



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Alphabet Playgroup
Undy Primary
Pennyfarthing Lane
Undy
Monmouthshire
NP26 3LZ**

Date of inspection: November 2019

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Alphabet Playgroup

Name of setting	Alphabet Playgroup
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Louisa Sutton and Tracey Millard
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Louisa Sutton and Tracey Millard
Number of places	19
Age range of children	Two and a half to four years old
Number of children funded for up to two terms	19
Number of children funded for up to five terms	0
Opening days / times	Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8.30am to 3.00pm and Tuesday and Friday from 8.30am to 12.30pm.
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. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of children who use, or intend to use their service. We recommend that the service provider considers the Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care'.
Date of previous CIW inspection	05/03/2018

A report on Alphabet Playgroup
November 2019

Date of previous Estyn inspection	12/11/2015
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	20/11/2019
Additional information	
Nearly all children are from English speaking homes. A very few are from ethnic minorities.	

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Wellbeing	Excellent
Learning (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	n/a
Care and development	Excellent
Teaching and assessment (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	Excellent
Environment	Good
Leadership and management	Excellent

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

- R1 Enhance the learning environment to ensure that it supports the development of literacy and numeracy skills
- R2 Review the arrangements for toileting and nappy changing routines within the setting

What happens next

Estyn and CIW will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Wellbeing: Excellent

Nearly all children play happily knowing they are listened to and that practitioners will take very good account of their views and play choices. Nearly all make informed choices about where to play from the wide choice of learning experiences. For example, children move between the inside and outside confidently playing with trikes, large construction blocks and water play in the outdoor area and with the light board and in the home corner inside. Nearly all children choose when to interrupt their play to have their snack, and then return to their play choices at their leisure. They make extensive contributions to the ongoing evaluations of activities and resources.

Nearly all children are happy and settled in the setting. They demonstrate high levels of trust and confidence with practitioners and form close bonds with keyworkers. Nearly all children feel highly valued, reassured and settled at the setting. They show enthusiasm and pride in their work that is displayed prominently. Nearly all are very relaxed and content. A notable strength is the way nearly all children build successful friendships. Nearly all children have an excellent understanding of different cultures and customs, for example by inviting parents into the setting to talk about cultural dress, foods and customs.

Nearly all children are developing very good social skills in line with their stage of development. They are respectful, form mutual friendships and are learning to share and co-operate very successfully. For example, during a dance activity children eagerly seek friends to hold hands and dance with, and gently pat their friends' back, showing care and concern. Nearly all children are beginning to understand the rules and routines of the session successfully and remind their friends courteously of simple rules such as not to shout during a play activity. Nearly all children respond purposefully to practitioners' requests to tidy toys away and most work happily and cooperatively, demonstrating a strong awareness of routines and behaviour at their setting.

Nearly all children show obvious enjoyment in their play and benefit from the many highly effective play opportunities and hands on experiences. They engage in activities very quickly and sustain interest for long periods. Nearly all children demonstrate effective social skills when playing with their peers, for example when role playing in the home area and playing with the musical toys.

Nearly all children are extremely confident and develop their independence skills very well. For example, children self-register on arrival and for their snack in the café, by choosing their name confidently and presenting the label to staff. Nearly all children understand good hygiene procedures very well, wash their hands regularly and dress themselves independently for outdoor play.

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

There is no report on children's learning as there was an insufficient number of three and four-year-olds present at the time of the inspection, not receiving funded education elsewhere, on which we could report anonymously.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners are experienced and well qualified, and provide an exceptionally caring and nurturing experience for the children. Leaders ensure that safeguarding has a high priority and promote children's health and wellbeing very successfully. All practitioners have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. They implement the setting's policies and procedures very effectively. As a result, the arrangements in place for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners know the children very well and anticipate their needs to promote healthy lifestyles and keep them safe highly effectively. For example, they practise emergency evacuation procedures regularly with all children, promote good hygiene and keep records of accidents, incidents and administration of medication appropriately. Practitioners provide excellent support to children in raising awareness about healthy eating and remaining hydrated and have a very good understanding of dietary needs of individual children. Highly effective systems extensively promote children's feelings of security and emotional wellbeing, through well-established systems. Practitioners provide excellent opportunities for children to learn about the importance of fitness and the positive effect of exercise of their bodies. An effective example of this is when children were asked to consider how fast their hearts were pumping or how fast they were breathing when resting and relaxing, as opposed to when they were jumping and running about excitedly.

Practitioners manage interactions with children to a very high standard and adopt a highly positive approach to encourage children's learning and social interactions with their peers. They use positive feedback, praise and a variety of strategies very well to support children to adopt good behaviour. Practitioners are very clear and consistent in gently reminding children of safety rules. Practitioners build children's self-esteem skilfully through the use of high quality interactions with children. Practitioners diffuse any unwanted behaviour quickly and effectively. A calm and well-organised atmosphere presides throughout all play areas, which enables the children to enjoy their play activities and learning opportunities in all sessions.

Practitioners have a very good understanding of how to promote child development effectively. The keyworker system is implemented very well with practitioners, building a strong understanding about the children in their care. They undertake regular observations of children and evaluations of activities, to identify and promote children's development effectively. Staff provide high levels of support in all areas for

children with special educational needs. For example, practitioners adapt activities to suit the individual needs of each child to support and enhance their learning highly appropriately. They provide worthwhile opportunities to promote children's awareness of cultural diversities and sustainability through appropriate activities and resources available to children.

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

Practitioners plan an exciting range of learning experiences for children that engage and stimulate children's interests extremely well. For example, they plan for children to take measured risks when building bridges as part of their play and opportunities to create leaf houses and mountains and learn about dinosaurs. Practitioners use their strong knowledge of the children's current abilities to plan effectively for the next steps in their skills development. This ensures that nearly all children make at least good progress from their starting points. Practitioners use the foundation phase framework and consider the four purposes of the new curriculum carefully when planning exciting and stimulating activities for children

Practitioners involve children in planning the curriculum highly effectively and use a variety of ways to develop skills progressively, such as the use of observations to plan the next steps for children. Practitioners have an extensive understanding of good foundation phase practice, and provide interesting opportunities for children to learn through play and active involvement. High quality, thoughtfully planned learning areas encourage children to choose freely during their play both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners provide purposeful opportunities for children to access these areas independently.

Practitioners use questioning and challenge children's thinking to a very high standard, extending children's learning and prompting their thinking to make valuable choices and decisions. For example, practitioners provide opportunities for children to hammer wooden tees into pumpkins and once they have mastered this to negotiate harder materials such as watermelon and wood.

The setting provides exceptional opportunities for children to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In particular, practitioners are skilful in identifying incidental opportunities to improve children's understanding and wider vocabulary. For example, when eating apple slices practitioners ask the children to describe the sound it makes and how it feels. Practitioners encourage children enthusiastically develop their ICT skills through independent play such as when using the light table to explore colour and texture and the tablet to take photographs of their creations.

Practitioners encourage children to develop an interest for books by reading to them regularly with enthusiasm and engagement. They enable children to develop their

reading preferences beneficially by allowing them to have an individual vote on which story they would like to hear next. Throughout sessions, practitioners record children's preferences quickly. This ensures that children are listened to highly effectively. Practitioners use Welsh well as part of the daily routine and during activities. This has a positive impact on children's ability to understand and use the language during their time at the setting. Children have beneficial opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions. For example, they use puppets to celebrate the story of Santes Dwynwen and wear traditional costume when performing in the primary school.

The setting provides an innovative range of learning experiences to foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extensively. For example, practitioners develop a sense of awe and wonder amongst children when they watch birds eating from the bird feeders the children have made, and by encouraging them to use their imagination when they make discoveries in the forest area. The setting provides exceptional opportunities for children to experience a wide range of activities such as dance to promote their wellbeing and healthy living in a highly imaginative way.

Practitioners assess and observe the children extremely well. They make excellent use of the information to inform the next steps in learning to shape future tasks. For example, they take notes of the particular skills that children demonstrate during activities and use these to work with parents to inform their planning, such as developing the use of interesting vocabulary. They use electronic systems well to record children's skills and to share this information effectively with parents through weekly emails, newsletters and social media posts.

Environment: Good

The building is a demountable unit, which is very well maintained, and safe. Leaders manage entry to the premises well. They ensure that daily visual checks are completed and review risk assessments regularly. The premises and equipment are clean and practitioners follow infection control guidelines well. Practitioners' deployment of staff is very responsive to children's needs in order to support and keep children safe in all areas around the setting.

The setting is spacious, safe and nurturing with a stimulating safe outside play area and supervised access to the school playing fields and forest area. All play areas are set up creatively to provide a very rich and stimulating space for children to play and learn safely. For example, practitioners positively encourage children to participate in all activities. Practitioners make highly effective use of imaginative resources such as a light table, book area with English and Welsh books, mark making area and role-play area with real resources to develop children's skills progressively. There are excellent resources for all children, including easy access to toileting facilities directly from the base room, which promotes their independence effectively.

However, due to current arrangements in place for staff to use these toilets, they are occasionally not available to children during the session for a very short period of time.

Leaders ensure that children benefit from direct free flow access to the outside play space. They provide highly beneficial opportunities for children to access a wide range of resources and activities both inside and outside. This promotes children's independence and ability to choose choice to a very high standard. All learning areas include interesting and stimulating natural and manmade resources and children take resources from one area to support their play in another. The learning environment is highly imaginative visually stimulating with a worthwhile range of sensory resources made from wood, twigs, conkers and pebbles. However, practitioners do not always ensure that all areas include enough visual stimulus relating to literacy and numeracy for the children to reference in their play.

Leaders ensure that there is an extensive range of high quality, developmentally appropriate play and learning resources for all ages that offer suitable challenges, risks and opportunities for children to experiment. The setting has a wide range of low-level furniture and resources, which practitioners use effectively to enhance children's learning. Highly imaginative resources, such as costumes, dolls and books, develop children's awareness of their own and other cultures exceptionally well.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The leaders provide highly effective direction to the day-to-day work of the setting. Leaders and practitioners are highly passionate and enthusiastic about their work and they work collaboratively to promote improvements in provision and children's outcomes in a nurturing and caring environment.

Practitioners identify the setting's strengths and areas for improvement highly effectively. They use a robust system of self-review and reflection to ensure improvements in standards of children's learning and provision. Practitioners monitor progress with their improvement plan regularly, providing a valuable opportunity to evaluate the setting's strengths and identify further areas for development. For example, from informal observations and reflection, practitioners identified that children needed more opportunities to develop creativity. Consequently, they enhanced resources and planned more opportunities to develop children's creative skills, such as woodwork. They evaluated the provision regularly to ensure an improvement in children's skills.

There are safe and robust recruitment processes in place. Practitioners are suitably qualified and leaders ensure that children have access to a wide range of exciting and imaginative resources that support their learning very effectively, including a grassy forest area, and accessible outdoor area.

Leaders carry out regular staff appraisals that identify clear improvement objectives and training needs. They provide excellent opportunities for practitioners to attend training to develop their professional knowledge and skills effectively, such as developing Welsh speaking skills with the children. All practitioners learn from each other and they try hard to introduce new vocabulary and phrases. They do this in an enthusiastic and relaxed manner; this encourages the children to try new words. They carry out supervisions very effectively and leaders have introduced outstanding wellbeing meetings with practitioners to ensure staff are working collaboratively and positively. Practitioners have regular meetings with leaders to discuss feelings, aspirations and professional relationships in a confidential, relaxed manner.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the budget and prioritise expenditure effectively. For example, the setting has purchased additional large blocks and a light panel recently, to provide a wider range of opportunities for children to practise and develop their skills. They monitor the budget carefully and ensure that accounts are audited regularly. This ensures that children benefit from an extremely well-resourced provision that has a positive effect on developing children's skills. Leaders use available grants highly effectively to support children's skills, such as buying large wooden blocks, promoting collaboration play.

The setting has a wide range of highly successful partnerships that have a positive effect on provision and children's progress. For example, a very strong partnership with parents supports children's wellbeing effectively. Parents are welcomed into the setting and are encouraged to work closely with practitioners to provide beneficial experiences and outcomes for the children. For example, practitioners discuss how they manage positive behaviour so that parents can use similar strategies at home. The setting benefits extensively from the productive partnerships with the community and especially the local school where they have developed seamless arrangements for transition. The setting has effective partnerships with the local authority advisory teacher and use the advice and support given well to deliver positive outcomes for children and parents. For example, they visit other settings to gain valuable advice and ideas in areas such as woodwork and baking.

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

© Crown Copyright 2020: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 24/01/2020