

The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

Nursery report on: Shirenewton Playgroup

Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Mary Dyas

Date of inspection: 6th and 7th May 2008

Contract number: T/096/07N

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Report on the inspection of nursery settings in the non-maintained sector

Name of nursery:	Shirenewton Playgroup
Address:	Shirenewton Recreational Hall Shirenewton Nr Chepstow Monmouthshire
Post code:	NP16 6RQ
Telephone:	07798 780971
Person responsible for day-to-day management:	Beverley Lindsay
Position	Playgroup Supervisor

About the inspection

This inspection took place as part of a national programme of inspections of the educational provision for children before compulsory school age in Wales. It was commissioned by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings so that providers can improve the quality of education offered and help children achieve their full potential. Another purpose is to inform parents and the public about the quality of nursery education. A copy of the inspection report must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the nursery and should be available on request to other people.

Inspectors have used a five point scale to record all judgements. Grade definitions are:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no major shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

1.0 Context of the setting

Context of the nursery setting

Shirenewton Playgroup opened in the mid 1970s. The present owner no longer works there but maintains regular contact and financial control. It is registered for up to twenty six children aged from two and a half years to compulsory school age.

Shirenewton is a rural village five miles west of Chepstow in South Wales and the playgroup uses the village recreational hall. The hall is used by other groups in the afternoons and evenings so equipment has to be set up and put away on four mornings a week. On the fifth day there is an afternoon session specifically for younger children and one morning a week is similarly dedicated to the pre-school age group.

The playgroup has the use of a large, bright and airy room with an adjacent kitchen for the preparation of snacks and also a large storage cupboard. There is a smaller room which is used for registration and circle time and is set out with quieter activities such as mark making, a book corner, interest tables and a computer. Some children's work is displayed around the walls but has to be taken down between sessions. The supervisor works in all sessions and is supported by six other part-time members of staff ensuring adequate staff:pupil ratios

The hall is situated in approximately eight acres of playing field and the playgroup has been allocated a small section in one corner which they have begun to develop into a forest school area with a log circle, willow arbour and areas for digging, exploring and growing. They are also able to use an adjacent playground area with large equipment and an 'astroturf' surface.

Children attending the playgroup come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. There are no children currently from ethnic minority groups but policies are in place for their inclusion. The playgroup welcomes children with additional needs and makes appropriate arrangements to provide the appropriate support and care. At the time of the inspection there were 39 children on roll of which 18 were three year olds and 15 were four year olds. There were 17 present on the first morning of the inspection and nineteen on the second.. Thirty children were in receipt of funded educational provision at the playgroup.

The playgroup has gained the Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association Quality Assurance award and is currently working towards re-accreditation. They were last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in September 2007 with no recommendations or points for action.

The playgroup was last inspected by Estyn in 1999.

2.0 Main findings of the report

2.1 The overall quality and standards of educational provision and whether or not the provision successfully promotes the goals for children's learning

The quality and standards of educational provision, taken overall, are appropriate and successfully promote the desirable outcomes for children's learning.

2.2 Standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

Six areas of learning	Grade for under-fives
Language, literacy and communication skills	2
Personal and social development	2
Mathematical development	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	2
Physical development	2
Creative development	2

2.3 Inspection judgement on the quality of education provided by the setting

Quality of education	Grade for under-fives
Quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
Quality of planning for children's learning	2
Quality of teaching	2
Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress, and reports for parents and carers	2
Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community	2
The contribution made by the setting to children's well-being	2
Quality of the leadership and management of the setting	2
The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report	2

3.0 The standards achieved by children in the six areas of learning

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds and standards achieved by 4-5 year-olds

3.1 Language, literacy and communication skills

Good features

All children place a laminated figure in a pocket with their name when they arrive at playgroup. The position of their named pocket is changed daily. Younger children do this with help and all four year olds are able to do it unaided.

Most children make purposeful marks using a range of implements such as brushes, pens, pencils and chalks. Many four year olds write their own name on their work as do a few three year olds.

All children enjoy listening to stories. They show interest, take part in discussions about the story and anticipate what is coming next. When looking at books during their play they handle them carefully, turn the pages correctly and comment appropriately on the pictures.

The children are gradually being introduced to letter sounds using a commercial scheme and a majority of four year olds are able to name and identify more than half the letters of the alphabet.

Many four year olds are extremely articulate and use complex language to express themselves. Most children talk animatedly to one another, listen to what others say and respond appropriately. They are happy to talk to visitors about what they are doing and retell experiences clearly.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.2 Personal and social development

Good features

The children are very relaxed and happy in the playgroup. There is a strong sense of self worth and acceptance and children are kind and considerate of one another. Older children concentrate for lengthening periods seeing an idea through to their satisfaction.

Snack time is organised in a cafeteria style and children are able to come and have a drink and a snack at any time while it is set up. They find their named mat and choose their drink and snack from a healthy selection. Children are encouraged to use the Welsh words for milk and water when choosing their drink.

Parents and younger siblings can stay for the registration time and sit on the floor in a circle with the children. The majority of the children listen and look at the things that others have brought to show for the interest and sound tables.

All children are learning to be independent in their use of the toilet, hand washing and putting on and taking off coats and boots to go outdoors. All four year olds and many three year olds perform these tasks themselves.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.3 Mathematical development

Good features

Children benefit from many opportunities to count during the playgroup sessions. A majority of three year olds are able to count past ten and all four year olds can count by rote past twenty. Most four year olds are able to count objects accurately to and past ten.

Children use mathematical language in their play: for example when comparing lengths of ribbon they talk about longer, longest, very long and shorter. They are learning to make tally charts to record their findings through their work in the outdoor area.

All children know and join in with a range of number songs and rhymes and are able to hold up the correct number of fingers on one hand.

Most children know and can identify basic shapes and use coins when visiting the role play café. They sort a variety of objects according to colour, size and shape.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.4 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Good features

Children are able to talk about their homes and to relate things that have happened. They are also able to talk about visits they have made to different places. They are familiar with the daily routines of the group and can anticipate what is going to happen next.

Many children take good advantage of the opportunities offered for them to solve problems or follow their own ideas: for example a small group independently used the small physical play equipment to devise their own game.

Through the regular use of the outdoor area the children are gaining first hand understanding of the changing seasons. They also take regular walks around the neighbourhood to look at changes in the environment - collecting leaves in autumn, looking at spring flowers etc.

Visitors to the playgroup such as a doctor, vet and policeman and opportunities for role play such as a café, post office, hospital, hairdresser and optician, help the children to begin to think about different kinds of workers.

Most children are able to use a mouse to make selections and to move objects around the screen when using the computer. They also play CDs of their choice on a music centre during activity time.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.5 Physical development

Good features

All children are developing their fine motor skills and in particular skills of manipulation. They roll and cut playdough, thread beads, and handle small items such as sequins when making craft items. Children use scissors, felt pens, glue sticks and small stickers with appropriate skill.

There are many opportunities for the children to develop their gross motor skills both indoors and outside. They ride bikes and scoot cars which they steer skilfully around the astroturf surface, balance along a beam and swing, rock and climb on the outdoor playground equipment. They play with a range of small equipment which they throw, catch and kick. Older children, particularly boys, enjoy opportunities to run, jump and climb.

All children respond to suggestions to move in different ways: for example like different insects they fly, jump, wriggle and crawl.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.6 Creative development

Good features

Children enjoy playing a range of percussion instruments. They are able to follow signals to play quietly or loudly, quickly or slowly and to stop. They show good control of the instruments and follow the rhythm of the music.

Children enjoy making individual choices to create pictures and designs. They choose the medium and cut and stick independently. Many children have very definite ideas about that they want to do.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.0 The quality of educational provision

The quality of educational provision for 3-4 year-olds and for 4-5 year-olds

4.1 The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Good features

The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Teachers are good role models. They are calm and caring and know the children well as individuals. There is a very strong sense of team spirit in the playgroup and children are respected for themselves.

Provision for cultural development is good. All common social and religious festivals such as Christmas, Dviali, St David's Day, Succot, Shrove Tuesday, and Valentine's Day are celebrated. Children have opportunities to dress up and to eat different food for their snack. There is a good diversity of books available for the children to read and look at including books about Wales, books in Welsh and a range of books depicting children of different races.

The children have begun to be introduced to some basic Welsh vocabulary. A recent feature is the introduction of a Welsh 'word of the week'.

Shortcomings

Staff lack confidence in the use of Welsh and do not consolidate the use of the words and phrases to which the children have been introduced.

4.2 The quality of planning for children's learning

Good features

The quality of planning for children's learning is good.

Planning is firmly based on the seven areas of learning of the forthcoming Foundation Phase in accordance with local authority guidelines. Medium term topic webs are discussed as a staff and the children are consulted as to what they would like to learn about. Their suggestions are noted to ensure that over time input is from a range of individuals.

The provision of one morning specifically for those children who will be moving on to statutory education enables activities to be tailored to their needs.

There is a partial long-term plan to ensure that seasonal topics are covered but the group is moving towards following the interests of the children and then using the topics chosen to ensure that the necessary skills are developed.

The staff are constantly discussing the activities they have provided and seeking to ensure that they are meeting the learning needs of the children. This is still informal.

Shortcomings

There is no formal recording of evaluations of children's progress or identification of the next steps in learning in future planning.

4.3 The quality of teaching

Good features

The quality of teaching is good.

Three members of staff, including the playgroup supervisor, are qualified to NVQ level 3, two others are working towards level 3 and two are unqualified.

Staff work well together and support one another positively. They demonstrate good understanding of the desirable outcomes for children's learning and are making preparations for the coming Foundation Phase later in the year.

All staff care about the children and rejoice in any progress made. They model examples of good play and make learning fun for the children. Good use is made of encouragement and questioning when children are involved in a learning activity.

A few of the older children in the playgroup are quite lively and boisterous. Staff handle any outbursts calmly and patiently and the children are quickly diverted into more productive activities.

The playgroup works closely with the visiting LEA advisory teacher. The staff have taken on and developed many suggestions and regularly attend courses offered by the Early Years team.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.4 The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports to parents and carers

Good features

Formal records are kept in line with the current recommendations of the local education authority. These are shared with parents who sign them when their child leaves the playgroup. With parental permission they are then passed on to the child's reception class.

The playgroup holds parent review meetings twice a year at which they review the child's progress and samples of work in the transition folder and discuss any areas which need to be improved.

Staff make daily records onto post-it notes which are then transferred every half-term onto the child's personal record and dated. The supervisor has made a list of areas which need to be checked for individual children and this is shared between the staff as they supervise different activities.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.5 The quality of relationships with parents, carers and the community

Good features

Relationships with parents, carers and the community are good.

Parents are welcomed to the playgroup. They are able to join in with the morning registration time, bringing any small siblings, are invited to come to help during playgroup sessions and are encouraged to come and share any talents or expertise they might have. Questionnaires have been sent out to parents and carers. Twenty one out of thirty responded with the majority of responses being very positive. There were some suggestions for improvement to which the playgroup has responded positively.

Parents report that they are extremely happy with the playgroup. They feel their children have settled well and are making good progress. They receive a diary letter each half term listing activities for each week itemising things to bring, specific activities which will be taking place in the classroom or outdoors and any expected visitors.

The playgroup enjoys very strong links with the local primary school which most of the children will move on to. The supervisor helps voluntarily once a week at the school in the reception class which proves particularly beneficial when the children start school in September.

Links with the community are good. The playgroup has taken part in providing a display for the church flower festival, they have made a collage to be displayed in the local library and have made a collage for the Chepstow Show for which they won a prize.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.6 The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing

Good features

The attention given to children's well-being is good.

All the required policies are in place. These include admission arrangements, signing in and out procedures, behaviour management, accident procedures, special needs, equal opportunities, procedures for the administration of medication and arrangements to ensure the safe conduct of outings. All staff are aware of their responsibilities with respect to Child Protection and have received specific training. Risk assessments are carried out when taking the children out of the playgroup and all equipment is checked daily. The outdoor area is always checked for safety before taking children across.

Children's emotional well-being is very well provided for. The playgroup promotes a positive ethos and children are made to feel safe and cared for.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting

Good features

The playgroup has assessed its own performance according to the desirable outcomes for children's learning on a five point scale. This was conducted jointly with all staff. A development plan lists dated targets for improvement and these are dated when achieved.

The relaxed policy for parents to stay or to leave their children according to the needs of both the child and the parent or carer is a strong feature of the playgroup.

Annual staff appraisals are conducted by the supervisor. Previous targets are reviewed and new training needs identified.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.8 The progress made by the setting in implementing the key issues for inspection identified in the last inspection report

Good features

The key issues identified in the last inspection report have been appropriately met.

An effective assessment policy is now in place and children's progress is effectively evaluated.

Children have many opportunities to use mathematics and mathematical vocabulary in their everyday experiences.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

Develop and implement evaluations of the planned activities provided to ensure that future planning effectively meets the learning needs of the children.

Increase staff confidence to enable them to continue to develop the daily use of Welsh within the setting – to introduce more phrases and sentences to use during the course of the sessions

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days, or 45 working days if the plan needs to be translated to or from Welsh, showing how the issues identified above will be addressed. The action plan must be given to all parents/carers with a child at the setting. A copy of the action plan must be sent to Estyn. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.