



**Estyn**

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  
RAF  
St Athan  
Vale of Glamorgan  
CF62 9WA**

**Date of inspection: March 2022**

**by**

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)**

**and**

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

## About Swallow Playgroup

Name of setting	Swallow Playgroup
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Tracy O'Callaghan
Responsible individual (if applicable)	N/A
Person in charge	Andrea Glenton
Number of places	30
Age range of children	Age 2 to school age
Number of children funded for up to two terms	6
Number of children funded for up to five terms	12
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
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.
Date of previous CIW inspection	23rd May 2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection	December 2014
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	02/03/2022
Swallow Playgroup is based in the residential housing estate for the Ministry of Defence base at St Athans in the Vale of Glamorgan local authority. Many of the children's parents work at the base. It feeds seven primary schools in the area and within the local authority. The leader and deputy have been at the setting for over 10 years.	

The setting is full day care and runs until 4pm each day with most children staying for full day care. Nearly all children attending the setting are from English speaking households.

### **Non-compliance**

No areas of non-compliance were identified at this inspection.

### **Recommendations**

R1 Develop children's numeracy and creative skills across the curriculum

R2 Develop the use of observations to better inform future planning

### **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### **Wellbeing:**

Most children make choices and decisions about their play and learning. They move between different activities confidently. For example, children enjoy their play using the role-play resources in the home corner and outdoor flower shop. Most children express their views clearly. Older children speak with confidence during group activities such as circle time and snack time. Some children contribute ideas for activities and themes for the term.

Most children arrive eagerly at the setting and cope very well as they separate from their parents and carers. They form close bonds with their key workers, which has a positive impact on their wellbeing and motivation. The majority of children go through the process of settling in without any difficulty. Those that struggle receive gentle comfort and reassurance from practitioners. Settling in routines for new children are flexible to allow children to settle in at their own pace. Children are aware that practitioners will listen to their choices and respond effectively to their needs.

Nearly all children behave appropriately for their age and stage of development. They share resources well, and are beginning to understand how to take turns, for example when using coloured water, glitter and flowers to make magic potions. Most show an understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and consistently use good manners.

Nearly all children show a keen interest in most of the tasks set for them and engage with them well. Almost every child enjoys learning new skills while experimenting with a wide variety of interesting play opportunities. For example, children show excitement when using magnifying glasses during a nature hunt and using torches to discover shadows in the den. Most children concentrate for an appropriate amount of time and respond well to encouragement from practitioners. For example, they join in enthusiastically with singing and actions at circle time.

Nearly all children develop their independence skills appropriately. They complete self-registration on arrival and happily take responsibility for their belongings. They quickly hang up their coats and know where to store their lunch bags. Most children complete self-care tasks independently, with staff encouragement if needed. For example, they wash their hands at appropriate times, get tissues to wipe their nose, help prepare their own snack and pour their own drinks.

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

Nearly all children make strong progress from their starting points. Nearly all children make themselves understood and develop their speaking and listening skills successfully. They listen with understanding and carry out instructions well. Most children recognise their own names, and a few children identify initial letters of their own names and of others. A few children show an interest in books and are beginning to handle them as a reader, for example when reading recipe cards in the home corner. Nearly all children follow the routines of the setting well. Most children

experiment with and enjoy early writing experiences. They make choices in the materials and resources that they use and a few children are beginning to give meaning to their marks.

Most children enjoy singing and joining in with songs and rhymes, and they are beginning to clap, stamp and tap in rhythm to the music. Nearly all children follow instructions well and make choices about which percussion instruments to play. However, there are limited opportunities for children to express themselves creatively through art across the areas of provision.

Most children cooperate and communicate effectively, for example working together to tidy up the outdoor area by collecting balls to place back into the ball pit. They share ideas, work collaboratively, and communicate well with each other with appropriate instructions and encouragement. A few children count to 10 and use simple mathematical vocabulary in their play. They begin use comparative mathematical language to describe how many balls they have collected and demonstrate perseverance and enjoyment in successfully completing the task. Nearly all children join in and enjoy singing number actions and rhymes. A few children are beginning to recognise numerals for example using the number line to count how many children are present in the setting. However, there are limited opportunities for children to play with quantities and number to support and develop mathematical concepts.

Nearly all children enjoy singing and joining in Welsh songs and rhymes. Most are beginning to recognise colours, weather and the days of the week in Welsh. They understand and respond appropriately to simple language such as greetings when they enter the setting.

Nearly all children's physical skills are developing well. They maintain balance when walking on balance beams, riding scooters and using balance bikes. They jump, hop and skip along to music during music circle time and throw and catch coloured scarves in time to the music.

Many children's problem-solving skills are developing well and there are opportunities to develop these across all areas. For example, children explore how screws and washers join together when playing in the garage role-play area.

### **Care and development:**

Practitioners have a sound understanding of how to keep children safe and healthy. They implement policies and procedures consistently and are confident in their roles and responsibilities. For example, they follow the medication policy competently and meet the needs of children with allergies safely. Practitioners follow cleaning procedures appropriately to ensure a hygienic environment for the children and to minimise cross contamination. They provide a variety of healthy snacks and children have access to drinking water or milk. Practitioners plan a range of beneficial opportunities for physical play and exercise to improve children's health and wellbeing. For example, children take part in yoga sessions and access fresh air daily during their play in the outdoor area.

Practitioners understand their responsibility to safeguard children from harm, including how to respond to any child protection concerns. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners manage children's behaviour effectively. They provide children with clear, age appropriate direction and praise their good behaviour consistently. For example, practitioners praise children when they are kind and helpful. Practitioners involve children in drawing up rules and display these prominently in the setting, which act as a reminder for children. All practitioners act as good role models and encourage good manners. This practice helps support children to manage their own behaviour and develop good social skills.

All practitioners know the children well and have a clear understanding of their individual needs, abilities and preferences. They provide a nurturing and caring environment where the needs of the children come first. For example, practitioners are mindful of children's family circumstances and adapt their approach to suit. Practitioners utilise information collected before children start at the setting to plan how to care for each child effectively. All practitioners provide children with worthwhile learning and development opportunities. They carry out regular observations of children's play and learning, which provides them with a wealth of information on how children are developing. Practitioners collaborate successfully with external agencies, such as health professionals to support children with additional learning needs.

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

Practitioners plan a worthwhile range of experiences that encourage children's all round development. They have a good understanding of child development and know their children well. They are beginning to respond to the interests and needs of the children, for example providing opportunities to explore with torches in the dark den and make potions following activities in the wildlife area. The setting makes good use of its space to develop children's skills through an exciting and stimulating environment that offers children a wide range of experiences.

The provision to develop children's literacy skills is effective. Practitioners are good language role models and encourage children to participate in conversation skillfully. They use questions effectively to support children's thinking and model appropriate vocabulary development. The book corner is homely, welcoming and stocked with suitable resources that encourage children to engage in stories from their own culture and that of others. Practitioners model Welsh well through whole group activities. They use incidental Welsh within the session and encourage children to respond.

Practitioners plan a range of role-play experiences that encourage children to use their imagination and allows them to take on various roles within their play, for example when playing in the garden centre and home corner. However, there are limited resources within the role-play areas and across the areas of provision to support the development of children's numeracy skills. Practitioners do not always take sufficient advantage of opportunities to model numeracy skills and as a result children's skills are not extended well enough.

Practitioners provide opportunities for children to develop a sense of curiosity and awe and wonder, for example by providing opportunities to watch the wind move through the trees and hunt for spiders webs in the wildlife area. The setting has developed a quiet zone in which children have beneficial opportunities to rest, be quiet and reflect.

Practitioners use assessments and observations regularly to identify children's learning. They keep parents well informed of progress and development through regular updates. The outcomes of assessments and observations, however, are not used well enough to plan future learning. As a result practitioners do not always take advantage of learning opportunities across all the areas of the curriculum.

Practitioners are beginning to look at the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales and make appropriate changes within their setting. There is a good balance between child led and adult led activity and adults are used well to support children's development.

### **Environment:**

Leaders offer a good range of quality toys and resources to stimulate children's curiosity and interest. Children benefit from a suitable range of accessible reading materials. For example, they can access books in a cosy book area and recipe cards in the role-play home corner. Play materials promote cultural awareness, including Welsh heritage and equal opportunities successfully. This ensures that children gain a good understanding of the world they live in. Practitioners frequently clean toys and resources and dispose of any broken items appropriately. Toilets and nappy changing facilities are clean and comply with hygiene requirements. Children have access to child sized furniture, such as tables and chairs as well as other equipment, to promote their physical development and independence skills successfully.

### **Leadership and management:**

The leader has a clear vision for the setting based on developing a high sense of wellbeing for all children, and as a result children experience a warm, caring and nurturing environment. There is a strong team ethos based on collaborative working and all staff feel valued in their roles. There is a clear statement of purpose that provides an accurate picture of the setting.

Leaders identify the setting's strengths and areas for development accurately. They make purposeful use of advice from support partners such as the local authority's early years teacher. This has resulted in positive changes to the routines and environment of the setting to better meet children's needs allowing for more choice and responding to children's interests and fascinations. Improvement plans are effective and have had a positive impact on the environment and the routines of the setting. Quality review processes take account of the views of practitioners with positive effect. Leaders make good use of funding and grants to improve the environment and to purchase appropriate resources.

Leaders develop strong relationships with parents who are kept well informed of their child's progress and how they can further support their learning. They keep in touch through regular updates and the setting's private social media page. Assessments

are shared with parents and the feeder primary schools to support successful transition arrangements. Leaders work well with a range of partners to support children's health, and wellbeing, for example to access funding to develop the outdoor environment to improve children's health and well-being.

The setting has effective policies and procedures to ensure that it complies with regulations. The leader shares responsibility appropriately and provides beneficial opportunities for all practitioners to develop in their role.



## 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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Publication date: 06/05/2022