

The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

**Nursery report on:
Wick & District Playgroup
Wick and Monknash Village Hall
Church Street, Wick
Cowbridge
CF71 7QL**

Foundation Phase Inspector: Julie A. Jones

Date of inspection: 16 and 17 March 2009

Contract number: T/066/08N

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Report on the inspection of nursery settings in the non-maintained sector

Name of nursery: Wick & District Playgroup

Address: Wick and Monknash Village Hall, Church Street, Wick, Cowbridge.

Post code: CF71 7QL

Telephone: 01656 890330 / 07900 404093

Person responsible for day-to-day management:- Mrs Chrystine Thomas

Position:- Supervisor

About the inspection

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

- Grade 1** good with outstanding features
- Grade 2** good features and no important shortcomings
- Grade 3** good features outweigh shortcomings
- Grade 4** some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
- Grade 5** many important shortcomings

1.0 Context of the setting

Context of the nursery setting

Wick and District Playgroup opened in 1969. It is a Wales Pre-School Playgroups community playgroup and registered charity. It is based in the village hall in the village of Wick and has its sole use during the session. In 2005, with the emphasis on Foundation Phase outdoor learning opportunities, the staff and parents have transformed a corner of the adjacent churchyard as a Wildlife and Learning Garden, where children can plant, harvest, observe nature and enjoy outdoor learning.

The setting is a voluntary sector local authority funded playgroup, run by a management committee, made up of current and past parents. There are four members of staff aided by two volunteers. Staff are very experienced and well-qualified, including two members who have been at the playgroup for over thirty six years each.

The playgroup is involved with four Quality Assurance Schemes and projects, ultimately improving their quality of provision. These awards include gaining their second Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2008, becoming the first playgroup in Wales to obtain the Eco Schools International Green Flag and in June 2008 became the first Fairtrade Schools playgroup in the country. They also have the Wales Pre School Playgroups Quality Mark which incorporates checks on all aspects of playgroup practice.

Children come from a wide geographical area, including children from the towns of Bridgend and Llantwit Major, as well as those from the immediate rural locality and neighbouring villages and hamlets. Families based at the nearby World College of the Atlantic regularly use the playgroup. Although the majority of children speak English as a first language, the group also has the experience of integrating children learning English as a second language. The playgroup has supported children with additional learning needs for many years.

Children are admitted from the age of two and a half years, most of whom remain until they move on to reception classes in a number of different primary schools, including the Church in Wales Primary School situated nearby. There are fourteen children on roll, six of whom currently receive funded places.

All furniture and equipment is set out each morning and stored each evening. At weekends this is stored in an attic room or under the stage area. The sessions run from 9.30 to 12.30 on four days of the week, with Tuesdays planned for children moving to reception class in the following September.

The playgroup was successfully inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in 2008 and previously inspected by Estyn in 1999. There are suitable action plans in place that have been appropriately addressed.

2.0 Main findings of the report

2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision and whether or not the provision successfully promotes the goals for children's learning

The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the Foundation Phase Outcomes for children's learning.

2.2 Standards achieved by children in the seven areas of learning

Areas of learning	Grade for under-fives
Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity	1
Language, literacy and communication skills	1
Mathematical development	1
Welsh language development	1
Knowledge and understanding of the world	1
Physical development	1
Creative development	1

2.3 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

Quality of education	Grade for under-fives
Quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
Quality of planning for children's learning	1
Quality of teaching	1
Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress, and reports for parents and carers	1
Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community	1
The contribution made by the setting to children's well-being	1
Quality of the leadership and management of the setting	1
The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report	1

3.0 The standards achieved by children in the seven areas of learning

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds

3.1 Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity

Outstanding features

Children's personal and social development is good with outstanding features. The majority are confident and competent in their environment. They leave their parents and carers happily, quickly engage in a wide range of activities demonstrating excellent independent thinking and learning skills. This is a significant aspect in their well-being and emotional development.

Good features

All children use good decision making skills and explore new, exciting experiences confidently. Children's behaviour is exemplary. They recognise appropriate behaviour for different situations and the majority respond to reason very well. Children describe the meaning of "fair" very well, giving excellent examples through their responsible work on the Fairtrade steering group. All children understand that living things have to be treated with care and as a result become respectful, careful, explorers in their outdoor environment. Children respond positively to a very good range of new cultural experiences and celebrations such as Chinese New Year, St David's Day and Christmas. The majority of children use and respond to the Welsh language exceptionally well, increasing in confidence to ask and answer questions in Welsh on a range of subjects, during registration.

3.2 Language, literacy and communication skills

Outstanding features

Children's speaking and listening skills are good with outstanding features. They listen attentively, express opinions confidently, answer and ask questions clearly and have ample opportunities to express their thoughts and explore meaning. The majority have a well-developed vocabulary, have the self-assurance to describe what the weather is doing and share their home experiences extremely well. Some children take notes in their Eco committee meeting, demonstrating excellent understanding that written symbols have sounds and meaning. This is an exceptional aspect.

Good features

Children know how to handle books correctly, enjoy listening to stories and in discussion, use vivid language when describing the characters within stories such as Mr Gumpy. The majority of children recognise their own names, whilst some can read the names of others. Children develop early writing skills and take every opportunity to make marks, colour and shade during their chosen free play. Some children recognise the sounds that certain letters make and apply this knowledge in other activities. In role play at the vets, children answer the telephone, write prescriptions and make appointments, demonstrating excellent communication skills.

3.3 Mathematical development

Outstanding features

Children's mathematical development is good with outstanding features. Children develop a very good understanding of mathematical concepts through singing number rhymes in Welsh and English and through stimulating number activities. They display excellent problem solving skills when reading a simple bar graph on sizes of children's wellingtons. Demonstrating independent learning skills, children accurately record the number of children and adults present during registration. Children know how to make their shadows shorter or longer and have a very good understanding of measures, through "harvesting" apples. These are noteworthy aspects in their mathematical development.

Good features

Children count forwards and backwards from thirteen, sort and match these numbers in their play. Through excellent role play experiences, children are developing a good knowledge of the use of money and some are very confident in the aspect of giving change. Most children recognise two-dimensional shapes such as circles, squares, rectangles and triangles, whilst some are confident in giving the number of sides and corners in these shapes. In discussion they understand the passing of time and have a very good understanding of "heavier", "lighter", "full" and "empty" in their play. They use tally graphs confidently when investigating insect population in the wildlife garden.

3.4 Welsh language development

Outstanding features

Children's Welsh language development is good with outstanding features. All children answer the register confidently and accurately. Some children's ability to ask and answer questions about the weather, using accurate phrases and correct pronunciation, is outstanding. A few children's ability to move smoothly from speaking English into Welsh in their daily activities, is exceptional.

Good features

All children enjoy singing Welsh rhymes and number songs, regularly enhancing their language development. They use simple phrases correctly when asking Mr Crock to cross the water. All children respond to staff greetings and commands appropriately. All children count up to ten in Welsh confidently with some children counting backwards from ten. The majority recognise and know the colours red, blue, green, yellow, orange and apply this knowledge in other activities. More able children readily share a chosen book with an adult responding well to questioning.

3.5 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Outstanding features

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is good with outstanding features. All children make excellent progress and exhibit excitement and curiosity in the wildlife garden. Children display outstanding knowledge of the types of wildlife in the garden, through using a web camera, housed in a nearby house. This raises their standard of achievement considerably.

All children take responsibility for looking after their world through the work on gaining their Eco Green Flag. Children use excellent observation skills in their search for mini beasts and use decision making skills well, describing the fact that spring is coming. Children's understanding and knowledge on the conservation of our planet through recycling and saving energy is outstanding. They consistently display this concern throughout their play and focused activities. This is a noteworthy aspect of their development.

Good features

Children sort, collect and name different types of materials and recycle them appropriately. Children competently dig the soil, plant seeds and harvest the crops having a very good understanding of what plants need to grow. Children are very aware of their body parts and have a good idea of what happens to them during physical exercise. Visits and visitors, enable them to understand the jobs people do, such as the postman and visits to places such as the animal centre reinforce children's understanding of how living things are cared for. Children use digital cameras competently to record their everyday activities and are developing a very good knowledge and use of programmable equipment.

3.6 Physical development

Outstanding features

Children's physical development is good with outstanding features. Children's use of space is very good. They run, march, jump, slide and use very good problem solving skills when moving through and balancing on, various obstacles. Children land appropriately from high positions and explain in detail, what exercise does to their hearts and to their bodies. Their detailed explanations are outstanding.

Good features

All children use a range of small equipment such as glue sticks and scissors confidently and competently, showing very good hand-eye coordination. They hold pencils and crayons correctly and are able to make marks with improving accuracy. They make good progress in skills such as folding, moulding, pasting and building for a variety of purposes, including using a computer keyboard.

Some children display accurate, physical control, when pouring water from one container to another during some investigation on a favourite story-line regarding a sinking boat. All children move confidently, enjoy music and movement activities, indicating increased physical control in a variety of ways of travelling. Outside in their investigative work, children demonstrate good handling of larger equipment such as bamboo canes, moving water from one area to another, with excellent hand-eye coordination.

3.7 Creative development

Outstanding features

Children's creative skill development is good with outstanding features. All children enjoy singing a very wide range of rhymes and songs in Welsh and English. They respond exceptionally well to stimuli such as a guitar, sing tunefully and use very good expression.

Some children create extraordinary pictorial stories detailing Welsh themes and use very good observation skills creating rivers, mountains and trees. They retell their creative story naming specific areas, such as the Berwyn range of mountains in North Wales. This is a noteworthy aspect in their creative development.

Good features

Children paint using bold brush strokes and enjoy using their hands to mix different colours of paint. Children play imaginatively in the role play area and are confident learners in the role of the vet or the receptionist. Children independently experiment with paint, crayon and chalk giving careful concern to shape, colour and texture. Their collage work is very good and they use leaves, flowers and twigs to create a picture whilst investigating in the wildlife garden. They create and make musical shakers from recycled bottles and during free choice experiment with the different sounds they make. Children's observation skills are developing very well as they recognise and recall similar patterns, such as those created by the bark path in the wildlife garden.

4.0 The quality of educational provision

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds.

4.1 The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Outstanding features

The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with outstanding features. The playgroup successfully reflects positive attitudes and promotes respect for different beliefs, social and cultural traditions within society and this is significant. Wick and District Playgroup has clear aims and values, that are achieved extremely well and these are demonstrated in its work and in children's development. The adults in the playgroup are a very strong team and this is an outstanding feature. They provide the children with very good role models and they value and respect the children as individuals, who in return respect each other. The use of Welsh by the staff is a noteworthy feature and all adults take every opportunity to use incidental Welsh, extending children's vocabulary. There is a very good selection of Welsh books that children freely access or share with adults. The children are very aware of the culture and traditions of Wales and this knowledge is enhanced through celebrations such as St David's Day.

Good features

The playgroup effectively promotes values such as honesty, fairness and a respect for each other. Activities have a very good balance between child-centred and adult-directed focus and this develops children's self-esteem and encourages self-reliance. Children's spiritual development is supported by an appreciation of each other as individuals. Opportunities such as watching the wildlife in the adjacent garden using a web camera, brings an awe and wonderment, enhancing children's understanding. Socially, they respond well to the routines that are carefully established in the playgroup's organisation. All children have the self confidence to work independently and to make correct choices. One attribute of the playgroup is the feeling of being a very close community and having a sense of belonging.

4.2 The quality of planning for children's learning

Outstanding features

Planning for children's learning is good with outstanding features. It effectively concentrates on the seven Foundation Phase outcomes of children's learning, with a good balance of focused and free activities. Within this, there are purposeful Eco and Fairtrade planning across all seven areas and this is an outstanding aspect. Medium-term planning around a theme, highlights the detailed curriculum mapping and the contribution of parents, students, local authority, outside agencies, children and staff. This element is noteworthy.

Good features

The very good planning for children's learning ensures there is continuity and effectively builds on what children can do, so extending their experiences. There is equality of access for all children to participate in learning opportunities and all adults make sure there is full participation of children. Different tasks are set for more and less able children and there is equal opportunity in all activities. There is very good promotion of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig, includes reference to different cultures and traditions and is well focused on racial equality. No children have been identified as having special educational needs. The playgroup has suitably qualified staff and there is very good provision in place to accommodate them. Excellent support and advice is available from outside agencies if required.

4.3 The quality of teaching

Outstanding features

The high quality teaching is firmly based on a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase outcomes of children's learning. All adults have high expectations and these are more than adequately met. Teaching strategies are well met to children's learning needs and to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. The consistent interaction between the adults and the children raises their standard of achievement and enhances their language development in Welsh as well as English and this is an exceptional feature of the teaching.

Good features

Staff are extraordinarily experienced and very well qualified. They update or refresh their knowledge through attending relevant training that includes some evening courses. The impact of the training is very evident in the day to day running of the playgroup. It also uses and benefits from outside advice when required and has close links with the local primary school. The teachers are very knowledgeable of children's development and are aware of every child's needs. Adults provide children with very good guidance and advice in a way that encourages them to partake in new experiences. The effective balance that exists between child-centred and adult directed teaching, increases children's level of achievement and raises self-esteem. In all activities, racial equality and a sense of fairness is securely maintained. Children benefit from an exceptional range of appropriate resources. A safe outdoor area is being refined by having new surfacing and the quality of the resources, such as ladybird and bee houses, in the amazing wildlife garden, is very special.

4.4 The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports to parents and carers

Outstanding features

The quality of assessment is good with outstanding features. The playgroup's self-evaluation or assessment of where they are and what they need to do to improve, is outstanding. There are effective, specific, manageable procedures in place, to assess and record children's achievement and progress on a daily basis and over time. The procedures for early intervention are effective and parents support and welcome this approach.

Good features

Baseline assessments are used effectively to screen children's ability on entry. Ongoing assessments are collected in a manageable format and contribute to the detailed overview of children's progress, resulting in very good reports to parents at the end of the first, as well as the second year. All assessments are evaluated and contribute well to the next teaching objective. Individual files are kept on each child, across all seven areas of learning, demonstrating good and often very good progress. In discussion, parents are kept very well informed of their child's progress, including emotional, as well as educational. Parents are kept aware of their child's achievements and know that daily activities are well matched to ability and needs. Parents have a very warm relationship with all adults in the playgroup and are informed of their child's performance, through an "open door" philosophy and often by telephone, if their child has been a little upset at starting the day. This too is a noteworthy attribute.

4.5 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community

Outstanding features

The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community is good with outstanding features. Links with the community are outstanding. The community playgroup is run by a management team of parents, elected by parents, ensuring decisions made by the parents, are implemented. This committee employs the staff and work exceptionally hard to raise substantial funds and running costs, enabling the playgroup to function. The playgroup has a website, set up by a past parent in conjunction with playgroup staff. All parents are encouraged to use this, keeping abreast of information. A member of the local community, who serves on the group's Eco Committee, has set up a webcam linked to the playgroup website, which enables children to observe wildlife in a neighbouring garden. Together these factors enhance children's level of achievement and are very special and extraordinary features.

Good features

The playgroup has a very useful information prospectus that potential parents / carers receive, giving details of the playgroup, including the care, the language and the educational provision. In discussion, parents are very well informed of the areas of the Foundation Phase to be covered each half-term. They receive various newsletters and information sheets, with advance notice on planned outings. All parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaires and the results indicate an extremely strong approval of the work of Wick and District Playgroup. Wick and District Playgroup are in receipt of four Quality Assurance Schemes and projects ultimately improving their quality of provision. Two of these awards include becoming the first playgroup in Wales to obtain the Eco Schools International Green Flag and the first Fairtrade Schools playgroup in the country.

The playgroup is thoroughly integrated into the church community, especially with the approval of access to the stimulating “Wildlife” garden. Children attend family services such as Harvest Festival, with the curate visiting the playgroup on a regular basis. Every resource and piece of equipment is devotedly set out and stored at the end of every session. Parents are involved in this process especially at weekends when all equipment is stored under the stage or in the attic. This is a noteworthy feature of the quality of relationships with the whole community.

4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children’s wellbeing

Outstanding features

Wick and District makes an outstanding provision for promoting children’s well being. In discussion, parents state they are very appreciative of the way adults demonstrate care and concern for their children and know that they would be contacted immediately should anything be amiss. The bond between the adults in the playgroup, the children in their care, together with that of their parents, is outstanding.

Good features

It has well documented policies and procedures in place ensuring that all children are protected from harm and neglect. All policies are freely available to parents, carers and visitors. The child protection policy is robust and staff are aware of signs of possible abuse, receiving updated training when necessary. There are vigorous procedures in place ensuring all staff have enhanced checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. The staff are trained in paediatric first aid and there are comprehensive risk assessments in place for outside trips and visits. Healthy fruit snacks are provided by the parents ensuring a balanced diet. All children have access to supervised activities, enabling them to partake in strenuous physical activity such as running, jumping and climbing in and out of doors. This includes regular supervised access to a local sports field. Overall the playgroup provides a safe place for the children to work and play. All children are extremely well cared for and each child’s needs and expectations are very well met.

4.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting

Outstanding features

The quality of the leadership and management of the playgroup is good with outstanding features. Wick and District Playgroup is exceptionally well managed and led. The enthusiastic, zealous supervisor and her dedicated deputy form a very strong team. Together they are self-evaluative and efficiently define clear manageable objectives for improvement, giving a true outline of where they are and what they need to do to improve. The well-defined development plan, with achievable measurable targets, reflects the team’s quest to improve the educational opportunities made available for all children. This is an exceptional and outstanding aspect.

Good features

The playgroup promotes equality for all, which incorporates staff as well as children. The management committee of the playgroup has successfully focused on employing well qualified experienced staff. All staff have annual meetings where personal and professional training needs are identified and these impact on the playgroup’s set targets for improvement, raising standards and quality of provision.

Effective procedures are in place to measure the impact of this training and also that of any new resources. All training covered is shared with other staff members. Good use is made of the advice from the Early Years Partnership advisory teacher. The playgroup has very good links with local training colleges and has two students on placement each year. The playgroup pays particular attention to issues of recycling and to the care of the world around them. The playgroup is suitable for all persons with disabilities.

The dedication of the staff is remarkable and is an outstanding feature. Every morning, quality resources are taken down from the attic and carefully set out and packed away at the end of every session. The stimulating end result impacts and enhances children's level of achievement. Very good use is made of the back room where children snack and enjoy adult-focused activities. With adult supervision, children are safe to explore the wildlife garden, which has been a joint project with Environment Wales, the Church in Wales, the local community and the management of the playgroup. The constant use of this provision impacts across all seven areas of the Foundation Phase outcomes and enhances children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

4.8 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for inspection identified in the last inspection report

Outstanding features

The playgroup was inspected by Estyn in 1999. An evaluation of the progress made is in place and clearly states the actions taken by the staff and the management of the playgroup as a whole. All elements from the previous inspection that were highlighted as key issues have been more than successfully addressed.

The recent CSSIW inspection required all playgroups to amend their complaints procedure, in line with recent recommendations for all settings. This has been adequately addressed by Wick and District playgroup.

Overall, the progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues identified in the last Estyn inspection report, is very good.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1 Continue to develop the high quality assessment procedures taking account of ongoing initiatives of the Foundation Phase principles continuing to follow local authority directives on assessment.

R2 Continue to develop the excellent learning opportunities in the outside areas to extend or broaden the "mark-making" opportunities already highlighted in the planning.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to the Chair of the Early Years and Childcare Partnership or Children and Young Peoples' Partnership, as appropriate, and to the Local Authority. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.