A report on

Argoed Playgroup

Green WI Hall
Chambers Lane
Flintshire
CH7 6UB

Date of inspection: May 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Argoed Playgroup

Name of setting	Argoed Playgroup
Category of care provided	Sessional Day Care
Registered person(s)	Argoed Playgroup
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Lynne Ingman
Person in charge	Natalie Jones
Number of places	20
Age range of children	2 – 5 Years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	8
Number of children who receive funding for early education	8
Opening days / times	9.15 – 11.45 Monday to Thursday 9.15 – 11.45. Fridays are available if financially viable. Term time.
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	The service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	Post registration
Date of previous Estyn inspection	N/A
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	20/05/2025
The setting is English medium, and all the children have English as a first language.	

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 Develop practitioners approach to supporting children during play

What happens next

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

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Nearly all children have a voice and are confident to communicate. They actively and effectively share their ideas, needs and interests knowing they will be listened to. Children move around the environment freely as they self-direct their own play, successfully choosing where and what they want to play with. For example, when choosing furniture, they want to use from the doll's house to make their own house. Children make appropriate decisions about their experiences including when and what they have for snack.

Nearly all children feel safe and confidently separate from their parents and carers on arrival as they feel secure in their environment. They settle well as they enthusiastically get involved in an activity when they arrive, such as choosing to play with the dough. Children are very familiar with the embedded routines which supports them to feel happy and understand what is happening. Children develop a positive relationship with the practitioners which helps them to feel valued and have a sense of belonging. Friendships are formed that mean a lot to the children and they enjoy playing and learning together.

Nearly all children learn to be understanding and respectful towards each other. They take turns with resources and share their experiences. For example, a group of children enjoy playing in the water tray together. They share the resources, helping to fill and empty different containers. Children benefit from their interactions and develop understanding and enjoyment through shared experiences.

Nearly all children focus and engage well in their chosen activity. as they can follow their interests. They share what they are doing with others, showing they enjoy their experiences and are happy in their play. For example, they share a book and show their friends the different shells explaining what they think used to live in them.

Children have a good range of opportunities to develop their skills and are progressing in their learning. They enjoy practising their fine motor skills when using scissors to cut paper for their pictures and start emergent writing when pretending to do their homework like their older siblings. Children enjoy being active, developing their physical skills as they balance and climb on the outdoor fixed play equipment. Children confidently try and do things for themselves including accessing the different areas of learning. They happily move around the environment independently, choosing resources to play with and items to enhance their play experiences, for example when finding a wheelbarrow to transport different items around outside.

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

Most children engage happily in their play, confidently choosing where and how to pursue their interests. They co-operate well with their peers to share space and resources and show consideration for others and their environment, for example by encouraging others to help tidy away and by using a wheelbarrow to collect play bricks for a friend.

Most children enjoy singing songs in Welsh and English. They use relevant actions and control the volume of their singing at key points. A minority of children sing familiar songs spontaneously during their play, for example singing Twinkle, Twinkle when cutting star shapes to decorate a cake they are making from modelling dough.

Nearly all children listen well. They show good understanding when following instructions, responding to questions and when talking with their peers. Most are beginning to develop their knowledge of Welsh vocabulary well. For example, they use Welsh names for colours and choose llaeth or dwr at snack time. A few confidently name the days of the week and describe the weather in Welsh.

Most children develop their early reading skills well. Many select books from the attractive displays to share with adults or enjoy looking through books with friends in the comfortable reading areas. They handle books appropriately and are curious to use flaps and pop-ups to explore pictures, commenting on what they see. Nearly all listen attentively to stories read by practitioners, joining in with sounds and expressions that match the characters, such as the lion's roar and the camel's grumpy face. Most children use pens, chalks and brushes to make marks and to paint expressively. A few are beginning to recognise individual letter shapes and sounds that make up their name.

Most children use suitable mathematical language in their play, such as comparing the size of items. They experiment with sorting natural objects, identifying their size and colour, and placing them in order to create patterns. Many count small quantities, such as wooden eggs, accurately. A few children begin to experiment with measuring tools such as balancing scales and a tape measure to explore their environment. They use digital tools such as phones and cameras purposefully in their imaginative play, for instance when speaking with family and taking holiday photos.

Most children show appropriate coordination and dexterity when handling tools to create cakes or using pipettes and jugs to transfer liquids. They take suitable risks when balancing along planks between crates and develop their strength and agility effectively when jumping between a row of hoops they have laid out on the grass. They investigate sounds they can make using untuned percussion instruments and a few children choose to express themselves physically by dancing with scarves and ribbons, running and twirling to help them move in the breeze.

When exploring the environment, most children respond excitedly to changes they observe around them, such as a snail that has attached itself to a birdfeeder or the newly emerged seedlings that have grown from the seeds they sowed. They show care for living things and ask sensible questions about where they live and what they need to grow. When given the opportunity, many children are developing their ability to focus independently for extended periods of time on activities that are important to them. For example, to explore the properties of different fabrics when dressing up or organising tools and resources methodically when preparing to construct a wall.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of their role when keeping children safe. They effectively implement the appropriate policies, procedures and routines including

understanding the appropriate safeguarding procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Practitioners keep appropriate records when recording accidents and incidents and if they need to administer any medication. Practitioners ensure that everyone is aware of the procedure to follow in an emergency as they regularly practice fire drills with the children. They ring the bell daily and talk about what they do if they hear the bell, so children are familiar with the sound and don't get frightened.

Practitioners have good routines in place to help children lead a healthy lifestyle. They provide nutritious snack choices including fruits and vegetables and only offer milk or water to drink. Practitioners are effective in promoting physical activity and ensure children have regular opportunities to get fresh air. They take children outside daily, so they can run around, use the play equipment and enjoy learning about the world around them.

Practitioners are good role models. They teach empathy and understanding through modelling positive behaviours and respect which is appropriate for the children's stage of development. They play alongside the children using questioning that helps children to develop their speech and language skills effectively. Practitioners consistently implement behaviour management strategies effectively to ensure children know what is expected of them. For example, they discuss with children when they need to wait to go in an area as there are already enough children in there. They clearly explain that they will get a turn and ensure this happens so children are happy to wait.

Practitioners promote children's learning and development effectively. They use observations and track children's progress successfully. This supports when planning activities and providing resources which create good learning opportunities. Practitioners ensure children have opportunities to be independent. They access items they want to play with and are given the support they need when serving themselves snack and pouring their own drinks. Practitioners understand the benefits of enabling children to take and manage their own risks. For example, they supported and encouraged the children effectively to use the planks of wood and crates to balance and walk along.

Practitioners provide valuable support for children who have emerging or recognised additional learning needs. They work effectively with a range of outside agencies to support all children to develop their skills.

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

Practitioners make effective use of the setting's environment, indoors and outdoors, providing a stimulating range of learning experiences meeting the interests and needs of most children well. This impacts positively on children's engagement and ensures they are motivated to learn. They establish a strong routine and model consistent expectations that support children to feel secure and interact with one another successfully.

Practitioners develop children's communication skills effectively. They interact sensitively with children during play, using conversations and questioning to model speech extending children's vocabulary beneficially. They promote reading particularly well, often sharing stories as a group and talking about books with the children as they play.

Practitioners provide suitable opportunities for children to develop their confidence in using spoken Welsh. They model the language accurately and support children to respond to a good range of simple questions about familiar topics and to sing Welsh songs. They develop children's awareness of their Welsh culture appropriately. Practitioners develop children's mathematical understanding and early number skills through worthwhile practical activities. For example, they encourage children to explore different containers capacity in the water tray and to count and compare different shells during their play. They provide an appropriate range of toys and equipment to develop children's digital and creative skills effectively.

Practitioners monitor children's learning closely. They provide helpful instructions and guidance that enable children to accomplish tasks competently. For example, they encourage children to keep their feet together and bend their knees when practising jumping and demonstrate how to squeeze a soft toy fish in the water tray when replacing the air with water.

Practitioners provide a suitable balance of adult-initiated and child-led learning that develops children's skills and nurtures their curiosity effectively. They have a good understanding of children's development and have worked thoughtfully to align their practice more closely to the principles of the curriculum for non-maintained settings in Wales. At times, however, they intervene too swiftly and do not always provide enough opportunity for children to try out their own ideas or to become engrossed in their activity. This occasionally hinders children from experimenting or persevering to develop their skills as independently as they could.

Practitioners make thoughtful use of observations during sessions to note children's interest and assess their progress carefully. They use this information skilfully to adapt the environment and plan specific activities that build on children's previous learning well. For example, they gather authentic resources for children to explore after hearing them talk about going on holiday. This stimulates children to share their experiences with one another and to think about how places they visit on holiday differ from home. Practitioners provide useful updates to parents about their child's progress and share information and resources that enables them to support their learning at home.

The setting makes use of visitors such as members of the emergency services and a dance teacher to develop children's understanding of the role's adults play and to develop their creativity. Practitioners enhance children's knowledge of their locality by taking them on a shopping trip to a nearby supermarket and visiting a local wood. They make worthwhile use of the setting's outdoor space for children to be physically active and to learn about the natural world. For example, practitioners seize purposeful opportunities to build on children's curiosity such as when a child finds a snail or when a child tries to use a hand operated pump to fill a tank with water.

Practitioners develop children's spiritual, moral and social skills effectively. They celebrate diversity appropriately by learning about different customs such as Chinese New Year. They provide some culturally diverse books and toys that are freely accessible to the children.

Environment: Good

Practitioners provide a learning environment which inspires children's learning and creativity successfully. The environment is suitably maintained and decorated, and leaders ensure it is a safe and secure space for children. Effective procedures are embedded in practice to make sure that appropriate security measures are in place. These include keeping external doors locked and controlling access to the premises. Registers of children's and practitioners' attendance are completed, and visitors are asked to sign in and out of the setting. This ensures everyone can be accounted for. Effective risk assessments are conducted so any hazards are identified and managed well. Daily checks ensure any possible new hazards are found and are not a risk to children.

Leaders and practitioners are extremely effective in the way they arrange the environment. Any barriers that could arise from being a pack away setting are addressed appropriately. They create inviting and inspiring areas for children to play and learn indoors and outdoors. All available space is used creatively to support children's development. The environment has suitable toilets and handwashing facilities that children can use independently. The environment has a safe, secure and inviting outdoor area that is an extension of the learning experiences available indoors. This is utilised well, and children have daily opportunities to be outside and access the many creative and inspiring opportunities practitioners have created for them.

Leaders and practitioners are effective when supporting children's play and learning through the resources they provide. The environment has been arranged with areas of learning and creative resources that inspires children's curiosity and supports their skills. For example, there are areas where children can develop their physical skills as they balance and climb. Other areas provide opportunities for children to practice their fine motor skills as they begin to write for a purpose.

The environment is enhanced with a range of natural materials and authentic resources that further inspires children's development and curiosity. For example, children use crates and planks of wood to create an obstacle course and develop a seaside themed area with sunglasses, flip flops and hats during role play activities. Leaders and practitioners support children's enjoyment of books effectively as they enhance areas of learning with appropriately themed reading materials. This helps children develop an enjoyment of reading and further enhances their play experiences.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have a clear vision for ensuring the setting offers a positive environment that supports children's learning and well-being successfully. They set high expectations for children and practitioners and work diligently to sustain a caring and inclusive ethos.

Leaders provide clear job descriptions, regular supervision and appraisals that support practitioners to carry out their role effectively. They manage practitioner's workload efficiently. Leaders follow robust procedures to update the setting's statutory documents, policies and practices and manage the safe recruitment of staff appropriately. The setting's statement of purpose provides a suitably detailed and accurate reflection of its work.

Leaders understand their role and work closely with practitioners and professional partners to promote the setting's strategic development. For example, they draw on the expertise of the local authority's early entitlement service and feedback from parents to evaluate the setting's strengths and areas for development accurately. They use professional development opportunities, such as online training events with colleagues from other settings, to consider what they do well and what could be improved. These processes support leaders and practitioners to develop as reflective professionals.

Leaders set clear goals for development. They use staff meetings to plan and monitor actions and make timely assessments when implementing changes and evaluating their impact This has resulted in worthwhile improvements that benefit children's holistic development. For example, practitioners have recently improved how they capture their observations of children's learning. This enables them to plan learning experiences that match children's needs and interest more responsively.

Leaders manage the setting's resources prudently. They ensure that suitably trained and qualified practitioners are deployed effectively and use additional funding to enhance their professional development appropriately. Leaders use grant applications and fundraising activities to develop the setting's environment and resources, enhancing learning experiences for children beneficially.

Leaders foster strong relationships with parents. They are approachable and engage with parents by sharing photographs securely and through a regular newsletter. They seek and respond appropriately to parent's views and ensure that they are well-informed about their child's progress. Because of this, parents express strong support for the setting and value staff highly. Leaders and practitioners use their relationship with parents to ease children into the setting and hold beneficial meetings with staff in the nearby primary school to support their transition to the next stage of their learning.

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

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Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

CIW has no areas for improvement identified following this inspection.

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

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