



Estyn

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

A report on

Upper Colwyn Bay Playgroup

**Ysgol Pen y Bryn
Wentworth Avenue
Upper Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 6DD**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Upper Colwyn Bay Playgroup

Name of setting	Upper Colwyn Bay Playgroup
Category of care provided	Sessional care
Registered person(s)	Not Applicable
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Louise Everett
Person in charge	Louise Everett
Number of places	20
Age range of children	2 to 4 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	13 three year olds No 4 year olds
Number of children who receive funding for early education	13
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 9.00 to 12.55
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	No
Welsh Language Active Offer	This is a service that does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of people/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	n/a
Date of previous Estyn inspection	n/a

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Dates of this inspection visit(s)	10/05/2022
Additional information	

Non-compliance

We identified non-compliance in relation to Care and Development and we have issued a Priority Action Notice to the provider.

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.

Information on all non-compliance is included in the Action and Improvement Summary report, which will be sent separate to the report by CIW.

Recommendations

- R1 Use effective observations of children's play and exploration to plan for the next steps in their learning and development
- R2 Ensure that practitioners' interactions support individual children's learning and development progressively during their play
- R3 Ensure that regular appraisal and supervision provides practitioners with effective opportunities for them to reflect on their practice and identify targets for improvement

What happens next

The setting will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Areas where the setting is not meeting requirements must be addressed through the priority action notice.

Main findings

Well-being:

Nearly all children make purposeful choices and access areas of provision confidently. For example, they enjoy using the role-play resources in the home corner and exploring the outdoor areas. Most children including those with additional learning needs (ALN) communicate and express their views clearly through phrases, sentences or non-verbal cues such as pointing. Many children speak with confidence during group activities such as circle and snack time. For example, they tell practitioners they want more milk. Children who are not ready to sit in a group express themselves clearly, and happily select alternative activities.

Most children arrive eagerly at the setting and cope well as they separate from their parents and carers. They form close bonds with practitioners, which has a positive impact on their well-being and motivation. Settling in routines for new children are flexible to allow children to settle in at their own pace and, as a result, they feel safe and content. When appropriate, they receive gentle comfort and reassurance from practitioners. Children are aware that practitioners will respond effectively to their needs. For example, they approach them when they are hurt and feel immediately comforted by them. Children feel a sense of belonging and smile as they receive praise for showing kindness to a friend or being an excellent helper at tidy up time.

Nearly all children are enthusiastic and enjoy opportunities to play and learn. They show a keen interest and engage well in most of the experiences available to them. Nearly all children show curiosity and explore a variety of play opportunities. For example, they show excitement when using magnifying glasses as they search for toy mini beasts. Most children concentrate for an appropriate amount of time and respond positively to encouragement from practitioners. They listen to instructions well, for example when they join in with music and movement songs. Many children feel a sense of achievement and pride when they succeed in activities, such as when they discover how to turn a reel on its side to roll it across the floor.

Overall, most children develop their independence skills effectively. They complete self-registration on arrival and happily take responsibility for storing their belongings. They hang up their coats and know where to place their lunch bags. Most children complete self-care tasks independently. For example, they wash their hands at appropriate times and get tissues to wipe their nose. Children learn about helping others successfully as they arrange plates and cups at snack time or help to tidy resources at the end of the session.

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

Overall, most children including those with ALN make effective progress. Nearly all develop their personal and social skills effectively. They co-operate successfully such as when they play together in the sand or water. A few children show kindness spontaneously. For example, they make play dough cakes for everyone to share. Most children are confident explorers of their environment and are developing their thinking skills well. They make decisions about the activities they choose and the

resources they need successfully. A minority of children solve problems independently when faced with challenges. For example, when they notice a need for more water in a doll's bath, they decide to go outdoors to collect it themselves. A few children show strong levels of persistence, such as when they work hard to pump water from a tap in the outdoor area.

Nearly all children develop their physical skills well. They enjoy using a games area where they develop their gross motor skills successfully. Nearly all children develop their strength and balance as they roll a tyre or complete an obstacle course. A few children enjoy using a climbing frame and show joy as they reach the top. Nearly all children develop their co-ordination well as they use a range of tools such as rolling pins, brushes and sticks during their exploration and play.

Overall, most children develop their language, literacy and communication skills effectively. They listen appropriately and speak clearly. For example, they chat happily about their pets or baking cakes at home. Many children develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. They respond to a range of Welsh words and phrases positively and join in with a few songs and rhymes. Many children listen to stories with interest, and a few make simple predictions about what will happen next. A few children select favourite books independently. They handle them confidently and turn pages with care. Most children develop their mark making skills successfully as they use chalk on a large scale or paint with water outdoors.

Overall, most children develop their mathematical understanding effectively through their exploration and play. For example, they tell friends they need more soil when playing in the mud kitchen or describe a bucket of water as heavy. Many children join in with number songs. A majority say numbers in order to ten and a minority count objects accurately to at least four.

Most children show concentration and pleasure as they develop their creative skills effectively. They develop their imagination well as they engage in beneficial role-play experiences. For example, they take great care as they bathe a baby doll and sing as they dry it with a towel. Many children engage in painting activities enthusiastically and show pride in their creations. They enjoy drawing on battery operated light boards, and this supports their digital skills appropriately. However, overall children's digital skills are underdeveloped.

Care and development:

Practitioners communicate with children in a friendly manner and create a calm and relaxed atmosphere. They are positive role models for children and interact purposefully with them throughout the session. For example, they sit with children during snack time, modelling good social and communication skills.

Practitioners share a positive approach to managing children's behaviour and follow the setting's policy effectively. They have developed a successful range of strategies to promote positive behaviour, for example, using distraction and communication. They praise children for being kind or sharing resources and this has a beneficial impact on children's behaviour and self-esteem.

The setting has worked hard to improve procedures to support children with ALN and this is having a positive impact. For example, practitioners are aware of children's individual preferences and have collected favourite toys so that children can access them readily. This supports children's well-being and engagement successfully.

Practitioners implement the setting's policies and procedures effectively overall. They practise effective hygiene procedures consistently. For example, they wash their hands regularly and deal with intimate care, such as toileting, appropriately. Practitioners are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children healthy. For example, they support and encourage children to get fresh air and provide healthy snack choices. Practitioners are aware of the procedure to follow in an emergency. For example, they practice regular fire drills with the children. However, practitioners do not have a sufficient understanding of the setting's safeguarding policy and procedures and a minority of practitioners have not completed appropriate safeguarding training. Therefore, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children do not meet requirements and give cause for concern.

A minority of practitioners support children's independence well most of the time as they encourage them to wash their hands or put on their coat. However, on a few occasions, practitioners provide too much support for children, which reduces opportunities for them to be independent.

In general, most practitioners know children well and meet their immediate needs successfully. However, practitioners do not make observations of all children's learning and development effectively. As a result, planned learning experiences that build on children's next steps and support their progress are limited.

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

The setting provides an engaging learning environment indoors and outdoors that supports children's development effectively. Practitioners are beginning to develop a flexible approach in response to the new curriculum for Wales that promotes learning through child-led play and exploration.

Practitioners develop children's physical, creative, personal and social development well through providing beneficial opportunities to investigate and explore natural materials. For example, children collaborate with friends as they use sticks to mix pretend potions in the mud kitchen. The setting provides further opportunities for children to develop their physical skills successfully through activities such as riding trikes and playing target games with balls. Practitioners provide ample opportunities for children to take part in creative activities such as painting and drawing. However, in a minority of cases, these focus more on the end product rather than the process. This limits opportunities for children to experiment and express themselves freely.

The setting provides an effective balance between child-led and adult-directed learning experiences with ample time for children to follow their interests and develop their own ideas. A majority of adult-led learning experiences engage children well, such as balancing on wobbly steppingstones or singing songs. However, a minority of experiences are not planned well enough to maintain children's interest or support their learning effectively.

Overall, most practitioners support children's language, literacy and communication skills successfully. They build on children's interest and knowledge of books well by reading favourite stories throughout the session. A minority of practitioners introduce new vocabulary in English such as 'ingredients' and 'dragonfly' effectively. Beneficial experiences, such as using chalk on a large scale supports children's mark making skills successfully. Practitioners support children's Welsh language skills successfully through singing number rhymes and songs about days of the week. However, very few practitioners model the use of incidental Welsh language during the session.

The setting promotes children's awareness of the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales effectively. For example, children wear traditional dress and plant daffodil bulbs to celebrate St David's Day. Practitioners provide learning experiences that promote children's moral, spiritual and cultural development well. They foster a sense of awe and wonder and encourage children to care for living things appropriately. For example, they remind children to be careful as they observe a snail they find in the garden.

The setting builds on children's mathematical understanding appropriately. For example, a minority of practitioners model language such as 'big' and 'more' as children play in the water. Practitioners support children to build on their number skills suitably through, for example, counting the number of children in the group and singing a range of number rhymes. However, provision for developing children's mathematical concepts and language is underdeveloped.

Practitioners interactions with children are encouraging and positive. They join children in play and engage them in conversation effectively. A few practitioners extend children's thinking appropriately through the use of questioning. For example, they ask children to think about the properties of their magic potion. On a few occasions practitioners' interactions challenge children effectively, such as when they encourage children to step further away from a target when practicing their throwing skills. However, most interactions do not focus well enough on moving individual children's learning forward.

The leader assesses children's learning and development in a very few areas during their first few weeks at the setting. The leader and deputy record a limited number of observations of children's achievements in a minority of areas of learning over time. However, the setting's procedures to observe children and assess their progress across the curriculum are underdeveloped. As a result, practitioners do not have enough knowledge about individual children's development to ensure that they make the best possible progress across the curriculum.

Environment:

Leaders ensure that the indoor and outdoor environments are safe and secure. Effective risk assessments are in place, including daily checks of the environment and health and safety procedures regarding COVID-19. Visitors cannot access the setting unless admitted by a staff member and all visitors sign in upon arrival and out on departure. All required safety checks are completed within the required timescales, including fire and electrical tests. The premises are clean and all practitioners practise effective hygiene procedures. They wipe down tables before serving food and wear appropriate protective clothing. The toilet and nappy changing

facilities are appropriate, and practitioners follow guidelines to promote children's privacy and dignity.

The premises are warm and welcoming and provide an effective environment for children to play and learn. Overall, the indoor and outdoor environments are used well to promote learning and development. The outdoor area is stimulating and easily accessible, allowing free flow from the indoor environment. There are suitable covered areas, which shelter children as they play outdoors in a range of weather. Leaders have arranged for children to have use of the school's outdoor games area. This enhances provision to support children's physical development well.

Leaders provide an extensive range of developmentally appropriate toys and resources that engage children well. All resources are clean and well-maintained. The setting encourages recycling and incorporates natural and sustainable materials in children's play effectively. Leaders encourage active learning and provision, such as messy play, that encourages children to experiment and be imaginative successfully. For example, children use pebbles, water and grass to make rock soup or pretend to make cakes with compost. A selection of resources are stored at a low level so children can access them and make choices independently. There are sufficient play materials to promote cultural awareness and diversity effectively. This ensures that children gain an appropriate understanding of the world they live in. Furniture and equipment are suitable and generally of good quality.

Leadership and management:

The setting leader and deputy are both relatively new to their roles. During their time in the setting, they have experienced many significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes to staffing. Despite these challenges, they have developed a strong team where practitioners cooperate well and feel valued.

Leaders meet regularly with the committee and communicate effectively with practitioners, resulting in the smooth running of the setting. The setting has produced a statement of purpose that ensures parents can make an informed choice about using the setting. Leaders provide a suitable range of policies and share these appropriately with parents. However, they do not ensure that all important policies are fully understood by practitioners. For example, aspects of the setting's safeguarding policies are not set out clearly enough, resulting in many practitioners being unclear about important procedures designed to keep children safe.

Leaders work effectively with practitioners to provide a warm and inviting environment for all children. There is a strong commitment to teamwork, and this has a positive impact on outcomes for children. For example, leaders collaborate with the school to share learning environments successfully.

Overall, the setting has appropriate arrangements for identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders make suitable use of information from a few sources to inform the self-evaluation process and make improvements. For example, they work with the local authority to improve their provision for children with ALN. Most practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to develop. For example, they describe how organising children into two groups has increased children's engagement during planned learning experiences.

Most leaders and practitioners take advantage of opportunities for continued professional development and strive to improve their performance. This has a positive impact, such as developing practitioners' understanding of the benefits of exploration and child-led play. However, leaders have not ensured that all practitioners have attended all required training. For example, not all new staff have attended safeguarding training. Leaders communicate appropriately with practitioners to improve their practice. However, systems for appraisal and supervision do not provide practitioners with effective opportunities to reflect on their practice and identify targets for improvement.

Overall, the setting makes effective use of resources to support children's well-being and play effectively. Resources are plentiful and of good quality. For example, a well-resourced mud kitchen supports children's learning well. However, the setting does not meet the required numbers of suitably qualified practitioners. This contributes to the focus on children's learning and development being underdeveloped.

The setting has a worthwhile range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. For example, leaders work effectively with a range of agencies to ensure that they meet children's additional learning needs successfully. Practitioners keep parents and carers informed about what their children are learning and how well they are progressing appropriately through social media, newsletters and informal updates. This has a positive impact. For example, parents get involved in supporting children's learning through sharing photographs of children as babies during a topic on growth.

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)