



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

**Deganwy Play Group
Deganwy Play and Learning Centre
Ysgol Deganwy
Park Drive
Deganwy
Conwy
LL31 9YB**

Date of inspection: October 2012

by

Anne Manning

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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Deganwy Playgroup was first established about 30 years ago and was originally set up as a mother and toddler group and in 1999 the group relocated to their current premises. The medium sized setting is situated near the seaside town of Llandudno in North Wales. The setting is managed by a committee and the general day to day running is carried out by a team of practitioners.

The large entrance has information for parents to view when they drop off or collect their children. The provision is set out in one large room that is divided into areas for play. Outside; there are good opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities in an enclosed space.

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 30 children who attend a varying number of sessions.

The last CSSIW inspection was in May 2011 and this is the second inspection by Estyn.

There were five children present aged three none of whom were eligible for funding during this Autumn term.

Deganwy Playgroup is English speaking, providing care and education for children from families for whom nearly all this is their first language. Nearly all are White British and no children this term have additional needs.

The group has an equal opportunities policy and an admission procedure that welcomes all children. Nearly all children attending the setting are from the local area and come from a range of social backgrounds.

Deganwy Playgroup receives support from Conwy Early Education and is a member of Wales Pre-School Providers Association.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

There is a good range of interesting and innovative learning experiences for the children.

The setting effectively develops mark making and literacy skills.

The provision for the Welsh language is good.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

Relationships between partners have been effectively developed.

Leadership and management of the group is good.

There is a commitment to self evaluation and improvement. Strengths and areas for development are effectively identified.

The relationship with the school is good.

Recommendations

R.1 Further develop the relationship with the school to share resources including outdoor areas and to provide opportunities for professional development. (This recommendation has been discussed and agreed with the setting and the head teacher of the school).

R.2 Review the way in which snack time is organised to provide more learning opportunities for the children.

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how the setting will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	N/A
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There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skill 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.

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

Learning experiences encourage all children to work together. They are confident and enjoyed talking to the inspector about what they were doing. The practitioners plan activities that engage all children and provide new experiences in all areas of learning, for example, mark making with toothpaste, blackberry juice, lipstick, cotton buds and mixing paint with their hands. There are good opportunities to experiment that form part of the children's experiences to help them understand and learn about the world around them.

Although there is a range of challenging learning experiences indoors and outdoors such as a beach rock pool, many activities are already set out for the children and do not always allow for the children to make decisions about setting up their play, for example, when washing socks.

Practitioners provide learning experiences that effectively develop children's communication, literacy and mark making skills, by engaging them in early writing in different situations, including letter recognition, writing their names and looking at books and listening to stories. Books are provided as an essential part of the discovery area to support a topic.

All children are encouraged to use the Welsh language during circle and story time and respond well with simple words and phrases. They have planned opportunities to learn about the traditions, cultures and celebrations of Wales including Santes Dwynwen Day and St David's Day when they dress in traditional Welsh costume. All children listen to Welsh stories about Ticw the bear and join in enthusiastically. They learn effectively about other cultures by finding out about and celebrating Chinese New Year.

There are good opportunities for children to learn about Information Communication Technology through taking their own photographs with cameras, a light box and by using simple programmable toys such as Bee Bot. Children re-use junk in their model making and are starting to learn about other types of re-cycling in the playgroup. Children learn to take care of living things, for example, by caring for tadpoles, giant snails and mini beasts and growing potatoes, cress and sunflowers.

Teaching: Good

There are four practitioners working with the children with a core staff of three. All three are qualified to level 3 and the leader and deputy have both worked in the playgroup for 7 years. All are good language models and manage the behaviour of the children well.

All practitioners use effective questioning to check the children's understanding and extend their learning and provide helpful oral feedback. They spend time with individual children discussing what they are doing and how it may be improved.

All practitioners use a high level of Welsh with the children particularly during circle and story times. They check the understanding of the children regularly, for example, questioning them about what was happening during the story of Ticw the Welsh bear.

Practitioners provide a good introduction to the session explaining well what they are all going to do and the activities that are available for them. There are high expectations of the children and they are all encouraged to learn through child initiated and adult directed play. Adults generally know when to intervene and when to let the play develop to enable the children to discover and think for themselves, for example, when mixing two colours of paint directly on a table top.

Practitioners have developed a positive learning environment and strategies used encourage children to confidently enjoy new experiences. They effectively develop thinking skills by asking 'What do you think will happen?'

All practitioners know the children in their care well, have a good knowledge of child development and respond to the differing individual needs of the children.

Observation is carried out and assessment booklets are completed that are supported by photographs and samples of work. Although practitioners make good use of most of the learning experiences, snack time, for example, does not provide children with sufficient opportunities for tasting different foods, or developing skills such as pouring their own drinks or collecting and washing beakers.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The playgroup effectively supports children and their families and promotes the health of the children. There are a range of policies and procedures to support their well being. Learning experiences promote the children's personal, moral, social, spiritual and cultural development. Playgroup enables children to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the world in which they live, for example, when looking closely at fresh fish.

The playgroup has appropriate policies and procedures in place in respect of safeguarding. All practitioners have undertaken training and there are systems in place to update this every three years. All practitioners take responsibility for health and safety and there are risk assessments to keep the children safe both indoors and outdoors. Individual risk assessments have been effectively carried out where needed, for example, for a child with a mobility problem.

All children know the routines well and the playgroup effectively helps children to distinguish right from wrong and provides good opportunities for them to help each other. All practitioners are good role models and the playgroup promotes values such as honesty, fairness and respect and actively develops an understanding of living and sharing with others. The setting provides good opportunities to work together such as when sorting socks into pairs.

The setting has good arrangements for ensuring children with additional needs are well supported by effective systems that meet their needs. The playgroup works in partnership with Portage, speech and language professionals and occupational therapists. There are individual plans to help them to learn and practitioners work closely with parents and professionals in support of these children and they are reported to make good progress in the playgroup.

Learning environment: Good

The playgroup room is well set out into areas of learning and welcomes all children, offers equal access and provides a fully inclusive setting. Policies and procedures support the running of the group and the learning of the children. Children's achievements are valued and their work is displayed.

Varied resources are a good match to the stage of development of the children and meet any additional learning needs. They are suitable and sufficient to address the requirements of the Foundation Phase and the needs of the children attending and the accommodation is appropriate and used effectively. Boxes of resources are located at the height of the children and are easily accessible so that they can select items themselves. This ensures the children settle quickly to the activities, are confident and develop into independent learners. All children create their own work that is displayed in the playgroup.

There are sufficient practitioners with relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of young children and they use training to improve their own knowledge, understanding and skills.

The local environment is used to enhance the existing facilities in the playgroup that enables varied learning experiences.

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

The playgroup is well supported and led by a voluntary committee. Leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and take into account relevant legislation and guidance and use information to make effective decisions.

Leaders create a very positive ethos within the playgroup with the focus on the needs of the children. They work together to make changes in the group, for example, the new playgroup entrance enabling the group to have an individual identity.

The staff and children are well managed, supported, valued and respected and there are effective links with parents to support the learning of their children such as the termly newsletter letting them know about the topics. The group have a web site and a social networking page which the group have found to be a good way of communicating and passing on information. The management team provide time for the playgroup leader to carry out administrative duties and paperwork. When there is a change of committee there is a four week handover period to ensure that the group are able to continue to operate with the least management disruption for the practitioners and children.

There is a sense of direction and purpose and a need to make improvements to develop the setting together with others, for example, improving the outdoors. Practitioners are enthusiastic and well motivated and this has had a very positive impact on the group. There is a culture of self reflection and improvement that maintains and develops the setting.

Leaders respond quickly and effectively to any advice and guidance and ensure changes impact positively on standards and quality of provision. They work effectively to support children, for example, working with Portage to provide a placement and support a child with additional needs. Leaders ensure that children are known as part of their larger family and provide a good level of support through an effective key worker system.

Practitioners feel strongly that the setting will continue to improve. They attend courses and have areas of responsibility. Annual appraisals support practitioners and improve their practice.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has made good progress since the last Estyn inspection. All four recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed. The playgroup values the views of all. Self-evaluation has identified what the setting does well and areas that need to be developed. Improvements including levels of communication between the partners using the centre have been made and this has effectively resulted in positive

gains for the children. The group is committed to working closely with early education to develop the service and improvements have been prioritised.

Practitioners have made good use of Foundation Phase training to improve the curriculum and organisation and this has had a positive impact on the progress and well being of the children. Practitioners are able to evidence how they have effectively improved the provision.

Although all practitioners are open to new ways of working and share their experience, knowledge and ideas opportunities for involvement in professional development beyond the setting are limited.

Partnership working: Good

There are good working relationships that support the children and there is trust and clear communication between partners.

There are good relationships with parents and information and photographs displayed in the playgroup entrance keep them up to date with what is happening, effectively strengthening the partnership with parents and developing links between home and playgroup. Parents are made effectively aware of their children's 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. A welcome pack for parents ensures that they all know how the playgroup runs and are actively aware of the policies and procedures that support the service. There are open sessions towards the end of the year where parents are encouraged to come into the setting.

There is a good relationship with the school next door and the head teacher has been involved with the playgroup providing support and guidance to the committee. The children from the playgroup are invited to the sport's day held at the school. Both the school and playgroup are keen to further develop their relationship to include sharing outdoor resources such as the garden and the woodland area. Transition from playgroup to school is good and children make visits to the school nursery and the teacher comes into the group to talk to the children, however practitioners are keen to extend this to provide opportunities for professional development with the school nursery.

The playgroup takes part in fundraising, for example, through a sponsored toddle and a stall on Deganwy Promenade Day to enrich the experiences of the children and further build relationships within the community.

Students on placement enhance the learning experiences of the children, in particular art students who have worked together with the children to create a large ceramic mural.

There are good partnerships with other groups who use the centre including the out of school club with whom they are currently working on a big project to develop and better resource the outdoor area. Shared fundraising in this way effectively develops relationships within the centre for the benefit of the children, the school and the local community.

The playgroup is a member of the Wales Pre-School Providers Association and receives guidance that actively supports the provision and running of the group. The early education teacher works effectively in the setting and there is a good relationship with the local authority. All practitioners value the support they receive and are keen to respond to advice and guidance to improve the provision.

Resource management: Good

There are plenty of good quality resources for the children that are sufficient and suitable to deliver the Foundation Phase. The resources are used well, the children are interested, enjoy what is on offer and effectively enable and encourage the children to learn. All children are motivated and keen to use the resources which are well set out.

The playgroup are members of the toy library thereby ensuring that lots of different equipment may be borrowed to benefit the children and develop their learning.

Outdoors is used well to develop skills across all areas of learning and opportunities are maximised. Future resource needs are planned for and prioritised and overall the playgroup gives good 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.
They like all the staff and playing at the setting.

Appendix 2

The inspection team / reporting inspector – delete as appropriate

Anne Manning	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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.