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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Swallow Playgroup
West Camp Community Centre
R.A.F St Athan
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF62 9WA**

Date of inspection: December 2014

by

**Janet Marsden
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

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Context

Swallow Playgroup is based in the large community hall owned by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) at St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is situated just outside the main gates of the base. The setting was originally established in 1975 as a playgroup for children of MOD families. Swallows Playgroup now also serves families from the local community. The supervisor, who has worked at the setting since 2000 as a practitioner, was appointed in 2004. The current deputy supervisor has been a practitioner at the setting for 14 years. There are currently five practitioners, all of whom are well qualified in childcare or pre-school education. Practitioners are also very experienced in supporting children whose families move frequently or are posted abroad.

Swallow Playgroup is registered for up to thirty children at any one time aged from two to four years. It is open daily from 9.00am until 4.00pm for forty weeks of the year. There are currently 48 children on roll. There are 21 three-year-old children in receipt of local authority funding. Currently most of the children are white British and speak English as their first language. There are a very few children of other ethnicity and a very few children with additional learning needs.

The setting was last inspected by Estyn in November 2008. The setting was inspected by CSSIW in November 2014 but this report had not been published at the time of writing. The previous CSSIW inspection was carried out in June 2013.

Summary

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

Current performance

The performance is good because:

- nearly all children achieve good standards in their learning;
- most children successfully apply their knowledge and skills in other situations;
- all the children enjoy their learning and are eager to take part in activities;
- practitioners have a thorough understanding of the children's needs and support them very well emotionally; and
- the setting offers a wide range of enjoyable and stimulating learning experiences especially out of doors.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leader has a clear vision that is shared by all the staff;
- staff are a dedicated, experienced team, highly committed to improving their own knowledge and skills;
- the team know the strengths of the setting and how to secure improvement;
- there is an effective partnership with the local authority that successfully contributes to improving quality; and
- the setting has demonstrated its capability for securing improvement, for example in developing outdoor learning and its capacity to promote the Welsh language.

Recommendations

- R1. Continue to raise standards in ICT and Welsh
- R2. Ensure there is more challenge during focused tasks for more able children
- R3. Increase the use of visits and visitors to develop children`s awareness of the world around them, particularly Welsh culture
- R4. Develop partnership working with other similar providers to provide greater opportunities for professional development
- R5. Continue to work with parents in supporting their children`s learning

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

Most children make good progress overall during their time at the playgroup. They all make particularly good progress when interacting with adults during their continuous play. On occasions a few children of higher ability do not make sufficient progress during focus tasks, however all of them achieve well when they choose their own supervised learning activities.

A majority of children recall previous learning well, for example, when they search for small creatures in the garden they remember some of the places where insects can be found. They also recall that spiders like to be dry and woodlice like to be 'a bit wet'. Many of them successfully make the connection between their activity and the story 'Going on a Bear Hunt'.

Most children speak exceptionally well. Many have a very good vocabulary and hold lengthy conversations with adults and with each other. Many children converse imaginatively during their role-play at the car wash or supermarket and are exceptionally confident when speaking to visiting adults. Most children's listening skills are less well-developed than their speaking skills. At times, a significant majority of children do not listen carefully to instructions. However, most children enjoy hearing stories read to them and begin to study the weather book, written in Welsh, with their teacher. A majority enjoy choosing their own books to read from a selection they helped to purchase at the local thrift shop. They turn the pages with interest and a few children tell the story in their own words as they do so. Most children recognise their own name labels and a few recognise those of their friends. When carefully over writing their names, a few children correctly name some of the letters.

Most children enjoy sorting, matching, counting and grouping small objects and this effectively helps them develop useful numeracy skills. A majority of children confidently count to ten. A few children are able to count to twenty and a very few can count beyond twenty. Many children are able to name basic 2D shapes when they use them to create pictures on pin boards. Most children accurately find a number of up to five items. Most children successfully sort toy bears into size order. During their focused tasks, most children of higher ability correctly estimate which bear which is heavier and enjoy checking their results, successfully using weighing scales. They begin to comment on the larger numbers they read on the scale.

Most children use torches and metal detectors successfully in their learning activities but they do not develop their ability to independently use a computer, camera or listening device well enough. With support, individual children successfully use a computer mouse to drag and drop pieces of a puzzle into a simulated jig saw puzzle or complete a matching game. However, they are generally not confident in using information and communication technology (ICT) equipment without supervision.

Most children successfully develop their thinking and problem solving skills, particularly during their outdoor play. They are almost constantly engrossed in their tasks or in thinking about what they will do next. They all make choices about what they will do first or what materials to use for their craft work. All the children help to decide what vegetables they will grow in their newly prepared seed bed. Children make good spontaneous suggestions for equipping the new outdoor covered area for example, creating a car wash for the toy vehicles.

Children`s physical skills develop exceptionally well when playing in the outdoor learning areas. Most of them very skilfully climb on and jump off the large play equipment. They cycle very proficiently and push and pull large objects into position with exceptional control. Nearly all the children handle a variety of tools well. For example children skilfully scoop the soil from one container to another using small spades and make successful attempts to sweep up the spillage using brushes. Many children develop very good fine motor skills whilst colouring accurately or handling a variety of collage materials.

Nearly all the children develop their Welsh language skills satisfactorily and they are beginning to use a few basic Welsh words. With support, a few of them begin to repeat the sentence of the week. A majority know the names of a few colours and a few children are beginning to count successfully in Welsh. Most children willingly join in singing Welsh songs. A majority of children repeat Welsh words when playing a matching pairs game with a practitioner. However, children are generally not yet confident in using Welsh outside of an adult-directed activity.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children arrive at the setting happily and confidently place their name on the registration tree. They greet the adults who look after them warmly and eagerly look for their friends. Most children are quick to engage with activities when they arrive in the morning and concentrate well on their tasks. A minority stay in the same place for a considerable amount of time, for example when working on collage or role playing in the supermarket.

During free play, nearly all the children independently select their own equipment or games and persevere to successfully overcome any difficulties. They clearly enjoy working with adults on focus tasks and willingly follow instructions. Most children work co-operatively with their friends when digging in the garden area. They enjoy helping adults to distribute snacks or put away equipment.

Most children understand rules and boundaries and behave well. They share, take turns, and show an interest in each other`s progress, for example when matching cards to sounds in a lotto game.

They begin to successfully express their emotions and start to show empathy when their friends are feeling sad or unwell.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The setting provides a good range of interesting learning experiences for children, particularly out of doors. Well-planned topics cover all areas of learning and successfully meet the needs of the Foundation Phase. There is a good balance between adult-directed activities and those the children choose for themselves. For example, children develop their creative skills freely when choosing their own materials for collage but also learn about colour mixing with paint under supervision.

Learning activities are well-planned and generally build beneficially on children's existing knowledge and skills. On a few occasions focus activities lack sufficient challenge for more able children. However, enhanced and continuous provision successfully meets the needs of children of all abilities. The key worker system is very effective in ensuring children fully understand a concept before moving on to the next stage of their learning.

The setting ensures that children successfully develop their skills in literacy and numeracy through their play. Indoor and outdoor play areas are designed specifically to successfully promote reading and mark-making, counting, investigation and problem solving.

The setting welcomes a suitable number of visitors such as the local police officer, nurse and fire officer and this develops children's awareness of other people's lives. Visits to the MOD thrift shop are used appropriately for children to learn a little about the outside world. However, the setting currently provides few opportunities for children to make visits off site.

Outdoor learning experiences promote children's physical development and understanding of the natural environment particularly effectively. There are very good opportunities for children to study the changes brought about by the seasons, grow plants and search for wild life.

There is good provision for children to learn Welsh. All practitioners have worked very hard to develop their knowledge and confidence in using Welsh. Most practitioners make good use of registration and snack time to practice the sentence or phrase of the week and to encourage the children to respond. They encourage children to say 'please' and 'thank you' in Welsh and prompt them to use the correct word for water or milk when choosing their drink. They effectively promote the use of the Welsh language to parents and carers by sharing the phrase of the week and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the children. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and traditions through celebrating St David's Day.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have a good understanding of the Foundation Phase, particularly the benefits of outdoor learning. They stimulate children`s imagination skilfully through joining in a variety of role-play activities whether it is in making potions or visiting the cafe. All the practitioners know the children very well individually and understand how they like to learn. They plan varied focus activities that suit different styles of learning. Relationships are very good; adults and children interact very well and this has a positive impact on outcomes.

Adults have high expectations of what the children can achieve; they challenge the children without pressurising them and this helps them successfully develop their thinking skills.

All practitioners use adult language when conversing with the children and this has a beneficial effect on their speaking skills. Most practitioners correctly use a good range of incidental Welsh in daily routines despite being learners themselves.

Practitioners regularly assess children`s progress and keep detailed records on what each child is able to do. Information is stored in individual child profiles that provide a useful overview for staff and parents. The key workers follow up any areas that their individual children find challenging and ensure that they revisit activities that will help them improve particular skills. However, assessment information is not always used beneficially to plan challenging focused tasks for more able children.

Practitioners encourage children`s efforts regularly and praise their work. They offer useful suggestions for how to make it even better. Parents receive verbal daily feedback and useful regular reports on their child`s progress and achievement.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting promotes healthy eating and drinking successfully. Parents co-operate very well in this respect by donating fruit for children to share at snack time and providing healthy packed lunches for their own child. There are good opportunities for children to learn more about nutritious foods when they plan and make a healthy filling for a pancake, peel and juice oranges, and sort fruit according to colour for their paintings. At snack time children are offered a choice of water or milk and there are good arrangements for any special dietary requirements. Children are encouraged to clean their teeth correctly after eating. The setting provides good opportunities for children to take sufficient exercise by playing and learning outside in the fresh air.

There are effective arrangements for children to learn about avoiding waste, recycling and conserving water when they work in the garden. The wild garden also makes a valuable contribution to children`s spiritual development and sense of wonder about the natural world.

The setting successfully promotes positive behaviour and helps children understand the difference between right and wrong. Practitioners are very good role models of kindness and consideration for others. They use snack time, effectively to promote

politeness and good manners. There are good systems in place such as 'star of the session' to help children understand what is expected of them. The setting provides beneficial opportunities for children to consider the needs of other people in the wider community, when they help to raise money for charitable causes.

There are appropriate arrangements for children to develop an understanding of different cultural traditions. For example they engage in suitable art and craft activities or eat traditional foods to celebrate Divali and Chinese New Year.

The setting takes the health and safety of the children very seriously and the building and grounds are secure. Safeguarding arrangements are in place and give no cause for concern.

Appropriate systems are in place to identify and support any children with additional learning needs (ALN).

Learning environment: Good

The ethos of the setting is friendly, warm and welcoming. Staff are very sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of the children. They provide very good emotional support for them when MOD family members are posted abroad. The setting ensures children have equal opportunities and there are no differences in the way boys and girls or children of different ethnicity are treated.

The setting is very fortunate in having spacious accommodation that enables children to choose from a wide range of activities. They have plenty of room to move freely from the large hall into quieter play areas or into the exciting outdoor area. The setting uses another large indoor hall effectively to simulate real life situations, for example, when children observe miniature road signs whilst riding their bikes.

There are plenty of good quality toys and resources for children to enjoy using that help them to develop their skills in all areas of learning. There are regular opportunities to solve problems and discover which objects float or sink, or explore the properties of different musical instruments. A broad range of role-play equipment stimulates the children's imagination and creative ideas very well. For example, the dark den promotes their curiosity to experiment with torches and learn more about light and dark.

The outdoor area provides beneficial opportunities for growing and planting and the covered area ensures that outdoor learning can continue in wet weather.

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

The leader has a clear vision for the work of the setting and shares this successfully with staff.

The setting is well managed and systems run smoothly. There are beneficial arrangements for staff appraisal. Practitioners have clear targets and receive useful support to help them improve their practice. Induction arrangements for new staff are good and as a result everyone knows what is expected of them.

The management committee are kept well-informed about progress and are included in planning for the future. Members of staff feel part of the decision-making process and appreciate the fact that their ideas and suggestions are valued. Most practitioners have worked together at the setting for several years and know their individual roles and responsibilities very well. They are an effective team and willingly share ideas or offer assistance to one another; this has a beneficial effect on provision for the children.

The setting takes thorough account of local and national priorities and ably implements initiatives such as healthy eating and outdoor learning.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has a strong record of effecting improvement. The leader and her staff have worked very hard to change the focus of the setting from primarily the care of very young babies and children to a valuable learning environment for pre-school children. Recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed successfully and the setting has correctly identified what needs to improve next in its most recent development plan.

There is a well-established culture of self-evaluation and planning for improvement. This includes parents and the management committee as well as all practitioners. The leader and her team successfully use self-evaluation outcomes, together with a range of other worthwhile information to help them make beneficial decisions about the way forward.

Most members of staff also know the setting well and are aware of its strengths and areas for development. All practitioners continually seek effective ways to improve provision and outcomes for pre-school children. Although many of them are long established members of staff, they willingly adapt to new ideas and successfully implement change. All practitioners enthusiastically engage in professional development. A few practitioners have visited other pre-school settings to gain new ideas for developing the Foundation Phase. They critically evaluate what they have learnt and willingly share their knowledge and expertise with colleagues. This has had a positive impact on the setting.

Partnership working: Good

There are a number of successful partnerships that benefit the setting. There is a well-established positive relationship with both the local authority support teacher and members of the Early Years Partnership. This has resulted in effective professional development, support and staff training.

Community partnerships with the MOD fire and police service, the local community police and district nurse, provide valuable experiences for the children.

The setting has established informal partnerships with local primary schools that benefit children when moving on to the next stage of their education. These also provide useful opportunities for staff to gain professional development, for example the Welsh course staff recently attended at one local school. Partnership working with other similar providers to create professional support networks is at an early stage of development.

The setting promotes work experience and training initiatives well. It welcomes college students from Cardiff and the Vale College and also pupils from the local comprehensive school. This also benefits the children by providing useful opportunities for them to meet new people. There are beneficial partnerships with health professionals and others for specialist support and advice, particularly in the field of ALN.

There are effective partnerships with parents and carers. Families appreciate the care and concern both they and their children receive. They are very pleased with the progress that their children make. Parents have welcomed recent initiatives to provide more detailed information on their child`s progress and opportunities to become more actively involved in the next stage of their child`s learning.

Resource management: Good

Members of staff are successfully deployed and the leader makes effective use of their individual strengths. A member of staff, for example, has particular knowledge of forest school and outdoor learning and this has had a positive impact on outdoor provision. Practitioners are managed successfully and they receive useful, regular feedback on their performance. They take turns to plan the learning and afterwards work as a team to discuss the success of the activities.

The quality and range of equipment for children to use is very good. Most resources, particularly the outdoor learning environment, are well used to support teaching and learning. However, ICT equipment is not yet consistently used well enough to promote children`s skills development.

The setting leader and management committee have a thorough understanding of the finances and spending is prioritised according to need. Money spent on the outdoor area has already had a beneficial impact on the children.

In view of the many worthwhile educational opportunities offered to children and the good standards they achieve, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	10	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		80%	20%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	10	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	10	10 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	13%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	10	8 80%	2 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		80%	18%	1%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	10	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		69%	27%	1%	0%		
Teaching is good.	10	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		79%	18%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	10	8 80%	2 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		82%	16%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	10	7 70%	3 30%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		73%	22%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	10	8 80%	2 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	10	8 80%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		65%	24%	1%	0%		
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	10	5 50%	5 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		63%	30%	5%	1%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	10	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		80%	19%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	10	7 70%	2 20%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		62%	30%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	10	6 60%	2 20%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		70%	24%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	9	1 11%	8 89%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		61%	31%	4%	1%		
The setting is well run.	10	9 90%	1 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		82%	17%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mrs Janet Heather Marsden	Reporting Inspector
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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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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 partnership's conditions of registration.
Foundation Phase	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.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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.

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.