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

Saltney Small Steps Playgroup and Playgroup Plus

c/o Saltney Ferry CP School
Saltney Ferry Road
Saltney Ferry
Nr Chester
Flintshire
CH4 OBN

Date of inspection: February 2023

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Saltney Small Steps Playgroup and Playgroup Plus

Name of setting	Saltney Small Steps Playgroup and Playgroup Plus
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Not applicable
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Jackie Marshall
Person in charge	Jackie Marshall
Number of places	19
Age range of children	2-4years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	6
Number of children who receive funding for early education	6
Opening days / times	9.00am – 5.30pm Monday – Friday
Flying start service	Yes
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	Not applicable
Date of previous Estyn inspection	January 2014
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	07/02/2023

Non-compliance

We notified the provider that the setting was not compliant with the Regulations, a notice was not issued, but these are identified as areas for improvement, and the RP/RI must address these.

Recommendations

R1 Review procedures and record keeping for keeping children safe and healthy to ensure that all guidance is adhered to and parents and carers receive suitable information.

R2 Establish suitable assessment systems to effectively plan for next steps and track the progression of skills.

R3 Carry out regular supervisory meetings with staff to check progress towards agreed targets.

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:

Nearly all children make appropriate choices and decisions and have some influence over their play and learning. They choose which resources they want to play with, whether they want to play inside or outdoors and which activities they want to take part in. Most children express themselves well through verbal or non-verbal cues because they know that their opinions and feelings are valued. For example, if children indicate they do not want to take part in specific activities, this is respected and understood by practitioners.

Nearly all children feel happy and secure. They settle immediately when entering the setting. They know practitioners well and have developed positive relationships with them. For example, they happily welcome practitioners into their play. Nearly all children are familiar with the setting's routine, which gives them a sense of security. They know to hang their coats up before finding their name and join in with songs enthusiastically during registration time.

Most children follow the rules of the setting, and many take appropriate care of equipment and resources. For example, at tidy up time, children help to put books back on shelves, put role-play food back into the cupboards and happily come together to listen to instructions. Nearly all children interact well for their age and stage of development. They share resources with increasing independence and are supported to be kind and well mannered. For example, at the hair dressing table, children shampoo and blow dry each other's hair and tell their friends that they look pretty.

Nearly all children show purpose and curiosity as they engage in the range of activities available to them. For example, they are excited to use magnifying glasses to look at animals they have selected from drawers. They confidently invite each other to buy items from their role-play shop, before handing the items over making comments that they would have heard whilst shopping in the community. There are extended periods of child-initiated play, which children use well to follow their own lead and take their play in whichever direction they wish.

Many children are developing a good level of independence because they are provided with a variety of age-appropriate experiences to practise their self-help skills. For example, at snack time, children collect their own bowl, tip away unwanted food and put their dishes in the sink. Most children attempt to put their coats on themselves and develop show good large/small motor skills. They select resources they need from around the room and this independence improves children's self-esteem.

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

Overall, children make good progress from their starting points. They enjoy their learning and achieve well in their activities. Many children have well-developed communication skills and all children make strong progress, including those at the

earlier stages of development. They make themselves understood well and use appropriate language in spontaneous and structured play. For example, one child named the different types of dinosaurs correctly and accurately described their features. Many children express themselves with confidence and a few use a rich vocabulary, for example describing a mouse as sneaky.

A majority of children show an interest in books and enjoy their content when listening to stories and a few children share a book for pleasure in the reading nook. Most children listen well in discussion time and follow instructions carefully. Most children's Welsh language skills are progressing well through the use of songs, rhymes and stories.

Many children's physical skills are developing well. They competently pedal bikes around a track marked on the playground and use large play equipment with increasing control. Many children demonstrate strong balancing skills when using the milk crates and balance bars outside. They handle large water containers effectively to carry water from the butt to the water tray independently. Many children develop good fine motor skills, and they make choices about the resources they use confidently. They create individual pictures in the cut and stick area and a few use the sticky tape dispenser independently.

A few children develop problem-solving skills well. For example, they work out how to get the mouse out of the tree by choosing the correct length stick to dislodge it. They use mathematical language to describe their sticks as shorter or longer. Many children develop a worthwhile range of numeracy skills successfully and are beginning to count. For example, they accurately count the ingredients to make a stew in the home corner. Nearly all children identify their toothbrush by colour and a few recognise the number on it.

Many children enjoy being creative, for example when making a Gruffalo crumble in the forest area. They put on and remove their own painting aprons when painting pictures at the easel. Most children develop effective social and emotional skills and co-operate well with each other in their play.

Care and development:

In general, practitioners follow appropriate policies and procedures that promote children's health, safety, and well-being. For example, they develop physical health by providing children with daily opportunities to play outdoors and they offer well-balanced food and drink. However, practitioners do not keep a record of food offered to children. Practitioners successfully encourage children to brush their teeth. They complete accident and incident records appropriately and share these with parents/carers. Practitioners ensure that parents/carers provide written consent prior to medication being administered, but they do not ask them to sign medication records after each dose given. Attendance records for children and practitioners are maintained accurately and include their time of arrival and departure. This shows that the setting follows appropriate adult to child ratios.

Practitioners follow good hygiene procedures. They wash their hands regularly, wipe tables down before serving food, and mostly deal with intimate care such as toileting and nappy changing appropriately. However, the nappy changing policy does not

contain enough detail about the procedures to be followed and practitioners do not keep any records of children's nappy changes.

Actions taken following a recent safeguarding incident are satisfactory and leaders ensure that practitioners renew safeguarding training regularly. Practitioners understand their responsibilities in reporting any child protection concerns and are familiar with the setting's safeguarding policy. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners manage children's interactions well and consistently. There is a suitable behaviour policy in place, which all practitioners follow. They use distraction techniques well to diffuse situations and praise to celebrate positive behaviour. When appropriate, practitioners offer meaningful explanations. For example, practitioners gently explain that a skipping rope tied to a trike might cause another child to trip. This helps children understand what is expected of them and why.

Practitioners are caring and responsive to children's individual needs. For example, they offer support to children who find it difficult to hold a pencil and help children go to sleep if they are tired. They model positive attitudes, behaviour and appropriate use of language. This supports children with communication skills, teaches them socially acceptable ways of behaving and encourages positive interaction with others. For example, during role-play, practitioners effectively model how to be the doctor, name resources such as the stethoscope and gently take care of the patient, which children then act out with their friends. All children have appropriate opportunities to hear Welsh, with some children beginning to use a few words themselves. Practitioners have a good knowledge of child development and how to support children with additional learning needs. There are suitable processes to identify any additional needs at an early stage and to involve support services appropriately.

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

Practitioners have high expectations of all children and, as a result, children learn how to relate to others and take responsibility for their actions. They encourage children to form positive attitudes towards each other and to start to develop self-discipline. They interact very well with children and know when to intervene appropriately in their play and when to stand back and observe. A majority of practitioners question children well to challenge and support their learning.

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and understand how to support and challenge all children, including those with additional learning needs. They reflect on and adapt their curriculum suitably and are beginning to take account of the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Many practitioners are beginning to develop activities based on children's interests. For example, some toy medical resources were provided after one child was pretending to be a fairy and had broken her wing. However, practitioners do not always use opportunities to plan tasks that stem from children's interest, allowing them an opportunity to work alongside the children to develop their skills. Overall, the setting's systems for recording, monitoring and reporting progress are at an early stage of development and do not always identify suitable future activities based on the children's previous learning.

The setting is suitably equipped to develop most children's skills. There is a wide range of media for developing mark making and early writing skills both indoors and outdoors. Staff value the children's creative process and not the end product. Practitioners are excellent language models. They model correct grammar and take opportunities to extend children's vocabulary through the course of their play. There are limited resources to develop children's ICT skills. Practitioners foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect, and promote principles that help children to distinguish right from wrong.

Environment:

Leaders ensure that the setting has appropriate measures to keep children safe. The premises are secure and effective risk assessments ensure that risks to children are reduced or eliminated. Visitors are asked to sign into the building on arrival, which ensures that all adults are accounted for. Regular fire drill practices are carried out and recorded appropriately. Practitioners supervise children diligently and recognise the importance of allowing them suitable opportunities to take risks in their play. For example, they promote opportunities for children to take managed risks such as allowing them to balance on planks of wood to get across plastic crates in the forest school area.

Practitioners care for the children in a clean, appropriately decorated environment. The layout and design successfully promote children's independence as they can help themselves to the majority of the resources they need. Resources are suitable and develop children's learning. The environment offers enough room for children to play and learn and contains a cosy area for children to rest or take part in quieter activities. There are a few examples of children's work on display, such as the children's art gallery and winter craft work, which provide children with a sense of pride. The outdoor areas are resourced appropriately, engaging and continually growing and developing. For example, practitioners have created a forest school area to develop a range of skills as well as to promote an understanding and respect for the natural world. This area is arranged well, with a range of natural and man-made materials to enhance children's experiences.

Leaders provide children with a wide range of toys and resources, mostly of appropriate quality and condition. However, a few toys and resources are not sufficiently maintained. Practitioners have adopted a curiosity approach and have made positive changes in the environment to reflect this. For example, practitioners put ceramic teacups and glass jars in the role-play area to teach children to handle breakable items with care. This appropriately supports their understanding of the world around them and develops their curiosity and imagination. There are a few toys and resources to promote cultural awareness and develop an understanding of diversity and Welsh heritage.

Leadership and management:

The setting has a clear statement of purpose to inform parents/carers of what it has to offer. There is a positive ethos among staff and all are committed to the aims of the setting. Practitioners have relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children. All show a commitment to continuing professional development and attend regular training. Leaders provide useful development

sessions regularly that focus on key areas such as the new Curriculum for Wales. As a result, children are nurtured well in an inclusive and welcoming environment. The registered person ensures that a range of relevant policies and procedures are in place.

The setting has robust processes to evaluate its practice and leaders show a good awareness of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders take account of the views of staff, parents and carers, children and other stakeholders. Leaders have suitable procedures to appraise the performance of staff but do not carry out regular supervisory meetings with staff to check on their progress towards agreed targets. Therefore, not all staff understand the key improvement priorities of the setting.

The practitioners frequently access the training offered by the local authority advisory team and respond readily to their advice and support. This has a strong impact on outcomes for children. Effective use is made of available grants. For example, leaders arranged for the forest school area to be fenced and suitably resourced and this has greatly improved the quality of the outdoor space. Practitioners use an online platform for sharing activities effectively to keep parents informed of what their children are learning. The setting is based within the local primary school and leaders take advantage of this by facilitating communication between staff to support transition effectively. This helps children to move onto the next stage of their education smoothly.

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)

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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

29	Ensure all practitioners, who look after children, receive appropriate supervision meetings.	New

Where we find the provider is not meeting the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care but there is no immediate or significant risk for people using the service, we highlight these as Recommendations to Meet National Minimum Standards.

We expect the provider to take action to address these and we will follow these up at the next inspection.

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.

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