



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

**Benllech Playgroup
Uned Mathafarn
Ysgol Goronwy Owen
Benllech
Ynys Môn
LL74 8SG**

Date of inspection: January 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

Benllech Playgroup was opened approximately forty years ago and is part of the Ynys Môn Children and Young People's Partnership provision. It provides pre-school education for children in Benllech and the surrounding locality. The area from which children are drawn is judged as being neither prosperous nor socially and economically disadvantaged.

Children of all ability and background are admitted to the setting. During the inspection, there were no children with additional learning needs or from ethnic groups registered at the setting.

The setting provides five morning sessions a week for two to four year old children, although the number of sessions attended by individual children varies according to parental choice. Places for sixteen children are funded by the Partnership.

English is the main language spoken at home for nearly all children. The setting's main medium of teaching and learning is English although Welsh is also used.

Children's education is supported by a leader and four practitioners all of whom are appropriately qualified to teach early years children.

The setting meets in a purpose-built pre-school unit which is located in the grounds of Ysgol Goronwy Owen. Accommodation includes an extensive main room, toilets, kitchen and storerooms and has its own designated outdoor area. The premises are used by the Playgroup during the morning and the Cylch Meithrin in the afternoon.

When children have completed their time in the setting most continue their education in the local primary school.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in May 2010 and by Estyn during March 2006.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- almost all children make good progress in learning and achieve good standards;
- children are challenged by a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities;
- provision for communication and literacy skills is good;
- practitioners have high expectations for children's learning, and
- the quality of care, support and guidance is good.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leader provides a strong sense of purpose;
- expectations for securing improvement are high;
- practitioners are open to new ideas and different ways of working, and
- a very wide range of partnership activities make a strong contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing.

Recommendations

In order to further improve, the setting needs to:

R1 increase the use of incidental Welsh by children and practitioners:

R2 further develop the outdoor area; and

R3 increase the resources for information communication technology.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

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

Nearly all children make good progress in learning from the time that they start in the setting and achieve good standards in all areas of learning. Most recall previous learning well, develop good thinking and problem-solving skills and acquire new knowledge and skills with increasing confidence. All children generally work at full capacity. During free choice activities, they experiment and explore confidently, take risks and make good progress towards becoming independent learners. Most make a sustained effort to concentrate and persevere with tasks for extended periods of time.

Most children apply their communication and literacy skills well in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. All children make themselves understood and during whole group discussions, express their feelings and ideas lucidly and confidently. In structured or spontaneous play and during role-play in the class 'take-away,' children very skilfully use language that is appropriate to the situation.

Children of all ability show an interest and enthusiasm in both story and information books and enjoy their content, with or without an adult, handling them as a reader. Many can choose books independently for a specific purpose whilst a few use a narrow range of strategies for recognising familiar letters and words. All children experiment with mark-making and are beginning to understand some of the functions of writing, such as for taking customers' orders in the 'take-away'.

Most children have a positive attitude towards learning Welsh. They respond appropriately to basic instructions from familiar voices and understand more words than they can speak. During whole group activities, they repeat some familiar words and phrases correctly and join in Welsh action songs and rhymes very enthusiastically. Nearly all follow and respond to familiar stories and show an interest in the content of Welsh books. However, only a few children are sufficiently confident to instigate conversation in Welsh.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children demonstrate a high level of interest and motivation towards learning and enjoy their time in the setting. All have a secure understanding of how to become healthy through what they eat and the physical activity they undertake. Children have a close relationship with practitioners and trust their guidance. Every individual feels safe in the setting and free from physical and verbal abuse.

Most children demonstrate good behaviour in and around the setting and are considerate and courteous towards each other and adults. During their engagement in specific activities or in tasks of their own choice, most co-operate amenable demonstrating increasing levels of independence. All children very willingly undertake responsibilities such as counting the number present during registration and, as they mature, learn to make more informed decisions about their learning.

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

The principles of the Foundation Phase are reflected strongly in the quality of the curriculum provided for children. Through detailed collaborative planning, practitioners succeed in providing a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities for all children across nearly all areas of learning. Every child is challenged by relevant activities which provide continuity and progression in their learning.

Provision for communication, numeracy and wider skills is coherent and firmly embedded into the experiences for every child. However, provision for developing aspects of information communication technology is hindered by a lack of appropriate resources. Both the indoor and outdoor environment is used imaginatively to encourage children to experiment with new experiences and to develop key skills. Children's learning experiences are substantially enriched by nature walks and visits to places in the community and by occasional visitors to the setting.

There is appropriate provision for promoting the Welsh language. Children's awareness of the traditions and the cultural celebrations of Wales is developed in a very meaningful and interesting way.

Children are actively involved in the setting's aim to act sustainably through minimising waste, saving energy and recycling paper. Through a wide range of imaginative activities such as celebrating the Chinese New Year, children's understanding of the wider world is promoted very effectively.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and have high expectations for children's learning. The stimulating, challenging and exciting environment created encourages children's involvement, participation and enjoyment. Learning experiences are skilfully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including the more able and talented. Practitioners know when it is appropriate to intervene in children's learning and they do so sensitively and skilfully to encourage children to challenge themselves as they learn. A good balance is maintained between child-selected and practitioner directed activities. Imaginative use is made of a variety of resources to appeal to children's interest and improve learning. Adult support is clearly focused and makes a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.

Children's progress and learning are assessed and tracked thoroughly across all areas of learning and this information is used purposefully to plan the next step in learning. The practice of inviting parents to 'development chats' with practitioners, ensures that they are kept well informed about children's achievements, wellbeing and development.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting which has recently achieved the Anglesey Healthy Schools Award, has appropriate policies and procedures for promoting healthy living and children's wellbeing. Practitioners know how to respond appropriately if challenges arise in

relation to bullying, injury and safeguarding. Every child is confident in asking adults for support and guidance. Practitioners know the children well and strive to ensure that the needs of each individual are met. Should the need arise, there are well developed arrangements for ensuring that children with additional educational needs receive appropriate support and guidance from both the setting and specialist services.

Effective induction arrangements together with the close relationship with parents, ensure that children settle quickly into the setting. Learning experiences promote the personal and social development of children successfully.

The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community, where all children have equal access to all the areas of learning and activities provided for them. There is a strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and ensuring that children and staff are free from harassment. The setting has enough practitioners, who have sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating environment in which every child is able to take full advantage of learning experiences and to develop positive values and attitudes.

With the exception of information communication technology, there is an ample supply of good quality resources for all areas of learning which are carefully matched to the development and learning needs of each individual. Resources in the community are used very effectively to support learning in the classroom.

The buildings and accommodation are of good quality and are used extensively. Although there is a designated area for outdoor learning, it has not, as yet, been developed to its full potential.

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

The leader has succeeded in creating a positive ethos in the setting whereby children and staff feel valued. Practitioners share common values about learning, behaviour and relationships and work collaboratively to make sure that the Foundation Phase and other national priorities are successfully implemented. The strong sense of purpose provided by the leader promotes and sustains improvement effectively. Learning and teaching are managed well, and the setting's policies are implemented effectively. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities which they fulfil conscientiously. Relationships with children, parents and the primary school are very positive and contribute significantly to a sense of community.

Expectations for securing improvement are high, but realistic, with the leader actively supporting and challenging everyone to do their best. Procedures for monitoring and appraising staff performance and identifying individual and whole-setting training and developmental needs are thorough and effective. They have a very positive impact on the setting's development and implementing change.

The management committee is well informed about the setting's performance and fulfils its responsibilities diligently. It supports the setting as a critical friend and is influential in maintaining high standards and setting priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know their setting well and through the leader's purposeful management, are continuously self-evaluating and exploring ways to improve. Secure procedures have been established to maintain good practice and implement change in areas that require improvement. Self-evaluation takes careful account of the views of parents and benefits substantially from the advice of the local authority support teacher.

Information from self-evaluation is used purposefully to prioritise the matters which the setting wishes to improve. The steps taken to improve standards and to address the recommendations of the previous inspection report have led to positive outcomes.

The well-established culture of collaboration, together with the willingness of staff to undertake responsibilities, is enabling the setting to develop as a strong learning community. Practitioners are very open to new ideas and are willing to try out different ways of working and to share their knowledge with others in the setting.

Partnership working: Good

A very wide range of partnership activities make a strong contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing. There is a very productive partnership with Ysgol Goronwy Owen, with the setting benefitting substantially from the school's willingness to share resources. Parents are regularly informed about all aspects of the setting's work with the leader taking advantage of every opportunity to include them in their children's learning. Practitioners work very well together, share information about children and know who to contact and when, if additional support is required for children. Very productive links have been formed with a number of organisations in the local community. Regular visits, reports and professional advice by the local authority support teacher have a very positive impact on the setting's development.

Resource management: Good

The setting is appropriately staffed to teach all aspects of the curriculum and members of staff are deployed effectively to make the best possible use of their time, expertise and experience. Resources are managed well.

The leader and the management committee have a thorough understanding of their budget and prioritise their spending in line with the setting's developmental needs. Financial decisions are carefully evaluated by the leader to make sure that they have a positive effect on standards and children's progress and wellbeing. The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholders' satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The very few parent questionnaires received expressed positive views about the setting.

Responses to discussions with children

Children say that they are happy in the setting and are confident to turn to any adult to ask for advice and support.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Wil Williams	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.