Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Littlefolk Playgroup

Bethel Chapel
Main Road
Church Village
Pontypridd
CF38 1RL

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Littlefolk Playgroup

Name of setting	Littlefolk Playgroup
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Allyson Harding
Responsible individual (if applicable)	N/A
Person in charge	Allyson Harding
Number of places	26
Age range of children	2- 4
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	10
Number of children who receive funding for early education	10
Opening days / times	9.15 – 15.45
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	27 September 2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection	March 2015
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	09/05/2023
Changed from Sessional Care to Full Day Care. Opening times extended from 9.15 – 1.15 to 9.15 – 15.45	

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Well-being	**Good**
Learning **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Good**
Care and development	**Good**
Teaching and assessment **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Increase opportunities for children to develop their independence throughout the day

R2 Ensure that practitioners use simple Welsh phrases and vocabulary so that children develop their understanding

R3 Develop practitioners use of effective questioning to encourage children's learning

What happens next

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

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Nearly all children make choices about how they spend their time at the setting. They choose what to play with from the plentiful resources available to them. We saw them moving freely between different areas, transporting toys and resources to support their play. Most children are confident to talk to staff and express themselves. They know staff listen to their needs and show an interest in what they say. For example, children call staff members by name as they start to tell them about what they are doing at the table.

Nearly all children are very happy, settled, confident and enjoy attending the setting. They cope well with separation from their parents and carers. For example, children arrive with smiles on their faces, coming in eagerly and settling to play straight away. They form positive emotional attachments with staff who know them well. Many children eagerly invite staff into their play. For example, children talk and laugh with staff as they invite them into their role play in the 'hair salon'. Nearly all children are familiar with the routines and expectations, and this adds to their sense of belonging. For example, children calmly assemble in a line ready to hold the safety reins when it is time to go outside.

Most children form friendships at the setting. They play happily alongside each other or together and are learning to co-operate and share. For example, children chat happily together as they play with teapots and dollies. Others co-operate in a game they had created hiding toy animals in the room. Nearly all children sit calmly at the table when eating and show respect for property and people.

Most children are enthusiastic and interested in their play and learning. They enjoy both adult led activities and free play. For example, children listen attentively and join in enthusiastically during circle time, and follow their own interests in the garden area, using role play tools with obvious enjoyment.

A majority of children respond positively to opportunities to develop independence. For example, they put on their waterproof trousers and wash their own hands. However, during the day there are some missed opportunities for children to increase their independence skills, for example at snack time and when taking off coats. Most children have good opportunities to develop physically using the outdoor facilities.

Learning (only applies to three or four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Good

Most children make good progress from their starting points during their time at the setting. They are very happy, confident learners who explore the learning experiences provided for them with enthusiasm. They demonstrate perseverance during tasks that challenge them, such as rolling balls down chutes and catching them at the end.

Most children's communication and literacy skills are developing effectively. They speak confidently and chat freely with their friends, practitioners, and visitors. For example, they chat about their favourite meals when playing in the role play kitchen. Many children ask questions to clarify their understanding when playing and listen attentively to responses from adults and other children. They follow simple instructions effectively, such as getting their lunch bags and finding a carpet circle to sit on. Many children are interested in books and enjoy looking at them with adults and their friends. They treat books with care and know how to turn pages and use the illustrations to tell stories. They enjoy mark making with chalk and paint and a few understand that their marks carry meaning.

Many children use mathematical language in their play and exploration. They talk about making big cakes in the mud kitchen and lifting heavy containers of sand. Many count reliably to five when playing, such as when finding out how many bottle tops fit in a frame. They enjoy singing number songs and rhymes during whole group sessions.

Many children are developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. They access pre-recorded messages and check a digital screen to find out the date and time. Many children demonstrate perseverance and are beginning to think carefully when faced with challenges, such as realising a cement mixer will not turn because the stones inside make it too heavy.

Most children are developing their physical skills successfully. They demonstrate good hand to eye co-ordination and use their physical skills adeptly when using a climbing wall and rope pull to reach the top of a slope. The use a range of small tools and utensils in their play well. For example, they use spray bottles to dampen hair in the hairdressers and spoons to stir porridge oats with a good degree of control.

Many children respond to simple questions in Welsh during whole group sessions and identify a few colours and numbers. They sing songs and rhymes and join in with actions enthusiastically. However, they use little incidental language in their play and as a result their knowledge of Welsh is limited.

Many children enjoy creating artwork using chalk and paint and they use a range of recycled materials to make framed pictures. They create their own recipes in the mud kitchen for making carrot soup and chocolate.

Most children are developing their personal and social skills well. They play co-operatively and share resources readily. For example, they share spoons and bowls to explore messy play activities.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. They have regular safeguarding training, which means that they have a clear understanding of safeguarding issues, the signs and symptoms of abuse and their own duty to report concerns. Practitioners carry out fire drills regularly so that children and staff are clear what to do in an emergency. They keep good records including evacuation times and any improvements to the procedure that may be needed. Practitioners are clear on managing food allergies, and information regarding individual children's needs is displayed discreetly for easy reference. All practitioners have up-to-date training in paediatric first aid. They record accidents, incidents, and pre-existing injuries well, and share this information with parents. Practitioners work in line with the wide range of thorough risk assessments at the setting and are alert to any emerging risks. They promote healthy lifestyles, offering a choice of healthy food at snack time and ensuring children have access to enriching and enjoyable daily outdoor play experiences. This brings children the benefits of physical exercise and fresh air.

Practitioners manage behaviour well at the setting. They are kind, gentle and warm and this sets the tone for positive interactions. They use praise and encouragement to support children. Practitioners are clear about boundaries and gently encourage children to be kind, show respect for each other and share resources. For example, practitioners gently support children to resolve a disagreement when two children want to play with a particular toy.

Practitioners are nurturing, sensitive and alert to the needs of children in their care. For example, they respond quickly to reassure a child who began to look upset. Practitioners are observant and alert for signs that children may have emerging additional learning needs. They work well with parents and outside agencies to support these children. Practitioners support children's learning and development

effectively. They consider the individual children attending each day and their range of needs. They vary the resources and activities available on each day to ensure that they meet the needs of every child attending.

Teaching and assessment (only applies to three or four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Good

Nearly all practitioners have an appropriate understanding of how young children develop and learn through play. They provide children with a wide range of interesting activities that stimulate their natural curiosity in the indoor and outdoor environments. Practitioners ensure that children can make choices about what they wish to explore and where they would like to play. They are flexible and supportive in their approach and ensure that children have sufficient time to become engrossed in what they are doing. Practitioners notice what fascinates children and respond effectively by providing stimulating resources that allow children to follow their interests well. For example, when children want to add an aroma to their mud recipes, an adult took them to pick herbs from the garden. As a result, children have first-hand experiences that promote their knowledge, skills, and development effectively. These experiences promote the children's learning successfully.

Practitioners promote children's communication skills appropriately. They engage children in simple conversations about what they are doing and ensure that they understand simple instructions as part of their play. They give children valuable opportunities to sing songs and rhymes in English and Welsh. However, they do not always take advantage of opportunities to ask questions to encourage children to think creatively and find solutions to problems they encounter as they explore their surroundings.

Practitioners have provided children with a comfortable reading area, where they can develop their knowledge of books and stories well. There are beneficial opportunities for children to develop their mark making skills and there are suitable ICT resources for them to use in their play.

There are worthwhile opportunities for children to develop their numeracy skills. For example, practitioners encourage children to look at numbers as the needle moves when weighing oats on scales. The setting ensures that children have many opportunities to be physically active, such as running, climbing, and riding bikes.

Practitioners plan valuable activities that develop children's understanding of the natural world and how to care for it. They grow a wide range of vegetables, flowers, and harvest and eat them. Following children's interest in birds, practitioners have installed bird boxes in the garden with pictures for identifying visiting birds.

Practitioners plan activities that promote the cultural heritage of Wales successfully. Children celebrate St David's Day and follow the Welsh football and rugby teams. Practitioners sing Welsh songs with children and introduce simple rhymes and phrases during whole group times, but very few use simple Welsh words and phrases when playing alongside the children.

The setting provides children with beneficial opportunities to learn about other cultures and beliefs. Children celebrate festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. Practitioners encourage parents to share aspects of their cultures with the children. For example, a family shared books and fabrics from their Caribbean heritage.

Practitioners make valuable observations of children as they play. They use the information to identify what children are doing, their interests and how well they are progressing in their learning and development. It also identifies all children's next steps in learning clearly, and practitioners record the information and share it on social media with parents and carers effectively.

Environment: Good

The environment is safe and secure. Staff lock external doors and gates diligently to ensure only authorised entry to the setting. They ensure that a record of all visitors is maintained. A video doorbell adds to the security as staff can see who is there before answering the door. Useful risk assessments for all areas of the setting are in place and followed by staff. They complete effective daily safety checks of the environment to identify and, where possible, eliminate any risks to children's safety. Suitably placed safety gates prevent children accessing unsuitable areas. Routine safety checks for the building and certificates are in place. Fire and security equipment is regularly checked.

The indoor environment is very welcoming and child friendly and provides ample space for children to play and learn. It provides light, spacious, and exciting areas for children to explore. The playroom is organised in an effective manner to stimulate children's curiosity, and development. For example, areas such as the 'hair salon' and sand table invite the children to play. Resources are at children's height enabling them to access what they want to play with freely. People who run the setting have worked hard to develop the outdoor area into a large, varied and very attractive space for children to play and learn. For example, the climbing wall and slide enable children to take appropriate risks and experience physical challenges, whilst a hard surfaced area enables them to develop skills with ride on toys. There is a fixed shelter in one section of the outdoor space. This provides some protection from the weather and elements.

The setting contains a large quantity of high quality, interesting and developmentally appropriate resources, ensuring that children have a good variety and choice. There is a mix of natural and man-made materials with many attractive wooden resources. Real life and multicultural items promote children's awareness of equal opportunities and cultural diversity. Staff regularly check toys, equipment, and resources to ensure that they are clean and in good condition.

Leadership and management: Good

The setting has comprehensive procedures that promote a positive and caring ethos where staff, children and families are supported well. The leader has a clear vision based on promoting the well-being of children and staff, which ensures a strong basis

for learning. The leader conveys this vision clearly. Practitioners feel well supported and are comfortable to raise concerns and share ideas for improving the provision. Practitioners and the leader work well as a team and ensure that the setting meets the needs of all children. As a result, children and their families experience a warm and nurturing environment, which promotes children's learning and well-being successfully.

There is a clear statement of purpose that provides an accurate picture of the setting, enabling parents and carers to make informed decisions about the care of their child. There are sufficient and suitably qualified staff who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The leader undertakes annual appraisals and regular informal meetings to ensure that they discuss their practice, share ideas, and identify their training needs. This ensures that staff feel valued and enjoy their work. The leader takes advantage of training opportunities to improve the skills and knowledge of practitioners. For example, attending training on the implementation of Curriculum for Wales has resulted in practitioners making effective changes to planning and assessment procedures.

The leader has embedded a process for evaluating the setting's work and identifies strengths and areas for improvement appropriately. The leader identifies suitable targets for improvement and ensures they have a positive impact on children's development and progress in skills. She consults relevant stakeholders and acts on their suggestions and ideas well. For example, the leader secured a large grant to increase the range of provision in the garden. With advice from the advisory teacher this has become a safe and exciting area for children to use.

The setting has developed strong links with a range of partners, who fully support and enhance children's learning and development. There is a strong link with the local advisory teacher who offers beneficial support and guidance to the setting. Established transition arrangements to feeder schools ensure that children are confident to move to the next stage of their education.

The setting has close relationships with parents and carers and informs them about their child's well-being and development regularly via informal daily conversations, phone calls and a closed social media group.

The setting creates a strong sense of belonging through links with the local community. For example, children visit the local post office, bakery and optician and play in a local park and field. Visitors to the setting enhance children's learning and understanding of the world around them. For example ,the local police and fire service visited for the children to learn about the way the emergency services can help us. The children also took part in a musical activity with a local group and enjoyed playing different percussion instruments.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from CIW and Estyn's websites (http://careinspectorate.wales) (www.estyn.gov.wales)

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
Poor	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 13/07/2023

Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	**What each means**
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

Was this report helpful?

We want to hear your views and experiences of reading our inspection reports. This will help us understand whether our reports provide clear and valuable information to you.

To share your views on our reports please visit the following link to complete a short survey:

- Inspection report survey

If you wish to provide general feedback about a service, please visit our Feedback surveys page.

Date Published 13 July 2023