

**A report on the quality of educational provision for
children before compulsory school age**

in

**Treetops Playgroup
The Scout Hall,
Heol Y Delyn
Lisvane
Cardiff
CF14 0SR**

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by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

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

Name of nursery: Treetops Playgroup

**Address: Heol Y Delyn
Lisvane,
Cardiff**

Post code: CF14 0SR

Telephone: 07763 917724

Person responsible for day-to-day management: Miss Lucy Kemp

Position: Leader

Inspected by: Rick Hawkley HMI

Copies of the report

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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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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 provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Grade	What the grade 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

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

Context

Treetops Playgroup is an English-medium setting which serves the Lisvane and Pontprennuau districts of Cardiff. It meets in the scout hut in Lisvane.

The setting serves an urban area. The children who attend are considered to come mainly from advantaged backgrounds. Almost all children have English as their home language. None of the children speak Welsh at home. One child has English as an additional language. Three per cent of the children have additional learning needs.

The setting is open each morning and is registered for 24 children between the ages of three and four years old. Children are admitted to the setting from two and a half years of age. At the time of the inspection all the places were filled. One child is currently funded by the local authority.

In June 2009, the setting obtained the Welsh Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA) Quality Award. The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in October 2009. It is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

Overall judgement on the setting	Good
Prospects for improvement	Excellent

Overall judgement

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

The setting is good because:

- all children make good progress and achieve well;
- children are happy to come to the setting, enjoy learning and are very well behaved;.
- it provides a wide range of varied and interesting activities which motivate children to learn;
- there are warm, caring relationships between children and staff; and
- most teaching is good or better.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- the setting leader and staff have a very positive attitude towards improvement;
- there exists a culture of improvement across the whole setting;
- the setting has a record of improvement since the appointment of the current leader; and
- self-evaluation is effective in bringing about improvements.

Recommendations

Inspectors have agreed with the provider the following recommendations for improvement:

- R1 improve standards in and provision for Welsh language development;
- R2 effectively plan and use continuous provision for outdoor learning;
- R3 further challenge more-able and talented children by effectively linking learning activities to assessments; and
- R4 ensure targets for improvement are clearly linked to children's development, are effectively planned, prioritised and communicated throughout the setting.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points across all the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning. Children acquire new knowledge and understanding effectively and enjoy the challenge of new and varied activities. Nearly all children are very confident learners who are willing to learn from their mistakes, take risks and explore their surroundings.

All children apply their skills well to a wide range of play activities. Most have excellent communication skills. They listen attentively to instructions and use a wide vocabulary and sentence structures to express themselves. Most are inquisitive, asking a range of questions clearly to help explore the world around them. Nearly all join in with songs enthusiastically and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. Many are interested in writing and frequently take opportunities to mark-make such as when playing in the 'office area' or making plans prior to model making. All can recognise their name in a list and many can write their first names clearly. Children use information and communication technology (ICT) well in the use of CD players or when playing with 'mobile phones' or tills.

Most children count objects correctly up to five and many name and recognise common shapes such as circles, rectangles or triangles. Many use mathematical language and skills correctly in their play. They describe the position of objects accurately, for example using words such as 'underneath,' 'behind' or 'below'.

Almost all children show high levels of independence for their ages. They confidently choose tools or resources themselves; visit the toilet unaided, washing and drying their hands afterwards; and they share their belongings and only ask for help when it is genuinely needed. They concentrate for long periods; for example when building a wall with large blocks, constructing a model railway track or cutting out with scissors.

Many children make excellent progress with their creative development. They are very keen to explore and experiment with a variety of techniques and materials including paint, crayon, sand, water and ice-pencils. They mix, shape, arrange and combine materials to create pictures of themselves and other objects. Most are keen to talk about what they have done. Many respond maturely to music. They show imagination in their enjoyment of role play.

The children's progress in Welsh is adequate. Few understand simple instructions or use individual words in Welsh.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Nearly all children are highly motivated and enjoy their learning. They enter the setting enthusiastically and settle into activities immediately having very positive attitudes to new experiences. An extremely strong aspect of their wellbeing is the strength of the children's respect and care for each other. They are well aware of the setting's 'kind hands' initiative and respond appropriately showing real sensitivity to others. Most children fully enjoy co-operative play, often actively encouraging others into their games. Behaviour is excellent. Nearly all children use 'thank you' and 'please' appropriately.

Most children are very keen to talk to adults about what they do. They take turns, and share toys and objects readily. Children look after their toys and learning resources well and show responsibility by enthusiastically joining in tidy-up sessions.

Nearly all the children are aware of the need for personal hygiene such as washing their hands before meals or after visiting the toilet. They enjoy 'snack-time,' eating a wide range of healthy food prepared for them. All helped evaluate the setting's work done in achieving the recent 'Healthy Food' award. They also contribute effectively to planning activities for the setting, leading to changes in continuous provision.

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

The setting provides all children with a wide range of interesting and stimulating learning experiences in most Areas of Learning (AOL). Practitioners work very well together to plan a wide range of activities which stimulate, engage and challenge many children to learn effectively.

Practitioners use the Foundation Phase Child Development Profile and Skills Framework effectively to plan for progression in children's skills. Practitioners work together successfully to provide children with high-quality learning experiences which effectively develop children's communication, numeracy and information and

communication technology (ICT), for instance, the very enjoyable 'pizza-making' session. This linked effectively the 'Healthy Food' award with children's development across many AOL. Children are encouraged to think for themselves. Practitioners give children many opportunities to solve problems, be independent and experiment with new experiences.

Practitioners know the children very well and respond to their varying needs and abilities spontaneously and appropriately during activities. However, they do not always plan activities well enough to ensure appropriate challenge for more-able and talented children.

Although used on a daily basis for whole group activities such as 'parachute games', practitioners do not plan well enough for the use of the settings outdoor area. Children make insufficient use of the outdoors for continuous activities, which limits children's experiential learning, to move around more freely, to be noisy or to take risks. The setting makes good use of the local community to extend children's experiences such as visits to a local farm, a bus journey or to an orchard.

Practitioners do not develop children's Welsh language skills well enough. While they use Welsh for whole group activities such as registration or during singing sessions, few practitioners use incidental Welsh regularly with the children. Children are not encouraged to use Welsh. Opportunities to learn about the traditions and celebrations of the cultures of Wales include 'St. David's Day' celebrations and making Welsh cakes.

The setting provides few opportunities for children to learn about sustainability, recycling or the impact we have on the world.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good. Practitioners are aware of the learning objectives for activities, have a sound understanding of the Foundation Phase and use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning. Practitioners make learning fun and the children respond very well to this. Children are given plenty of time to complete a task or develop an idea, and practitioners intervene sensitively and appropriately when needed. Practitioners use open-ended questioning particularly well to extend and challenge children's thinking. The best teaching occurs when practitioners challenge children effectively.

Practitioners provide helpful oral feedback to children as they learn. They spend time with the children prompting them to talk and think about how they can get better at doing something. A strong feature of the settings work is the assessment of learning. Lead workers know their children well and make regular, useful and evaluative observational assessments of them which helps, in many cases, to plan children's next steps of learning. The setting makes time before and after sessions to be available for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress. The setting provides parents or carers with a detailed portfolio of progress when children leave the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Very effective arrangements exist to ensure children's health and wellbeing and these contribute well to the children's overall development. There are good transition arrangements for children joining or leaving the setting. Links with the local primary school are particularly effective.

The setting has good arrangements for providing children with personal and specialist support. Children with additional needs integrate well into the setting, with planning and support systems meeting the full range of their needs. Practitioners work closely with professionals especially in the support of these children. Consequently, they make good progress. Parents of these children tell of good support and guidance they receive from the setting.

Children, and their parents or carers, say they feel safe in the setting. The setting has appropriate up-to-date risk assessments in place. Many of these are of a high quality, although a very few do not provide sufficient detail. The setting has appropriate policy and procedures in place in respect of safeguarding.

Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Learning environment: Good

The setting provides a welcoming environment for the children. There is a variety of stimulating displays of children's work in the hall along with photographic evidence of the wide range of activities that the setting provides. The setting is fully inclusive with all children having equal access to all areas of provision.

The setting employs sufficient well-trained practitioners to meet the needs of all children. They have an appropriate knowledge of the Foundation Phase. The leader places a strong emphasis on training and development. Practitioners use training well to improve their own knowledge, understanding and skills. The setting provides plenty of varied resources. These are matched effectively to children's stages of development and, where appropriate, to children's additional learning needs.

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

The setting leader creates a very positive ethos where staff and children are valued and respected. Her sense of purpose, clear vision for improvement and infectious enthusiasm are a driving force in the positive progress the setting is making. There is a strong and developing culture of self-reflection and self-improvement amongst practitioners that helps to develop and maintain the good work of the setting. A very strong feature of the setting is the way leaders respond quickly and effectively to advice and support, ensuring any changes made impact positively upon children's standards and the quality of provision. There is a strong belief and optimism amongst all practitioners that the setting can and will continue to improve. Staff and children contribute to long-term planning. The management committee is effective in

its role. It is appropriately informed about the performance of the setting and it fulfils its duties well. There is a very strong sense of community in the setting.

Practitioners respond positively to relevant national and local priorities. They are fully involved in training and developments connected with the Foundation Phase.

The setting has a good appraisal system in place to support and improve staff.

Partnership working: Good

A good range of partnership working contributes to children's progress and wellbeing. Practitioners create strong relationships with parents and carers. Regular newsletters and the parents' notice board keep them up to date with important dates and information. A few parents would like more written information about their child's progress.

Partnership working between the practitioners is purposeful and benefits all parties. Parents and carers value this strong link and feel that it has a significant impact on children's happiness. Those with older children express how well the links with the local primary school have helped their children make the successful transition from playgroup into school. The local authority Foundation Phase advisory teacher works effectively with the setting. Practitioners value the support they receive and are keen to respond to any advice and guidance.

The setting uses visitors from the community, such as police officers, fire-fighters, musicians, chiropodists and parents, to support children's learning. The setting also benefits from guidance from links to the Welsh Pre-school Providers Association.

The setting provides good support to students from local higher-education establishments. Whilst developing their own skills students provide extra support for children and allow a wider range of learning activities to place.

Quality improvement: Good

The setting has good processes to evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement. It regularly consults parents, carers and children about initiatives, such as 'Healthy Snacks'. There is a clear commitment to valuing the views of everyone.

The settings self-evaluation report was of very good quality. All practitioners contribute well to the self-evaluation process.

The setting uses the information from the day-to-day running of the setting to successfully identify new resources such as new tricycles to use outdoors. However, long term strategic planning and the evaluation of improvements in terms of children's progress are at an early stage of development.

Practitioners are beginning to develop positive links with practitioners in other settings. For example, the setting leader has visited a few other local settings to exchange ideas and compare good practice. She has made good use of Foundation Phase training to improve curriculum planning and organisation in the setting.

Resource management: Good

The setting has a good range of up-to-date resources that contribute well to the progress that all the children make. The leader deploys staff appropriately. The management committee have an appropriate understanding of their budget. They evaluate effectively requests for additional resources to be sure that there is benefit to the children. The setting provides good value for money.