

The inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age

Nursery report on: Alphabet Playgroup

Registered Nursery Education Inspector: Mary Dyas

Date of inspection: 11th and 13th May 2009

Contract number: T/123/08N

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

Name of nursery: Alphabet Playgroup

Address: Undy Primary School
Pennyfarthing Lane
Undy
Monmouthshire

Post code: NP26 3LZ

Telephone: 07826 639042

Person responsible for day-to-day management: Joanne Russell

Position: Manager/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 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

Alphabet Playgroup opened in the village of Undy near Caldicot in January 2000 in the village Memorial Hall where equipment had to be set out and put away daily as the hall was used by other community groups. The current manager/supervisor took over ownership of the playgroup in September 2007. With the introduction of the Foundation Phase they found themselves unable to deliver the full curriculum because there was no possibility of developing an outdoor learning area. In February 2009, therefore, they moved to a refurbished demountable in the local primary school which provides an adequate sized and brightly decorated room with child-sized toilets and washing facilities and a food preparation area. Outside they have the sole use of a safely enclosed space, which comprises an area of grass and a paved area which is partly covered by the overhang from the school roof.

Children come to the playgroup mainly from the local area and most move on to the adjoining school. Several children attend the school nursery in the afternoon and the playgroup provides wrap-around care for these children in the form of a lunch club and escort to the nursery in Undy Primary School and also to Magor Primary School nearby. Children come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and at the time of the inspection all children spoke English at home. Although there are currently no children with additional learning needs there are policies and procedures in place to welcome and accommodate all needs. Children coming to the playgroup for the first time are offered a taster session and parents of new children are able to stay if necessary to help their child to settle.

The playgroup opens five mornings a week and is registered for up to 20 children in the new premises aged from two and a half to four years. There are 22 three and four year olds on roll at present. Thirteen children were observed on the first morning of the inspection of which twelve were three to four year olds and seventeen on the second morning of which fifteen were three to four year olds. Six three year olds and one four year old are in receipt of funded educational provision.

The playgroup was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in February 2009 when it was re-registered in the new premises and by Estyn in November 2001.

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

Areas of learning	Grade for under-fives
Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity	2
Language, literacy and communication skills	2
Mathematical development	2
Welsh language 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 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	2

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

Standards achieved by 3-4 year-olds

3.1 Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity

Children's standards in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Most children are happy coming into the playgroup and quickly settle to the activities laid out for them. Relationships between children are good and there are a few very close friendships.

Many children show high levels of concentration and are able to stick at an activity for increasing periods. Most children play well with others in pairs or in small groups. They know and understand the need to share and to take turns and are able to put this into practice, for example when waiting for their turn on the slide.

All children are growing in independence. They use the toilet independently, wash and dry their hands, use glue and scissors independently and put on take off coats and boots when going outside.

The children are becoming aware of some of the culture and traditions of Wales as they celebrate on St David's Day and, through celebrations of other festivals, are developing their awareness of different cultures.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings but it was noted that only a minority of children helped to tidy up at the end of the sessions.

3.2 Language, literacy and communication skills

Children's standards in language, literacy and communication skills are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Many children are articulate. They speak in sentences and use descriptive phrases when talking about things they have done. Many have conversations with one another and respond appropriately. Most are happy to speak to visitors and to discuss what they are doing.

Most children enjoy stories in the group and understand that words and pictures convey meaning. They sit quietly and listen attentively, interact with the story, ask appropriate questions and join in with familiar passages. All children recall and join in with familiar songs and rhymes and most join in with actions and request favourite songs.

All children self-register when they come into the playgroup by finding their name, initially supported by a photograph. They then identify their written name only when attending the snack café and many three and four year olds are able to write their own name unaided.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.3 Mathematical development

Children's standards in mathematical development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children count together confidently to ten in both English and Welsh and are developing their understanding of one to one correspondence. Many three and four year olds are able to count objects accurately to three and a few to ten.

Most children use mathematical language such as heavy, light, bigger and more in the course of their play and are able to recognise and name basic shapes such as circle, triangle, square etc. They compare, sort and match different objects and are developing a good sense of size and shape, for example when choosing an appropriate box to make a den for an animal.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.4 Welsh language development

Children's standards in Welsh language development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

All children recognise that Welsh is a different language and respond very positively to the incidental Welsh words and phrases to which they have been introduced. They join in with Welsh action songs and rhymes, count together in Welsh to ten and show their understanding by responding appropriately to instructions given in Welsh. A few children are beginning to use Welsh words and phrases independently.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.5 Knowledge and understanding of the world

Children's standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Many of the children can talk about themselves, their homes and families and the wider world in which they live and they transfer this into their role play and small world play. They are developing an understanding of the passage of time through their familiarity with the daily routines of the playgroup.

The children are developing an appropriate understanding of people who work through visitors such as the community constable and fire officers. Their understanding of the changing seasons is developing at first hand through their daily time outdoors in the garden.

Most children are confident when approaching new learning situations and fully participate in exploring and experimenting with different situations both indoors and outdoors.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.6 Physical development

Children's standards in physical development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children's gross motor skills including climbing, sliding and balancing are well developed as they play on the outdoor equipment and move confidently both indoors and outdoors making effective use of the space available. All are able to follow a laid out circuit and carry out different movements such as sliding, jumping from spot to spot and weaving through skittles. Most older children are able to pedal bikes and all steer wheeled vehicles with appropriate levels of control.

Children's fine manipulation skills are developing well. They handle small objects to create a collage and use glue and scissors with age appropriate skill.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

3.7 Creative development

Children's standards of creative development are good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Most children enjoy creating images and objects from a range of materials. They select the items they want very deliberately and arrange them to their satisfaction.

Many children show good imagination in their creative play both in role play situations and with small world settings creating imaginary characters and situations.

Most children respond to music positively and with real enthusiasm. As part of their play they choose to play different percussion instruments. When playing instruments in a group they are able to control their playing and respond to suggestions to play quickly or slowly and loudly or softly and to beat in time.

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 is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

The playgroup has clear aims regarding values and principles and these are integrated into the curriculum. Policies and procedures are in place supporting the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and these are made known to parents and carers.

Staff are good role models for the children. They treat the children as individuals and respect their individuality. The children respond to this and treat each other with respect. All the children work very well together and take part in the routine of the playgroup.

Meaningful multicultural activities are integrated into their experiences and the children have been introduced to a good range of Welsh words and phrases which they respond to appropriately and are beginning to use themselves. Current Welsh vocabulary is included in the half termly newsletter to parents and carers with guidelines for pronunciation.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.2 Quality of planning for children's learning

The quality of planning for children's learning is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Staff work together well and share the planning efficiently to offer the children a range of different learning experiences. The planning includes medium and short term plans, identifies skills and learning intentions and links effectively to the areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. Ideas for the next half term are shared with the children and mind mapped together with the children's ideas.

Children are offered plenty of opportunities to participate in a range of activities, both in the indoor and outdoor environment. Equality of access and opportunities are ensured for all children including those with additional learning needs. The learning environment is suitable organised for the effective use of resources and specific activities are planned for the outdoors. Focus activities are effectively evaluated and identification of the next steps to inform future planning is developing well.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

4.3 Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Staff are appropriately qualified. The manager/supervisor, her deputy and one assistant all hold Cache level three qualifications in Playgroup Practice. The deputy is also a qualified teacher. Three other assistants are unqualified.

Staff work together very much as a team. They support one another positively and interact to ensure that the need of the children are met. They are very conscientious, kind and caring and always willing to adapt their activities to accommodate individual requests from the children. They all have a good understanding of the areas of learning and skill development in the Foundation Phase and have attended all training for the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

Levels of support and intervention into children's learning experiences are appropriate. All practitioners are skilled at the use of open ended questioning to extend children's thinking and learning.

The playgroup benefits from visits from an Early Years Network Co-ordinator from the Monmouthshire Early Years team.

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 is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

Children are assessed in accordance with the Monmouthshire Transition Record in the term following their third birthday and this is updated in June of that year and again in the following June before they leave to attend primary school. Children's individual assessment folders also contain information gathered from staff observations which are recorded under the seven areas of learning and colour coded to indicate when the assessments were made.

The playgroup has very recently offered opportunities for parents and carers to attend an afternoon appointment to talk about their children's participation and progress. This first opportunity was only taken up by a few parents but staff are hopeful that future sessions will be more successful.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified but a significant number of parents indicated in pre-inspection questionnaires that they did not feel they were well informed about their child's achievement.

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

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

Good features

Most parents and carers report that they are happy with the support and education provided by the playgroup. All parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire or who spoke to the inspector during the inspection indicate that their children are very happy in the setting and are quick to praise the staff for their caring attitude.

The playgroup welcomes visitors to speak to the children amongst which have been a road safety officer, a police constable, members of the fire service and a parent who regularly comes to take music and movement sessions with the children.

Links with the primary school are very strong. This is an outstanding feature. In the short time that the playgroup has been in the school grounds the children have been invited to watch a sponsored bike ride and the playgroup has been offered use of the playground and field when the school are not using them. There are already strong links with the teachers from the nursery class sharing information and resources and the playgroup is shortly joining the school nursery on a farm visit.

Shortcomings

No important shortcomings were identified.

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

The extent to which the playgroup contributes to the children's wellbeing is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

There are good policies in place covering all areas of keeping children safe and these are available to all parents, carers and visitors.

Procedures are in place to ensure that all new staff have enhanced checks by the Criminal Records Bureau and that they are made aware of the playgroup policies. The Manager is the named person for child protection and she and most other staff have attended child protection training. Risk assessments have been carried out and the playgroup has a policy covering visits.

Snacks provided for the children are planned to ensure healthy eating and children have regular opportunities during the sessions to take part in strenuous physical exercise either indoors or outdoors.

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 playgroup is good with no important shortcomings.

Good features

The staff team, led by the manager, works closely together and meets regularly to discuss and plan for future developments in specific areas of the playgroup. The team has recently undertaken a self evaluation exercise together in line with advice received from the Early Years Network Co-ordinator. Responsibility for different areas of management such as planning, assessment and Welsh are shared between the members of staff.

All staff are very keen to improve and are keen to take advice from the local authority. Evidence of this is seen in all areas of provision.

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

The playgroup has made good progress in implementing the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report.

5.0 Recommendations

The setting needs to:

Ensure that all parents and carers have sufficient opportunities to discuss their child's progress and are fully aware of the taught curriculum.

Continue with the good start that has been made to introduce the children to the language and culture of Wales.

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.