



**Estyn**

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**St. Joseph's Playgroup**

**St. Joseph's RC School  
Brackley Avenue  
Colwyn Bay  
LL29 7UU**

**Date of inspection: March 2022**

**by**

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)**

**and**

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

## About St. Joseph's Playgroup

Name of setting	St. Joseph's Playgroup
Category of care provided	Sessional Day Care
Registered person(s)	James Richard Wilkinson
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Maria Ann Wellings
Number of places	30
Age range of children	2 – 4 years
Number of children funded for up to two terms	7
Number of children funded for up to five terms	0
Opening days / times	Monday – Friday 11.30am – 3.10pm
Flying start service	Yes
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. We recommend that the service provider considers the Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care'.
Date of previous CIW inspection	September 2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection	September 2012
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	29/03/2022

## **Non-compliance**

We notified the provider that the setting was not compliant with the Regulations. A notice was not issued, but these are identified as areas for improvement, and the registered person must address these.

Information on all non-compliance is included in the Action and Improvement Summary report, which will be sent separately to the report by CIW.

## **Recommendations**

R1 Ensure that children have opportunities to take measured risks and develop their problem-solving skills effectively

R2 Provide practitioners with opportunities to reflect on their performance and identify targets for improvement through effective supervision and appraisal

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Well-being:

Nearly all children make choices and decisions confidently. They choose to play indoors or outdoors, engaging in a range of experiences such as exploring sensory balls or playing with toy dinosaurs in the water tray. Most children express their views confidently as they know their contributions are valued. For example, during the 'bucket game', children ask practitioners to spin the top again or use sign language to ask for more bubbles.

Most children separate from their parents and carers readily and are eager to play with friends as they join the session. They feel secure and are happy with routines they are familiar with such as group time and snack time. Nearly all children have secure relationships with practitioners who support them to overcome any challenges they may face and to gain confidence.

Nearly all children are developing their personal and social skills well. Most cooperate with others effectively, for example when they tidy up or get ready for lunch. Most children take turns on bikes in the outdoor area and share tools in the sand pit with little support. They are developing an understanding of what is right or wrong and a few are showing an awareness of their own and others' feelings. For example, they share popular toys with friends after gentle reminders to be kind.

Nearly all children show purpose and curiosity as they engage in a range of activities appropriate to their stage of development. For example, they play happily in the mud kitchen or explore musical instruments. Many children speak confidently to friends and practitioners. For example, they chat about mothers' day or a trip to the beach. Many children show joy as they call out or use sign language when responding to puppets used by practitioners at group times.

Most children develop their self-help skills effectively which enables them to develop their independence. For example, they dress for outdoor activities, pour drinks during snack time and help to tidy up the classroom with little support. Nearly all children show pleasure in completing activities and tasks well and are making good progress. For example, they are proud when practitioners praise them for watering daffodils in the garden independently.

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

There is no report on children's learning. This is because the number of three or four-year-old children present at the time of the inspection that do not receive funded education elsewhere was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

### **Care and development:**

Practitioners implement the setting's policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting children's health and well-being effectively. For example, they ensure fire drills are undertaken regularly with the school, and children know how to evacuate

the premises safely. Overall, they record accidents, incidents and pre-existing injuries effectively. All practitioners have completed safeguarding and first aid training and they know what to do should they have any concerns about a child. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Practitioners provide healthy and nutritious snacks, such as sandwiches and a variety of fruit at snack time. They follow good hygiene practices and have adapted routines and activities consistently well to deal with infection control during the COVID-19 pandemic. Practitioners ensure that children benefit from outdoor play throughout each session and during the lunch break.

Practitioners manage children's interactions successfully. They are good role models and help children to develop social skills through supporting them to cooperate as they play. They are exceptionally sensitive to the individual needs of children and distract them or intervene positively to prevent situations where children could become frustrated or upset. For example, they suggest children use other tools in the sand pit, give plenty of encouragement and ensure that children are engaged with activities that sustain their interest. Practitioners remind children of simple rules regularly and, as a result of their consistent approach, children's behaviour is very good.

Practitioners promote children's learning and independence skilfully. They plan interesting activities and consider individual needs and preferences of children well. Practitioners provide beneficial experiences that allow children to lead their own play and follow their interests. For example, children build a castle for the princess in the sand, wash trucks in the mud kitchen or pretend to be a builder using a tape measure. Their interactions during snack and lunchtime make it a social occasion and an opportunity for children to develop their communication and self-help skills effectively. Practitioners promote the Welsh language using simple Welsh phrases, rhymes and songs well.

Practitioners are highly responsive, caring and nurturing and have a very inclusive approach. They collaborate with external agencies such as health professionals to support children with additional learning needs successfully. They understand the ways in which individual children learn very well and provide nurturing experiences, considering individual targets and next steps effectively. Practitioners plan provision very well to ensure that all children are included and engaged in group activities. For example, a 'bucket time' activity encourages contributions from all children through signing or calling out very successfully.

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

The setting provides a range of experiences indoors and outdoors that support children's learning and development effectively. Practitioners are developing a holistic approach in response to the new curriculum that promotes learning through play and exploration successfully. For example, they develop children's physical, creative, personal and social development well through providing opportunities to paint together on a large scale. This supports children to explore and collaborate as they manipulate a range of tools or discover that they can make brown by mixing

colours together. Practitioners provide further opportunities for children to develop their physical skills effectively through activities such as riding trikes and balancing on wobbly steppingstones.

Nearly all practitioners support children's language, literacy and communication skills well. They build on children's interest and knowledge of books by reading favourite stories, which engage most children effectively. Practitioners introduce new vocabulary in English and Welsh such as watermelon and 'pili pala' (butterfly) through stories and songs skilfully. Beneficial experiences, such as drawing on battery operated light boards, engage children well and support their mark making skills successfully.

Practitioners provide learning experiences that promote children's moral, spiritual and cultural development well. For example, they foster a sense of awe and wonder effectively as they encourage children to observe roots and shoots growing from broad beans. Practitioners provide useful opportunities for children to learn about and care for living things, such as the seeds they have planted in the garden.

The setting builds on children's numeracy and digital skills successfully through carefully considered play provision. For example, they add magnetic numbers to a play dough area after noticing children's interest in pretending to make birthday cakes. This strengthens children's understanding of numbers as they talk to friends about how old they are or find the number to match the candles on their cake independently. Having digital cameras readily available enables children to develop their digital skills purposefully. For example, many children take photographs confidently and a few are able to show friends how to take a photograph of their play dough cake.

Practitioners explain things clearly and model activities to support children's engagement and learning effectively. For example, they explain how to use a small bucket balance or ask children how much play money they have to spend in the role-play shop. Large scale provision to promote problem solving, such as wooden blocks, planks and tyres, is available to children in the outdoor area. However, children do not readily access these resources to explore, try things out and take measured risks. As a result, children's problem solving skills are generally underdeveloped.

Practitioners have high expectations of all children including those with additional learning needs. For example, they support children to develop their communication through signing and/or speech skilfully. The setting has effective procedures to observe children and assess their progress across the curriculum. Nearly all practitioners know most children very well. They carry out ongoing observations of children as they play and explore and use this information to meet children's individual needs and support their learning successfully.

### **Environment:**

Leaders provide care in a safe and secure environment. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place, including health and safety procedures regarding COVID-19. For example, visitors to the setting are asked to complete COVID-19 risk assessments and to sign in electronically. There are effective infection control

measures including additional cleaning routines. The building is well maintained with all required safety checks completed within the required timescales, including fire and electrical tests.

Leaders ensure that the supervision of children is effective by having enough practitioners for each session. They make sure that all unnecessary risks to children have been identified and as far as possible eliminated. This is done in partnership with the school; with the required policies and procedures being specific to the playgroup.

Leaders provide a rich environment for play, which is welcoming and stimulating, both indoors and outdoors. They ensure that children benefit from using facilities such as the school playground and hall, and this supports children's physical development well. Overall, there is sufficient space and facilities to meet the individual needs of all children. For example, additional areas of provision provide a calm, quiet environment where practitioners support children's communication and language development well. All areas are light, clean and well maintained. Furniture, equipment and play resources are suitable and of good quality.

Equipment and resources are age appropriate and generally in sufficient quantity to provide an interesting choice for children in their play. Many resources are stored in baskets at a low level so children can access them and make choices independently. In a very few instances, resources such as large construction equipment are not organised to provide sufficient space for children to use them effectively. This limits opportunities for children to develop their skills through experiences such as building on a large scale. Natural resources such as pebbles, logs, sticks and feathers are available and enhance children's play successfully. For example, many children enjoy decorating their play dough models with coloured feathers. There are sufficient play materials to promote cultural awareness, including Welsh heritage and diversity, effectively. This ensures that children gain a good understanding of the world they live in.

### **Leadership and management:**

Leaders share a clear vision for the setting to develop healthy, confident children who show engagement and joy in their learning. They meet regularly with the registered person and communicate well with practitioners, resulting in the smooth running of the setting. Leaders provide an effective range of policies and share these suitably with parents. There is an up-to-date statement of purpose that ensures parents can make an informed choice about using the setting.

Leaders work effectively with practitioners to provide a warm and inclusive environment for all children. For example, provision for children with additional learning needs meets their individual needs very well. There is a strong commitment to teamwork, and this has a positive impact on outcomes for children. For example, leaders collaborate with school staff to share learning environments and resources very successfully.

The setting has effective arrangements for identifying strengths and areas for improvement and all practitioners are committed to improving the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Leaders make beneficial use of information from a range

of sources to inform the self-evaluation process. For example, after observing that children do not access the indoor reading area independently, they purchase additional resources to make it more inviting. Nearly all practitioners know what the setting does well and areas that they need to develop. For example, they describe how recent improvements to the environment have increased children's engagement in their play.

Nearly all leaders and practitioners take advantage of opportunities for continued professional development and strive to improve their performance. This has a positive impact, such as improving practitioners' confidence when using sign language and supporting child-led learning. Leaders communicate appropriately with practitioners to improve their practice. However, systems for appraisal and supervision are not consistent. For example, not all practitioners have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify personal targets for improvement.

Overall, the setting makes good use of practitioners and resources to support children's well-being, play and learning effectively. Leaders make sure that the setting meets the required numbers of suitably qualified practitioners. Resources are plentiful and of good quality. For example, a well-resourced role-play area supports children's learning well.

The setting has a worthwhile range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. For example, leaders work effectively with a range of agencies to ensure that they meet children's additional learning needs successfully. Practitioners keep parents and carers informed about what their children are learning and how well they are progressing well through a communication application, useful newsletters and informal updates. This has a positive impact. For example, parents get involved in supporting children's learning through donating plants and seeds during a topic on growing.

## 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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