



*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**

**Canal Playgroup  
Northside Community Hall  
Canal Road  
Newtown  
Powys  
SY16 3BH**

**Date of inspection: October 2012**

**by**

**Mr Eifion R Morgan**

**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:

<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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## Context

Canal Playgroup is an English medium setting located in Northside Community Hall in Newtown, Mid Wales. The community hall is a multipurpose building and this necessitates the setting up and clearing away of all equipment and displays for each session. However, it provides appropriate accommodation comprising an entrance hall and a main room which is of a good size, heated and well lit. The hallway has cloakroom facilities and adjacent toilet facilities. A number of notice boards and a table provide space for the display of relevant information for parents in the hallway. There is a well furnished kitchen which is used to prepare morning snacks. A second entrance provides access to a storage shed and the outside.

A small tarmaced yard is used for outside activities and a grassed area to the rear is used during appropriate weather.

Currently there are 37 children on the register. Children can attend in the term following their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday and leave for the next phase of their education in the term prior to their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. There are currently 17 children aged 3 years, all of whom are funded. The setting is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate up to 24 children in any one session.

All children are English speaking with a small number from minority ethnic communities in the town. The setting has worked with them and their parents to help them overcome communication difficulties. The setting describes the background of children as neither disadvantaged nor particularly advantaged, although the setting is an “overspill” for the Flying Start group which meets in the town. The locality is not a designated Flying Start area.

Two children have been identified with additional learning needs and benefit from 1:1 support. All children are welcomed irrespective of any physical or learning difficulties and special arrangements are made where necessary.

The playgroup opened in September 2010 after the closure of a playgroup that previously used the Community Hall. Whilst English is the main language of communication, the Welsh language is encouraged through the use of basic Welsh words and commands.

The setting is designated by CSSIW as an “Unincorporated body” with 2 persons identified as responsible individuals in accordance with CSSIW. The setting is overseen by an elected committee and a sub committee comprising also the responsible individuals. It is overseen by the Trehafren Children’s Centre Trustees who are responsible for the employment of the staff. Parents are welcomed to the meetings of the sub-committee and the parents are kept informed via newsletter and parents notice board.

The setting was registered by the CSSIW in September 2010 but has not, as yet, been inspected formally. The playgroup has not been inspected previously by Estyn.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

#### Good features

- The provision for ensuring children's wellbeing.
- The quality of care and support provided for the children.
- The leadership that provides the playgroup with a clear sense of purpose.
- The way the staff work together and the support they provide for the children.
- The standards achieved and the progress made by the children.
- The learning experiences provided for the children.
- The quality of relationships between staff and children.
- The partnership with the parents and professional organisations.

### Prospects for improvement

#### Good features

- Track record of planning and implementing improvement over the last two years.
- Openness to new ideas and the support provided by the local authority support staff.
- Leadership which supports staff development.
- Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.
- Commitment of staff to work together for the benefit of the children.

## **Recommendations**

In order to improve further the playgroup needs to:

- (i) further develop its assessment procedures so as to identify the skills acquired by individual children and to highlight the next steps in their learning.
- (ii) to use the assessment results in planning so that focused tasks are challenging and well matched to children's ability and prior achievement.

### **What happens next?**

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Standards: Good**

All children are making good progress towards meeting the appropriate Foundation Phase outcomes and in line with their age and ability. They achieve good standards based on their ability on entry. Most children are making an effort and persevere with their tasks for extended periods of time.

All children are developing good communication skills across all areas of learning. They make themselves understood using appropriate language and listen to instructions. All children enjoy singing and partake enthusiastically in music and action songs. They converse freely with adults and other children in their play.

Most children enjoy listening to stories and show an interest in books. They hold books appropriately and follow the story in pictures. Many children hold pens, pencils and crayons correctly and are beginning to scribble and make shapes. They know some of the purposes of writing.

All children count by rote and many recognise basic number. They are beginning to count independently and to use mathematical language. Children recognise simple two-dimensional shapes, including triangle, square and circle.

All children are familiar with digital equipment such as cameras, mobile phones and recording equipment and are beginning to use them. They use their computer to make images and show good control of the computer mouse. They recognise some computer icons.

All children understand basic Welsh words and instructions. They understand more Welsh words than they can speak. Most children repeat Welsh words, such as number and colour. They show an interest in Welsh books and stories and sing Welsh songs and rhymes. Overall, many children are developing a basic understanding of Welsh words and phrases.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

All children have a positive attitude to learning. They show enthusiasm when they arrive for the morning sessions and are soon fully engaged in activities set out for them. Children are confident and considerate when working in pairs or small groups. They are well behaved and courteous.

Children are developing a good understanding of healthy living. They know to wash their hands after play and before snacks and the importance of cleaning their teeth

after food. They have ample opportunities to take part in physical activities. A particularly good aspect is the obvious feelings expressed by the children of being safe and free from any form of harassment or abuse in the setting. Children also have good opportunities to suggest what visits they would like, such as a child who would like to go on a train journey.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Good**

Planning is based on the Framework for Children's Learning and is broad, balanced and relevant. The curriculum is interesting and successfully engages all children. Planning involves all practitioners and is flexible in that it responds to children's interests and includes planning for working out of doors.

Planning incorporates opportunities for continuous provision, extended work and focused tasks. Provision is made for children of differing abilities but is not always sufficiently focused on clearly identifying the next steps in children's learning.

Relationships are very good and individual children are well respected. Day-to-day activities highlight tolerance and concern for each other. Planning is sufficiently broad to develop children's knowledge of the living world, the need to care for living things as well as developing their creative and physical skills.

Good emphasis is given to developing children's skills across the curriculum and practitioners are adept at exploiting opportunities to develop these skills, particularly communication and numeracy skills. Useful aide memoires are provided at each activity area which clearly identify opportunities for developing skills, including language. Staff are also provided with an outline of the week's tasks and their responsibilities. There are also ongoing activities and opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills.

Practitioners encourage the use of the Welsh language through using familiar Welsh words and phrases. The knowledge and understanding of the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales is given good emphasis, such as celebrating St. David's Day with traditional food and dressing up.

All children are beginning to learn about recycling, such as recycling waste foods. Growing seeds and looking after plants helps children appreciate sustainability and the need to care for living things.

## **Teaching: Good**

Practitioners are knowledgeable and experienced in child development and have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. An outstanding element of the teaching is the good relationships that exist in the setting and this enables the children to be confident, knowing that they will be supported when necessary.

There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities, both indoors and outdoors. Children's individual needs are managed flexibly and all practitioners are skilled in promoting good behaviour.

Practitioners are themselves good language models. Additional support is provided for two children but this is unobtrusive and is effective in integrating these children.

Staff work together very well as a team and have a good understanding of their roles. There are ample opportunities for children to learn through play out of doors.

The quality of the teaching successfully engages all children. Practitioners know their children well and through the skilful use of questioning develop children's language and thinking skills. A good feature of the teaching is the identification of children of different abilities. However, the next steps in the children's learning are not always clearly identified, nor are the arrangements for teaching these children, in terms of time and grouping, specified.

Children are regularly and systematically assessed. Key workers make detailed notes on their observations and these are collated so that they inform planning. This is worthwhile and is a useful record of children's achievement and progress. Observations however tend to be too generalised and are not always sufficiently focused on what skills children have acquired and what they need to do to improve.

Parents are well aware of the progress their children are making. They are provided with details of the weekly activities. An ongoing pictorial scrapbook available for parents to see shows what children have been doing.

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

The provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and often very good.

Daily activities successfully foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect for each other. Children know right from wrong and act accordingly. Older children show initiative in helping each other and adults and are able to take responsibility, such as "helpwr y dydd". Children appreciate the setting's rules of behaviour since they have been actively involved in formulating them. The setting is very effective in developing children's personal and social skills.

Children, through visits and visitors to the setting, learn about people who help them and of people outside the setting. Their knowledge of the world around them and care for living things develops through their experiences of animals and care for them, such as looking after pet lambs.

There are good arrangements in place to promote the cultural traditions of Wales and to extend children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures and to promote respect for diversity.

The setting has used specialist services to support individual children, including Health Visitors. In some instances children who would normally attend the "Flying Start" provision in the town attend the setting.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure safeguarding arrangements. The leader is the named senior person responsible for dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues and has attended recent relevant training. Other staff have been trained and all are aware of their responsibilities. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

Children identified with additional learning needs (ALN) have full access to all areas of learning. Good arrangements are in place to support these children, including 1:1 support. Good use is made of professional services and parents are fully involved. Children benefit from individual educational plans (IEP) which include targets and success criteria.

### **Learning environment: Good**

A notable and good feature of the setting is its calm, supportive ethos. It is fully inclusive and develops a tolerant attitude, taking into account children's idiosyncrasies. All staff and children are free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. No child is disadvantaged, whatever their needs.

Resources are sufficient to support children's learning across all areas of learning. Whilst activity areas have to be set out each morning and cleared away, this is done very efficiently – this is a notable feature of the settings organisation. Staff co-operate very efficiently in this process and give their time to ensure that the setting is fully prepared to receive the children.

As well as activity areas, in the hall a good range of outdoor play equipment is provided. All resources are well used and accessible to all children encouraging independent learning. Materials available include objects collected, such as cones and pebbles, shells, measuring equipment and magnifying glasses. Photographs of children's work are collated in a scrapbook and available for parents to see.

Seasonally children have opportunities to cultivate and grow their own plants and to study the natural world of birds and pets. The outdoor environment is an intrinsic part of children's learning.

The accommodation is large, warm and well lit. Storage facilities are sufficient.

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

The leader provides the setting with clear direction and a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement. The setting's vision is clearly directed at providing the best possible provision for the children and improving them where possible.

There are high expectations of all staff and they respond positively. A very good and notable feature of the setting is the team spirit evident and the way the staff work complementing each other. The setting displays a positive work ethic and a sense of enjoyment is evident. Staff share values and create an ethos of high expectation. New staff undergo a period of induction and all staff are appraised annually.

Very good links are in place with parents and this encourages them to support their children's learning.

The setting was registered with the CSSIW in September 2010 and is an "Unincorporated body" at present overseen by two "Responsible Individuals" in accordance with the directives of the CSSIW. The setting is overseen by a sub-committee (including parents) who report to the "Trehafren Children's Centre Trustees". This is in keeping with its voluntary status. The "Trehafren Children's Centre Trustees" are responsible for reviewing policies and the employment and appraisal of staff. A manager oversees the day-to-day administration.

National and local initiatives have been incorporated in the setting's work, including implementing the National Foundation Phase curriculum and local initiatives, such as "Designed to Smile".

### **Improving quality: Good**

The setting has, since its establishment in 2010, conducted an annual self-evaluation and identified strengths and areas for improvement. Such improvements have been firmly focused on improving the provision for children. Overall, an evaluation of the setting shows that there have been positive gains for the children. In discussion parents, without prompting, confirmed the improvements in facilities that had taken place.

Current self-evaluation prioritise areas for improvement and the inspection agrees, including, for example, more differentiation in planning and further develop and enhance the areas of continuous provision.

All practitioners have taken part in professional development courses and the impact of such training is regularly evaluated in terms of children's learning.

**Partnership working: Good**

Partnership arrangements are good and the setting takes note and acts where possible on suggestions made. This, for example includes details of the week's activities as in response to parent's request.

Parents are fully supportive of the setting as is confirmed by the questionnaires returned and in discussion with a sample of parents bringing their children to the morning session.

Good links are in place with the school to which children transfer. The reception class teacher visits the setting to meet with the children who will transfer.

The setting collaborates effectively with other organisations such as the Wales PPA. The Local Authority advisory teachers have also provided the setting with useful advice and recommendations and this has had a positive benefit.

**Resource management: Good**

Staff work together very effectively as a team with good division of labour making the best use of their particular talents. Staff appraisal is undertaken regularly to identify specific needs. The setting is efficient in raising funds and resource needs are addressed. Good use is made of all available funds.

Overall, the setting provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

The parent questionnaires comprised 16 positive statements about the setting. Parents were asked to respond either “strongly agree”, “agree” “disagree” “strongly disagree” or “don’t know”.

In total 14 replies were received. There were no “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. Three quarters or more of the responses indicated “strongly agree” to the following statements.

*“My child likes this setting”*

*“My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting”.*

*“Children behave well in the setting”.*

*Staff treat all children fairly and with respect”.*

*“My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise”.*

*“My child is safe at the setting”.*

*“I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem”.*

*“The setting is well run”.*

Over half the replies indicated “agree” to the following statements.

*“Overall I am satisfied with the setting”.*

*“My child is making good progress at the setting”.*

*“Teaching is good”.*

*“My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs”.*

*“I am kept well informed about my child’s progress”.*

*“I understand the setting’s procedures for dealing with complaints”.*

*“My child is well prepared for moving on to school”.*

*“There is a good range of activities including trips or visits”.*

Comments made by parents on the questionnaires included:

- Friendly, safe, supportive ethos.
- Child happy and enjoys activities.
- Respect for the fantastic staff.
- Great use of Welsh.
- Very happy for my child to attend.

### Children's Responses

In discussion, children said they enjoyed coming to the playgroup. They enjoyed the activities provided for them, including looking at books and listening to stories. They enjoyed snack time and the different foods they had to eat.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R Morgan	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](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

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

## Glossary of terms

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

<b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<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.