A report on

St Asaph Community Playgroup

The Pod
St Asaph Infant School
Upper Denbigh Rd
St Asaph
LL17 0RL

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About St Asaph Community Playgroup

Name of setting	St Asaph Community Playgroup
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	St Asaph Community Playgroup
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Tracey Edwards
Person in charge	Tracey Edwards
Number of places	19
Age range of children	2-4
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	28
Number of children who receive funding for early education	7
Opening days / times	9 - 3
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	10 April 2025
Date of previous Estyn inspection	March 2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	03/06/2025
No children have English as an additional language. No children are fluent Welsh speakers	

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. Ensure that self-evaluation processes are embedded and development plans are detailed enough to support ongoing improvements

R2. Ensure that supervisions and appraisals happen regularly and are used meaningfully to support staff development

R3. Develop systems to ensure that policies and procedures are clearly written, kept up to date and continue to be relevant to the setting

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. They move freely between different areas, transporting toys and resources to support their play. Nearly all children are confident to talk and express themselves, knowing what they say to practitioners is valued and responded to with interest.

Nearly all children are happy, confident and enjoy attending the setting. They cope well with separation from their parents and carers, greeting practitioners warmly and eagerly. They form strong positive emotional attachments with practitioners whom they are familiar with. Children eagerly invite practitioners into their play, proudly showing their works of art when painting, and models when using play dough. Nearly all children are familiar with the routines and expectations of the setting, and this adds to their sense of safety and well-being.

Most children are beginning to form friendships at the setting. They play contentedly alongside each other or with their friends and are learning to co-operate and share. For example, they chat happily together as they put toy animals in the water for a 'swim'. With support from practitioners, they negotiate and wait patiently for other children to finish their turn with a toy before they use it. They show respect and care for resources and toys and use them appropriately.

Nearly all children are enthusiastic and interested in their play and learning. They enjoy both adult led activities and free play experiences. They move around the environment freely as they direct their own play, successfully choosing where and what they want to play with. Nearly all children enjoy listening to stories shared with them by practitioners. They join in enthusiastically when singing familiar songs and rhymes with practitioners.

Many children are developing their independent skills well. For example, they independently access the toilet facilities and wash their hands, with encouragement from staff where needed.

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

Nearly all children thrive in a safe nurturing environment where practitioners value every learning attempt. As a result, nearly all children make good progress from their different starting points. Nearly all children develop their communication skills effectively through a variety of imaginative play opportunities such as playing in the role play ice-cream café. Most children listen to their friend's orders attentively and use a good range of vocabulary to describe the flavours of the ice-cream and what they would like to eat. They take turns serving each other, handling payments, giving change and completing the order by writing receipts. Through this play, children develop valuable communication and early literacy skills.

Many children develop their early reading skills appropriately. They enjoy sharing books with practitioners and each other in the setting's reading den. They carefully select books, turn pages one at a time and engage in conversations about the pictures in the stories.

Nearly all children's Welsh language skills are developing well, nearly all children respond when they hear their name, and enthusiastically greet practitioners and visitors. Nearly all children listen and respond to simple instructions, for example when asked to sit for snack time, and confidently name colours.

Nearly all children make good progress in their physical development. They move easily around the setting avoiding obstacles and each other. When playing outdoors they accurately throw balls through hoops. They develop good balance and co-ordination, for example, when balancing on walking stilts. Nearly all children develop their fine motor skills successfully. For example, they squeeze pinch and roll dough into shapes and patterns of their choosing. Many children engage independently with mathematical resources when playing and exploring in the environment. For example, when playing with tape measures they comment on the numbers they see and go to find additional items and people they can measure in their environment. They begin to use mathematical vocabulary, such as 'high' and 'tall' when comparing the height of objects. Nearly all children develop effective problem-solving skills. They show perseverance and resilience when creating structures like towers and obstacle courses from crates and wood, remaining with the task until it is completed. They make thoughtful decisions about the materials they need, and how their creations will look.

Many children are beginning to develop their digital skills appropriately. They operate remote-control cars confidently, pressing buttons to make them travel in straight lines and to stop. They explore and experiment casting shadows in the reading den, using the torches, turning them off and on to observe the changes in light and dark.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. They have a clear understanding of safeguarding issues, 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 any improvements to the procedure that may be needed. Practitioners work in line with the risk assessments at the setting and are alert and skilled to assess any emerging risks. Practitioners have systems in place to record accidents, incidents and pre-existing injuries, and share this information with parents. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Practitioners promote healthy lifestyles; they offer a choice of healthy food at snack time and ensure that children have access to enriching and enjoyable daily outdoor play experiences. This brings children the benefits of physical exercise and fresh air.

Practitioners are kind, gentle and warm and interact positively with children. They use praise and encouragement to support children's behaviour effectively. They are good role models and set clear expectations for behaviour, confidently encouraging children to be kind, show respect for each other and take turns in sharing resources. Practitioners bring a sense of

humour, fun and joy into their interactions with children. This creates a warm and calm atmosphere at the setting.

Practitioners know children well. They are nurturing and sensitive to the needs of the children in their care. Practitioners identify those children who may have an emerging additional learning need appropriately. They work closely with parents, carers, and outside agencies to ensure that these children are supported effectively.

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

Practitioners know children well and demonstrate a sound understanding of child development. Daily routines are flexible and allow children ample time to play and pursue their own interests, indoors and outside. Practitioners are beginning to develop a good understanding of the curriculum. They provide a broad range of meaningful and authentic experiences. As a result, children make progress across the curriculum and develop a strong sense of belonging at the setting.

Practitioners provide a nurturing environment where children's achievements and successes are celebrated. They play alongside children, skilfully knowing when to support and when to step back. This approach builds on children's confidence successfully and supports them to explore new experiences for themselves.

Practitioners are good language role models and actively support children's language development for example, introducing new vocabulary to children as they play. They provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop their mark making skills in creative and engaging ways. Practitioners model and use simple Welsh words throughout the session. This provides regular opportunities for children to develop and use their Welsh language skills. As a result, children are beginning to respond in Welsh without prompting.

Practitioners ensure that children develop their physical skills effectively, they encourage them to take calculated risks in their play, for example encouraging children to be confident and careful when jumping off different surfaces, or when using the knives to cut up fruit. These experiences help children to develop their resilience, independence and confidence.

Practitioners develop and nurture children's creativity and imagination successfully. They provide a wide range of resources to role play areas to spark children's imagination. These experiences help children to make sense of the world they live in and provide creative opportunities to develop their communication and numeracy skills.

Practitioners develop children's spiritual, moral, and social development appropriately. They encourage children to demonstrate kindness and respect to others and their environment when at the setting. They promote Welsh culture suitably, celebrating St Davids Day and taking visits to local places of cultural importance, such as St Asaph's Cathedral. Practitioners provide children with suitable opportunities to learn about their own culture and the culture of others. They create meaningful opportunities for children to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the natural world. For example, they encourage children to care for the setting's pet fish, by feeding it daily, observing how it moves through the water and describing the different colours they see.

Practitioners are beginning to use observations and assessment to inform their weekly planning. Practitioners know their children well and their insights help them to plan appropriate support for each child and keep parents informed of the progress they make in their learning. The recent introduction of an online tool has further strengthened communication with families, enabling parents to stay updated on their child's progress and how they can further support them at home.

Environment: Good

The environment is safe and secure. The site is modern and well maintained. External gates from the school are locked, and practitioners allow only authorised access to the setting and a record of all visitors is maintained. Practitioners are alert to emerging risks and carry out daily checks of the environment to identify and, where possible, eliminate any risks to children's safety. Leaders ensure that risk assessments for all areas and activities are in place and followed by practitioners consistently. The indoor space becomes the school canteen over the lunch time period. Practitioners have developed efficient systems to pack resources away and manage this transition safely.

The indoor environment is warm, welcoming and inviting to children. It provides an effective environment for play and learning. The room is thoughtfully laid out to provide a wide variety of areas and resources to stimulate children's interest. For example, the home role play area is resourced attractively with comfy chairs to invite children to play, and a tent provides a restful space for children to look at books or relax. The tables and chairs are at children's height and provide a suitable place to eat snack and lunch whilst also serving as a useful space for learning activities. Toys and activities are stored in manageably sized baskets at children's height enabling them to access what they want to play with freely. Toilets and wash hand basins are clean and suitable in number, and children access them independently. The outdoor environment is safe and provides worthwhile opportunities for children to play and learn in the fresh air.

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 cultural diversity and the world around them. Staff regularly check toys, equipment, and resources to ensure that they are clean and in good condition.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders at St Asaph Community Playgroup have a clear vision for the setting, of helping children to make friends and be independent. This vision is shared effectively with practitioners and is reflected strongly in their daily practice. Leaders ensure that practitioners work collaboratively and effectively with the day-to-day tasks, and delegate these to suit the strengths of individual practitioners. As a result, the sessions are happy, calm and run smoothly. Leaders foster a positive and nurturing ethos, where both children and practitioners feel safe and valued. They ensure that the statement of purpose is clear and provides an accurate reflection of provision. Leaders understand and implement a range

of suitable policies and procedures. However, policies are not always readily accessible, clear to read or easy for others to understand.

Leaders are at an early stage in developing effective self-evaluation processes. They have attended beneficial training, which resulted in them be able to more clearly identify the settings strengths and important areas for improvement. As a result, leaders identified the need to improve the outdoor environment and have started to make beneficial changes to make best use of the small space.

Leaders ensure that job descriptions are clear and contain the relevant information. The setting benefits from a stable and experienced team and all practitioners are suitably qualified. Practitioners understand their roles well, taking the lead on areas such as planning. This consistency provides stability and the smooth running of sessions. Leaders are beginning to implement appropriate systems for supervision and appraisal. However, these are not yet fully developed to allow for regular opportunities for practitioners to discuss their strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, appraisals and supervisions do not always link in with professional development or improvement plans well enough.

Leaders make effective use of grants and additional funding to address the areas for improvement identified through their self-evaluation processes. For example, they used funding to purchase digital resources to support the development of children's digital skills and further develop provision in the outdoor area. Practitioners respond well to guidance from the Local Authority's Early Education Team. As a result, the setting has made effective changes to the environment and the daily routines. The setting has established strong relationships with parents, who value the care and support their children receive. The setting benefits from being on the site of St Asaph's Infant School. As a result, children's transition to school is aided by regular lunch time opportunities to meet the canteen staff and older children.

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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