

The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

Nursery report on: Gurnos Playgroup

Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Mary Dyas

Date of inspection: 9th and 10th February 2010

Contract number: T/077/09N

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

Name of nursery: Gurnos Playgroup

Address: Gurnos School
School Road
Lower Cwmtwrch
Swansea

Post code: SA9 1EQ

Telephone: 01639 842437

Person responsible for day-to-day management: Julie George

Position: Setting Leader

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 important 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

Gurnos Playgroup was established in 1997 in the local primary school and is registered to take up to 12 children from two and a half to four years for five mornings a week. Children attending the playgroup come from mainly disadvantaged homes from the local area and most move on to the school infant class. The school is situated in the village of Gurnos which is dominated by a large local authority housing estate adjoining a Communities First Ward with one of the highest factors of deprivation in Powys.

There are currently 5 children on roll all of whom are in receipt of funded educational provision. All three and four year olds speak English as their home language and currently 40% have been identified as having additional learning needs.

The playgroup occupies a large room in the main school building with a small side room which is set out as a book corner and also used for meeting together as a group. Toilets are accessible to all children and the group makes use of the adjoining school canteen for their snack time. Colourful displays on the walls reflect the work that the children have been doing. The classroom leads out onto a covered veranda which is laid out with activities each day and this then leads onto a safely fenced area of tarmac with a grassed area equipped with a climbing frame.

The Nursery was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in November 2009 and this is the first time it has been inspected by Estyn.

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 Foundation Phase Outcomes for children's learning.

2.2 Standards achieved by children in the seven areas of learning

In view of the small number of children aged 3-4 years attending the group, no judgements are made on their standards of achievement in the seven areas of learning. Instead the report makes reference to the experiences that the setting provides to develop children's skills in the seven areas of learning.

Areas of learning	Grade for under-fives
Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity	No grade awarded for standards
Language, literacy and communication skills	No grade awarded for standards
Mathematical development	No grade awarded for standards
Welsh language development	No grade awarded for standards
Knowledge and understanding of the world	No grade awarded for standards
Physical development	No grade awarded for standards
Creative development	No grade awarded for standards

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	3
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	3
Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community	2
The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing	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	N/A

3.0 The experiences that the setting provides to develop children's skills in the seven areas of learning.

In view of the small number of children aged three and four present during the inspection, in line with Estyn's policy, only provision is reported.

3.1 Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity

Good features

Children have good opportunities to develop their confidence and to socialise and work together. Practitioners encourage them to make decisions, share learning resources and gain confidence in trying out new experiences.

Planned activities enable children to concentrate for increasing periods and practitioners encourage all children make decisions for themselves and to experiment with new learning experiences. Children are also encouraged to become independent in taking responsibility for their personal hygiene and to help to tidy equipment away into the right places.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.2 Language, literacy and communication skills

Good features

The playgroup encourages children to sit quietly and listen carefully, especially during group and story times. Practitioners demonstrate how to handle books and stimulate children's interest in them. The reading of books with opportunities for children to join in with familiar or repetitive passages also enables the development of sitting and listening skills.

Children are given opportunities to discuss their own play and that of others and to express their opinion, for example when cutting up and tasting different fruits. Practitioners model simple speech patterns and encourage children to respond and/or repeat words and phrases.

There are regular opportunities for children to successfully develop their mark-making skills with a range of wax and pencil crayons and to understand about the purpose of writing in the course of their role play experiences.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.3 Mathematical development

Good features

The setting provides an appropriate range of mathematical activities which encourage children's interest in numbers, shapes and patterns. There is a designated area for mathematical development which has activities to develop counting, sorting and matching skills.

Children have regular opportunities to sing number songs and rhymes and to join in with rote counting in group time and in the course of their play. Practitioners work hard to promote the use and understanding of mathematical language in relevant contexts and both adults and children talk about containers being full and empty in the water tray, for instance, and compare numbers and objects when sorting and ordering.

Appropriate role play settings such as a post office or vet's surgery provide children with opportunities to develop their counting skills and their understanding of money. Adults play with them to develop their early understanding of money and this encourages children to use money meaningfully in their play with one another.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.4 Welsh language development

Good features

The provision for Welsh language development is generally appropriate and promotes children's basic understanding of simple phrases. Children are encouraged to respond to simple commands and to make responses in Welsh when singing songs during group time. Practitioners read simple books with the children and introduce them to basic vocabulary.

Shortcomings

Provision for Welsh language development is generally limited to group time.

3.5 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Good features

Children are given daily opportunities to investigate the properties of different materials such as sand, water and soil, enhanced from time to time by materials such as blocks of coloured ice, for example.

Through interesting and exciting activities children learn about the world around them, for example when cutting up different fruits they think about what equipment they need to access the fruit and investigate what parts of the fruit are good to eat.

The playgroup promotes daily opportunities to observe the weather when the children go outside and they discuss this during register time.

Children are given the opportunity to observe the world around them when they go for walks around the village and also when they accompany the infant department of the school on exciting trips to places such as Bristol Zoo and Caerphilly Castle.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.6 Physical development

Good features

Children are given opportunities to handle a good range of small tools and toys in order to improve their manual dexterity. They use pens, pencils, glue spreaders, rolling pins, dough cutters and scissors to acquire physical control through a variety of activities.

There are regular opportunities for the children to play outside where they are able to develop different ways of moving. Use of the climbing apparatus and organised activities enable children to develop their gross motor skills; for example, running, skipping and hopping.

Practitioners also provide children with a variety of play equipment, such as balls, bean bags and hoops to enable them to develop different skills such as throwing and catching. Children also have opportunities to ride pedalled vehicles around the tarmac area.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.7 Creative development

Good features

Children are able to explore with a range of techniques and materials when creating images and objects. They also enjoy exploring and creating musical sounds on a variety of instruments both indoors and outdoors in the course of their play. As a group children enjoy listening to music and responding to suggestions to play, dance or move in different ways. They are encouraged to play instruments in time to a beat.

Practitioners interact with children to encourage imaginative creativity in role play and small world settings. They model play to provide children with a framework to develop imaginary characters.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.0 The quality of educational provision

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

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

The quality of provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has good features which outweigh shortcomings.

Good features

The playgroup has clear aims regarding values and principles that are supported by policies which underpin the day to day organisation.

Practitioners provide many exciting opportunities to promote respect for a diversity of beliefs and social and cultural traditions. Children are given opportunities to taste different foods, to dress up and to make items relating to the topics they are learning about. The setting has celebrated festivals such as Divali and Chinese New Year in addition to the traditional Christian festivals.

The policies and routines of the group successfully promote positive behaviour. Practitioners are good role models and support the children through the use of praise. Children work and play very well together. Day to day activities promote equality of opportunity and respect for each child as an individual.

Children are introduced to the Welsh language through daily use of basic greetings, and the introduction of simple Welsh language books. St David's Day is well used to introduce the children to some of the culture and traditions of Wales.

Staff provide very meaningful experiences for the children to develop an awe and understanding of the wonders of nature and the world around them through their use of the well resourced outside play area.

Shortcomings

Provision for the promotion of a diversity of beliefs and cultural traditions is not sufficiently developed.

4.2 Quality of planning for children's learning

The quality of planning for children's learning has good features and no important shortcomings.

Good features

The planning for children's learning is based around a series of broad themes which are identified in long term plans but are subject to change in line with the children's interests. Records of planning indicate a good range of activities likely to promote the Foundation Phase outcomes and they are linked well to the seven areas of learning through use of a document provided by the local education authority which is based on the Foundation Phase outcomes and lists those skills most relevant to three and four year olds. These are marked off termly as they are addressed. The provision of enhanced and focused activities is clear and plans are available to practitioners for reference each day. The evidence of planning over time shows a broad and balanced range of experiences is provided.

The children have equal access and opportunity to learn and achieve. The overall provision and organisation of resources is good and supports them well in their personal development.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings but planning for Cwricwlum Cymreig and cultural diversity is still in its early stages.

4.3 Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has good features and no important shortcomings.

Good features

Practitioners in the playgroup are appropriately qualified to work with pre-school children and have attended training for the Foundation Phase. They develop learning activities well, have good working relationships with the children and ensure a high quality of care, support and guidance. There is strong emphasis on promoting oracy skills, and in developing numeracy skills.

Practitioners are fully involved with the children through the session and are always alert to enable less able and less confident individuals to access the activities. Skilled interventions successfully promote and support role play. Good attention is given to enable children to learn through first-hand experiences.

Staff work closely together and know the children very well. They adapt their questioning and input appropriately to accommodate the needs of each individual. There is much celebration of individual efforts and success.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.4 Quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports for parents and carers

The quality of assessment and recording of children's progress and reports for parents and carers has good features that outweigh shortcomings.

Good features

Informal sharing of information about children's learning is an important and very appropriate feature of this setting. Practitioners know the children very well and are fully aware of the progress that each child has made and what they need to do to move on.

Records of daily observations have begun to be kept and are recorded on sticky notes which are then filed in the child's personal record. Information is then collated into a termly learning record which provides a review of progress under the areas of learning.

A written report is provided for parents and carers when children leave to move on to mainstream education with comments under the areas of learning.

Shortcomings

Systems for the formal recording of children's achievement and progress are very much in the early stages and not yet sufficiently embedded to provide meaningful records.

4.5 Quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community

The quality of the relationships with parents, carers and the community has good features with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Questionnaires were returned by all parents and carers of children in the playgroup with all positive comments. Those parents and carers who were spoken to on the day of the inspection reported that their children are very happy attending the nursery and feel that they are well supported by the staff. They report that they receive regular newsletters giving information about activities planned for the forthcoming term and feel able to speak to the setting leader if they have any problems.

The children are occasionally taken out to play in a local field and to post letters as part of their topic work. Visitors to the nursery help the children to learn about the wider world – these include a local vet and the pastor of a nearby church who has formed strong relationships with the school and playgroup.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified but the playgroup does not make enough use of the local area to enhance the children's learning.

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

The extent to which the setting contributes to children's wellbeing has good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

A good range of clearly written policies and procedures is in place to ensure the children's wellbeing and safety during both indoor and outdoor activities. Risk assessments have been carried out. The school's head teacher is the named person for the safeguarding of young children and both the setting leader and her deputy have had training in child protection procedures.

Equipment is well maintained and regularly checked for damage or defects. Children are encouraged to eat healthily at snack time and to take regular exercise when they go outdoors.

Emotional well being is very well provided for. Practitioners are very caring and children are all treated as individuals with their differences and particular needs recognised and celebrated. Anti-bullying and behaviour policies are in place and the ethos of the group fosters excellent relationships between the children and staff and between the children themselves.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.7 Quality of the leadership and management of the setting

The quality of the leadership and management of the setting has good features and no important shortcomings.

Good features

The playgroup has conducted a self evaluation since September 2009. Following the structure recommended by the local authority three major targets have been set and progress recorded monthly. In addition the playgroup has successfully gained the Quality Assurance Award from the Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association and is now in the process of renewing the award.

Annual staff appraisals are in place and are conducted by the school's head teacher. Previous targets are reviewed and targets for the forthcoming year are agreed.

The playgroup has a good relationship with the Early Years Development Officer from the local authority who visits regularly to offer support and advice. Evidence of the effectiveness of this advice can be clearly seen in the progress made in planning for, and provision of, the activities provided for the children. The playgroup makes good use of the resources and space available.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

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

This is the first time the playgroup has been inspected by Estyn.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1 Ensure that Welsh is used throughout the session by both practitioners and children, by building on the good start that has been made in introducing the children to the Welsh language.

R2 Consolidate the assessment procedures that have recently been introduced, in order to create meaningful records of children's progress and attainment which can be used to identify the way forward for their learning.

R3 Ensure that planning includes provision for the introduction of experiences which will help the children to learn about the culture and traditions of Wales and to promote a respect for the diversity of beliefs and social and cultural traditions in our society.

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 the Chair of the Early Years and Childcare Partnership or Children and Young Peoples' Partnership, as appropriate, and to the Local Authority. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection.