



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Little Stars Playgroup
Scouts and Guides Hall
Crown Hill
Llantwit Fardre
CF38 2NA**

Date of inspection: March 2015

by

**Mr Michael T Ridout
Reporting Inspector**

for

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW..or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2015: 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 copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 24/03/2015

Context

Little Stars Playgroup is a non-maintained English medium setting in Llantwit Fardre, near Pontypridd in Rhondda Cynon Taff. It is registered to provide day care for a maximum of 32 children between two and five years of age. The setting provides morning sessions from Monday to Friday during school term time.

At the time of the inspection there were 35 children on roll. This includes seven three year olds of whom four are funded by the local authority for part-time education.

All children are English speaking and British born. None are from ethnic minorities. No families speak Welsh at home and no children have additional learning needs.

There are six appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners including the manager who has run the playgroup since 2000. The setting has recently developed an outdoor area for learning and play.

The Care and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales last inspected the setting in May 2013 and Estyn in January 2009.

Summary

The Setting's current performance	Good
The Setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Performance is good:

- Nearly all children make steady progress and achieve good standards
- Good quality care, support and guidance assures children's wellbeing
- A wide range of interesting learning experiences engages children well
- Teaching and assessment are effective
- The learning environment is well resourced and organised and
- Partnerships with parents and supporting agencies are well established

Prospects for improvement

Improvement is good:

- The setting is well led and managed
- Practitioners have a strong teamwork ethos
- Clear strategic direction is evident
- Self-evaluation and planning for improvement are effective
- Strong emphasis is placed on improving professional practice and
- There is a good track record of improvement

Recommendations

- R1. develop greater consistency in the implementation of planning and assessments
- R2. formalise forward planning for future resource needs

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
---	-------------

Standards: Good

Nearly all children make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. They steadily acquire new knowledge and skills as they try out new experiences.

Most have well developed speaking and listening skills. They spontaneously hold simple conversations, for example during role-play. They ask sensible questions and express themselves clearly. A few use a wide vocabulary and confidently engage in extended conversation with an adult about what they are doing. With few exceptions children enjoy listening to stories and enthusiastically recite familiar songs and rhymes. A few handle books as readers and show increasing awareness that the text conveys meaning. Mark making skills steadily develop and a few experiments with 'writing' in role-play. Progress in early mathematical skills is good. Numeracy skills develop well. For example, a few name numbers found in the sand and confidently match and sequence objects with an adult. Most show increasing awareness of one-to-one correspondence, such as when building towers. A few use positional and comparative terms well when sequencing puzzle pieces. Children's competence in using a range of information and communication technology (ICT) is developing well.

Competence in Welsh is developing. Many respond appropriately to the words and phrases spoken by adults, but the spontaneous use of Welsh is not established.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to keeping healthy and safe. They engage in a range of activities with enthusiasm and confidently make choices as they move between tasks. With few exceptions children remain busy and on task for appropriate periods of time. They are well motivated and sustain interest and concentration well.

Children have good relationships with each other and with adults. They increasingly show consideration for others, such as when sharing resources and during snack time. With few exceptions children work and play well together. Standards of behaviour are good.

Many children confidently state their likes and dislikes and practitioners encourage them to help choose which activities to keep or change in the setting. Most develop self-help skills well.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
---	-------------

Learning experiences: Good

A wide range of interesting learning experiences meets well the needs of children and the community. The Foundation Phase is embedded and planning successfully ensures progression. A good range of indoor and outdoor activities is provided and good use is made of the local environment and visitors to enhance learning.

Broad themes provide interesting contexts for learning. Planning is detailed and activities are well defined with appropriate learning objectives. Long and short term planning is implemented flexibly and provides a good basis to guide practitioners in how and what children will learn.

Strong emphasis is placed on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Stories are used skilfully to promote early reading skills and counting skills are developed well in different contexts. The focus on ICT skills is developing well.

The provision for Welsh language development is appropriate and awareness of Welsh history and culture is well promoted.

Teaching: Good

Teaching manages and supports children's learning well. Practitioners have high expectations and provide good models in language. They have good knowledge of the Foundation Phase and learning activities provide a balance between adult led and child chosen activities. Practitioners know well the tasks they are to lead or support; they successfully engage children's interest and strongly encourage learning. Children are given plenty of time to complete activities. Practitioners skilfully use questioning and praise to extend learning. In particular, they develop communication and numeracy skills very well. However, on occasions the focus on extending learning is limited.

Systematic procedures for assessment are implemented. Practitioners record individual achievements and this information is used well to plan the next steps in learning. However, there is some variation in the rigour of assessments. Taken overall, individual assessment records and collections of work provide an informative profile of progress.

Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress and they receive a written report before transfer to school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Good quality care, support and guidance impacts well on children's personal and social development. Strong emphasis is placed on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Healthy eating is appropriately promoted through the foods offered at snack time and in the lunch boxes provided by parents. Children regularly participate in energetic activities both indoors and outside. Practitioners strongly promote good behaviour. Children are encouraged to distinguish between right and wrong and to reflect on the wonders of the natural world. Positive values, including fairness, honesty and respect for others are sensitively promoted. Cultural awareness is appropriately promoted, such as through celebrating festivals. However, provision to promote awareness of sustainability is at an early stage.

Procedures to provide children with specialist support when required are well implemented. This includes appropriate arrangements to support and integrate children requiring extra help with their learning.

Arrangements to assure children's health and wellbeing are implemented consistently. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a calm and inclusive ethos. Practitioners treat children with respect. They skilfully foster positive relationships and take good account of children's different backgrounds. This helps to ensure children feel safe and free from undue anxiety.

Practitioners sensitively encourage understanding towards others and use positive strategies to manage behaviour. Equal opportunities are well promoted. However, policies do not include details of steps to ensure that future children with disabilities do not suffer less favourable treatment.

There are sufficient appropriately qualified practitioners for the number of children. A good range of age appropriate learning resources provides well for the Foundation Phase. The accommodation is fit for purpose and provides a safe and secure environment. The setting is very well organised and practitioners create a stimulating environment. A recently developed outdoor area and resources in the community are used well to enhance learning.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
--	-------------

Leadership: Good

The setting is well managed and organised and has a distinctive ethos of teamwork. Leadership sets high expectations and communicates effectively with parents. Practitioners have a good understanding of their responsibilities and their role as key workers is steadily developing. A strong sense of purpose is evident in the work of the setting. An appropriate range of policies and procedures are in place and implemented consistently. Leadership successfully provides strategic direction and sustains improvements in educational provision.

The setting is run effectively. Well-established administrative procedures are in place and the work of the setting is appropriately monitored. Practitioners contribute to an annual appraisal. This process identifies individual needs and sets appropriate targets. Good emphasis is placed on practitioners' professional development.

The setting takes forward national and local priorities well. The provision embraces well the Foundation Phase philosophy and approach. There is strong emphasis on equality and improving outcomes for children.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has systematic procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. A culture of reflection is evident. All practitioners are involved in the process and good account is taken of the views of parents, carers and stakeholders. The self-evaluation report and improvement plan written prior to this inspection provide a good basis to prioritise key goals and structure initiatives. The goals identified are both relevant and achievable. However, the absence of planning to show how initiatives will be resourced limits the focus on their implementation.

Areas for improvement and appropriate targets are identified annually. The setting manager carefully monitors the development of initiatives. Improvement is clearly evaluated; such as in an appendix to the annual quality of care report provided for parents. There is a good track record of improvement in meeting the recommendations from previous inspections and good evidence of steady improvement in relation to the targets set annually.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has well-established partnerships with parents and community organisations that contribute successfully to children's learning and wellbeing. Parents are provided with a good range of information about the setting and home tasks are provided to encourage their involvement. Friendly relationships promote well the exchange of information about children and more formal opportunities are arranged to discuss children's progress before they transfer to school. The setting has good links with receiving primary schools.

Practitioners take opportunities to share good practice with other settings, through attending training events, and the manager has visited another setting to see how outdoor learning was organised.

The partnership with the local authority and other agencies, including the Wales Pre-school Providers Association, is beneficial in the provision of training and guidance. The support and quality assurance provided by the local authority has a positive impact.

Resource management: Good

The deployment of practitioners and the use of learning resources are efficiently organised. Established routines ensure the effective use of indoor and outdoor facilities. The strong emphasis placed on practitioners' professional development impacts well on the quality of children's learning experiences. Practitioners take opportunities to update their professional skills by attending training courses with colleagues from other settings.

Procedures to monitor the setting's income and expenditure are secure. Annual accounts are audited and the owner prudently manages income and expenditure. The annual quality of care report includes a summary of finance. However, planning for future resource needs is insufficiently developed.

The setting deploys its own resources and the funding received for early entitlement education, to good effect. This impacts well on children's outcomes and represents good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Michael T Ridout	Reporting Inspector
---------------------	---------------------

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh.</p>

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.