners' professional development are in place. However, the role of the school's governing body in supporting and monitoring the setting's development is less evident.

The setting reflects well on professional advice and readily embraces national and local priorities. The provision reflects well the Foundation Phase principles.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has established procedures to identify its strengths and areas for development. Good quality provision is maintained and there is a track record of steady improvement in implementing the Foundation Phase. The current drive to enhance provision and develop practice impacts well on outcomes for children.

Practitioners endeavour to take account of the views of parents and carers as much as possible. The self-evaluation report, drawn together by the current setting leader, is a comprehensive document. The strengths and areas for improvement identified match closely the issues raised in the annual audit and the setting improvement plan (SIP). Despite the absence of simple plans of action to indicate how the setting's goals will be implemented the current leader has achieved much in a short time. Furthermore, the SIP includes initial evaluations of progress towards key goals.

Networks of professional practice appropriately support practitioners' professional development. The setting has beneficial links through a local cluster of settings and good use is made of training materials, including those available on-line.

Partnership working: Good

The setting's strong partnerships with the school, parents/carers and the LA impact well on the quality of service it provides. Practitioners have positive relationships with parents and the quality of communication with them is commendable. In discussion parents confirm that they value the quality of the provision. Informal day-to-day communication is friendly and very effective in keeping parents informed about their child's progress, the curriculum and planned activities. A notice board displays helpful information, including weekly planning and the menu for snacks and regular newsletters provide important information about the setting. The strong partnership with parents contributes very well to children's progress and wellbeing.

Partnership working with the school promotes well the sharing of resources and facilities. Close liaison with the headteacher and regular links with Class 1 helps to ensure a smooth transition to the primary school.

Partnerships with the LA and the school provide effective professional support. An advisory teacher works closely with the setting and practitioners value the advice provided.

Resource management: Good

The management of staff and finance is challenging due to local factors. Changes in personnel have been managed appropriately and this helps maintain good quality provision. The setting leader is well qualified and builds well on her previous experience in the playgroup. A recently appointed assistant is well deployed, but some opportunities to develop her practice in leading learning are insufficiently formalised. The accommodation is used well and effective working routines ensure resources are well organised and learning activities are interesting for children.

Planning for future resource needs and to evaluate the impact of expenditure is not sufficiently formalised. The LA and the governing body maintain appropriate oversight of the settings' finances. However, fewer children attending result in expenditure exceeding income. The Dame Anna Child Trust funds the current deficit. The high expenditure per child represents good value for the children attending because the provision of care and education are good.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received. Discussion with parents confirm they greatly appreciate the good work of the setting and that their children enjoy the sessions.

Responses to discussions with children

The children quickly settle and happily engage in activities. They have very good relationships with practitioners and a warm, caring ethos ensures children feel safe and secure. This was clearly evident in their confidence to engage in activities and simple conversations. 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)

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.