Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

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

A report on

Little Angels Playgroup

c/o St Gabriels Primary School
Ringland Circle
Ringland
NP19 9PQ

Date of inspection: September 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Angels Playgroup

Name of setting	Little Angels Playgroup
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Kelli Priest
Person in charge	Emma Hart
Number of places	24
Age range of children	2 years and 4 months to 4 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	23
Number of children who receive funding for early education	23
Opening days / times	0900-1500 Mon-Fri
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	18/10/23
Date of previous Estyn inspection	Oct 2016
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	24/09/2024

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 the planning, assessment and observation procedures focus more closely on children's progress across the developmental pathways

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 are happy and settled at the setting. They are cheerful and calm when they arrive and are greeted by friendly practitioners. This ensures that most children cope well as they separate from parents and carers. They form positive relationships with practitioners who know them well. Most children are familiar with daily routines such as washing their hands before eating and sitting on the carpet for a brief registration. This helps them to develop a strong sense of belonging.

Most children participate well in their learning and play activities and make suitable choices and decisions. They enjoy the freedom to move around the learning areas and choose activities that interest them, for example whether to play with dinosaurs in the small world area or play with the resources in the outdoor area. Most children express themselves confidently and make their needs known. They know they will be listened to by practitioners who value their interactions. This has a positive effect on children's well-being and esteem.

Nearly all children interact positively with their friends and those caring for them. They enjoy sociable mealtimes where they practice good manners and chat happily together whilst eating. Nearly all children are comfortable in their surroundings and develop warm relationships with their peers and practitioners at the setting. For example, older children provide support and reassurance to their younger friends who are settling into the setting. Many children approach practitioners for support and often invite them into their play, to which they respond with great enthusiasm. Most

children are beginning to learn to take turns and share, for example when playing with scooters outdoors.

Most children enjoy beneficial play activities and develop their skills effectively while experimenting and learning. Many children ask questions about their environment around them and are eager to learn new vocabulary. For example, children respond enthusiastically to using new Welsh vocabulary after it is modelled to them by practitioners. Many children concentrate for a suitable amount of time that is in line with their stage of development and enjoy periods of extended play. Most children respond positively when receiving praise from a practitioner. This has a positive effect on their well-being and self-esteem.

Nearly all children develop their independent learning skills well. They take responsibility for their own personal hygiene, such as using the toilet and washing their hands throughout the day. Nearly all children respond well to opportunities to do things for themselves, such as using tongs to pick up fruit at snack time. As a result, they attempt tasks independently before asking for help from practitioners.

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 during their time at the setting. They develop effective communication skills and establish strong relationships with their peers and staff. Many talk readily with other children and familiar adults and express themselves confidently, for example when describing what they have been doing at home or explaining what they are looking for when digging in the garden area.

Most children listen carefully and respond with understanding, for instance when following simple instructions. They interact positively with staff to engage in conversation and pick up on vocabulary that they introduce in their play, such as using ‘ready, steady, go’ when racing toy cars. Most children readily ask unprompted questions of adults when they are curious.

Many children show a good understanding of an increasing variety of familiar Welsh words and phrases. They use everyday greetings naturally and enjoy joining in with Welsh songs and answering the register in Welsh. A minority of children are beginning to use spoken Welsh independently, for instance to ask for ‘dŵr’ at snack time. Nearly all children show a positive attitude to learning Welsh and are keen to communicate with ‘Ticw’, the setting’s Welsh teddy bear.

Most children show enjoyment in being read to. They listen and concentrate well. Many respond enthusiastically to questions about what they hear and the pictures they observe, for instance to reflect on how they feel when they receive a hug from their family. Many pupils use the resources indoors and outdoors to make marks using a range of materials independently. They show suitable control and dexterity and are beginning to develop an appropriate pencil grip. A few pupils show an understanding of writing for a purpose and select materials to ‘write’ a letter to post or use a clipboard in their play.

Many children are developing their understanding of mathematical language and concepts appropriately. They gather and sort objects by size and shape and compare wooden pieces to decide which pile is bigger and who has more, or less. Many children become absorbed when experimenting with filling containers and pouring liquids between different vessels to make drinks and potions in the outdoor kitchen. Many are beginning to count individual items accurately, such as the number of people in a photograph of their family. A few children explore how quickly conkers fall down a drainpipe and a wooden plank. They explore which pipe is the fastest and how many can fall at the same time.

Most children make strong progress in developing their physical skills. They show good manipulative control, for instance when using tools to brush and scoop and when unscrewing lids from bottles. A few children show acute concentration and coordination when carrying a shallow tray of water outdoors carefully. Most children develop their strength, balance and stamina effectively when climbing and riding balance bikes and scooters confidently. They take suitable risks in their play and show resilience to carry on or try again if they fall or when something does not work first time.

Most children explore the indoor and outdoor environment confidently. They choose where they want to play, what they want to do and the resources they will use. Many sustain their interest in their activity well and engage with their peers, cooperating to use areas and materials together considerately. Many children enjoy participating in shared imaginative play with their friends and with members of staff. For example, they scooter excitedly during a chasing game, using foam stars to invoke magic powers that enable them to ‘freeze’ other people or to make them safe.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners follow clear systems and procedures to ensure that children are safe and healthy. They understand their roles and responsibilities well and adhere to the setting’s daily practices. Practitioners have appropriate certification to ensure that they know what to do in the case of an accident and that appropriate first aid resources are available at the setting.

Practitioners have a good understanding of child protection procedures and know their responsibilities well. As part of their wider safeguarding practices and to ensure that children are safe, practitioners record children's attendance and their own times of work. They keep records of accidents, incidents, and pre-existing injuries, which include signatures of practitioners and parents. Nappy changing procedures are in line with current infection control guidance. Practitioners ensure that allergies are dealt with in a safe and effective manner and all medical information is recorded in line with recommended guidelines. Leaders review and analyse procedures regularly and make amendments when necessary. As a result, the setting’s arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Practitioners promote healthy lifestyles by providing children with a variety of nutritious snacks and options of milk and water for them to drink. They ensure that all

children have daily access to fresh air in the outdoor areas. Practitioners follow good hygiene practices in line with infection control guidance, for example wiping tables before children sit down to eat. They encourage children to develop good hygiene routines, such as washing their hands before eating.

Practitioners have a warm, reassuring and comforting manner with children. They model positive behaviour strategies and language and follow the setting's behaviour policy well. Practitioners facilitate children's social development successfully by encouraging them to help with simple tasks. For example, they encourage children to help tidy up at the end of the session and talk to them about how they can put their plastic rubbish in the special recycling bins provided. Practitioners celebrate children's kindness, positive behaviours or when they succeed in their tasks. This has a positive effect on children's self-confidence and develops their understanding of respect and support of others.

Practitioners promote children's play, learning and development successfully. They provide children with purposeful areas of learning, which are led by the interests of children. Practitioners have comprehensive knowledge of children's individual needs and preferences and ensure that they use this information to support and promote children's well-being effectively.

Practitioners identify and support children with additional needs well. They work successfully with parents, carers, and outside agencies to ensure the best outcomes for children. They implement and review children's progress regularly to ensure that their needs are met.

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

Practitioners have a good understanding of how children learn through play and exploration. They have a sound understanding of child development and provide a worthwhile range of experiences that support children's learning across all areas. Practitioners pay good attention to children's interests and use this information well to help them plan future experiences.

Practitioners create a calm and inclusive environment through their thoughtful and kind interactions. They model how to share, take turns and take care of others when they need help sensitively. They encourage children to develop perseverance to complete tasks and find solutions to problems, such as how to use a bandage when looking after a sick patient in the role play area.

Practitioners provide extended periods of uninterrupted play, allowing children to choose their activities and revisit those they enjoy. This approach supports children to become confident explorers of their environment. Practitioners offer a balance of child and adult-led play. These experiences allow them time to get to know children well and help them settle into the settings routines.

Practitioners are beginning to consider how they use observations as part of their planning process to help them to plan future experiences. They capture useful

information on children's early skill development, and their likes and dislikes. However, they do not always use this information well enough to help them plan and teach the next steps in children's knowledge, understanding and skill development, across all areas of the curriculum.

Practitioners enrich children's experiences through exploring the local community, taking them on walks to capture photographs, and visiting the local library for story telling sessions. They offer meaningful opportunities for children to develop a sense of awe and wonder. For example, they actively engage children in gardening and growing activities throughout the year, involve children in the caring of birds during winter and explore the changing seasons. As a result, children begin to understand the impact of the seasons on nature, learn how to take care of living things and the environment.

Practitioners are effective language role models and introduce new vocabulary to children during play and activities, such as describing the texture of conkers. They use thoughtful questions to prompt children's thinking and support their communication skills. Practitioners model a joyful approach to learning and participate eagerly in children's play. They are skilful at knowing when to intervene and when to step back and observe children's play.

Practitioners model simple Welsh vocabulary and questions in their interactions with children well. They help children to develop an awareness of Wales and Welsh culture, for example by taking walks around the local area and participating in various Welsh cultural activities.

Practitioners offer range of worthwhile experiences to support children to develop their fine motor and early mark making skills. They respond well to children's interest in books and stories and read familiar stories to them with expression and enjoyment. They provide suitable activities and resources for children to develop their early mathematical and digital skills in the learning areas throughout the setting. In these areas, practitioners provide children with authentic opportunities to solve problems, sort and classify objects and develop early counting skills.

Practitioners promote children's social, moral, cultural, and spiritual development well. They offer children appropriate opportunities to learn about festivals and cultures from around the world. They also make good use of visitors to the settings to introduce children to a range of worthwhile cultural experiences. For example, visits from a musical provider and an animal encounters experience help children to develop a curiosity of the world and develop their communication and creative skills.

The setting works well with parents to gather valuable information on children's individual needs and interests before starting at the setting. Practitioners keep parents well informed of their child's progress through a range of events. They make good use of the settings online platform to engage with parents and share relevant information.

Environment: Good

Practitioners ensure that children are supervised carefully in a safe environment. They follow a good range of clear and comprehensive policies, which allows them to effectively promote the safety and welfare of children. They ensure that only authorised persons have entry to the setting and maintain a digital log of all visitors. Leaders develop and maintain a range of comprehensive risk assessments, which practitioners implement effectively to support the safe and smooth running of the setting. Practitioners are pro-active in undertaking daily safety checks of the environment and specific activities, ensuring that risks are minimised.

The setting is welcoming and well maintained. Practitioners follow effective procedures to keep the environment and equipment clean and in an appropriate condition. Children have access to child sized furniture, such as tables and chairs as well as low-level toilets and sinks, which promote their physical development and independence skills successfully. Leaders hold regular fire drills, allowing children to familiarise themselves with what to do in an emergency. They ensure that routine maintenance checks for the building and all appliances are undertaken, and relevant certificates are held.

Practitioners ensure that the environment celebrates children's creativity and successes through displays of their work and photographs of them in their play. Practitioners encourage parents and carers to send family photos into the setting to be displayed for the children to see and refer to. This helps to create a strong sense of belonging for all. The indoor area is arranged effectively to provide stimulating play and learning areas alongside calm and relaxing spaces to read and listen to music. Resources are stored at a low level to enable children to choose independently and pursue their individual interests. As a result, many children are familiar with gathering and returning equipment to the appropriate places.

Practitioners have created a well-used outside area that enables children to experience a wide range of learning opportunities. Children have opportunities to develop their physical skills by using wheeled toys, a trampoline, mud kitchen and other play equipment. They have access to a planting area, which provides opportunities to learn about the natural environment and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children have access to a few resources that represent the world around them and reflect different cultures from around the world. Practitioners use authentic resources and natural materials, as well as developmentally appropriate toys, providing children with rich opportunities to play and learn.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders create a calm and inclusive environment, promoting effective collaborative working with clear roles and responsibilities. This has a positive impact on the smooth running of the setting. The statement of purpose is clear and provides an accurate picture of the setting, helping parents make informed decisions about its suitability for their child. Leaders accurately identify the setting's strengths and areas

for development. The evaluation processes and improvement planning are appropriate and lead to positive improvements.

Leaders have established strong links with a range of partners. They work closely with a range of stakeholders to improve provision, support children's learning and identify key areas for improvement. For example, they have enhanced the indoor and outdoor environments by introducing a wider range of real-life resources and experiences. As a result, children engage more deeply in play and show higher levels of involvement.

Leaders allocate funding effectively to address identified areas for improvement and evaluate the impact of these initiatives on the setting appropriately. They offer a variety of valuable family engagement activities, such as cooking and nature 'take-home activity bags,' to strengthen the connection between the setting and home while providing meaningful opportunities for families to learn together.

Leaders provide valuable professional learning opportunities that enable staff to enhance their knowledge and improve their practice, in particular those linked to Welsh language and curriculum and assessment development. They implement safe and appropriate processes for recruitment and deployment of practitioners, and ensure all practitioners have clear up-to-date job descriptions that contain information relating to their roles and responsibilities. They encourage practitioners to reflect on their own practice through supervision and appraisal processes and ensure that all staff develop in their roles appropriately.

Leaders develop close relationships with parents, and they feel at ease to contact the setting if they have any concerns. On entry, parents complete a profile detailing their child's likes, dislikes and support needs. This provides leaders with valuable information, which helps them plan how they can best meet individual children's needs. Leaders keep parents well informed of their child's progress and development through regular updates and the setting's online platform.

The setting has developed suitable arrangements for transition with the school in which the setting is based. This supports children to ease into life at the school and their next stage of learning.

Leaders have established strong links with a range of partners. They work closely with a range of stakeholders to improve provision and support children's 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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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.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this	N/A

	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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