



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Childcare Inspection Report on

Flying Start Playgroup (Caerau)

**Caerau Primary School
Library Road
Caerau
Maesteg
CF34 0PA**



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Description of the service

Flying Start Playgroup - Caerau was registered in 2011 and provides sessional day care for a maximum of 20 children aged two to three years. The service is located in Caerau Primary School. Care is provided in two adjoining rooms, which have toilet facilities and an adjacent outside play area. The registered provider is Action for Children, the responsible individual is Jane Weeks and the person in charge is Alexis Bater. The playgroup is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 11.30am and from 12.30pm to 3pm. The service is provided in English with incidental Welsh.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Children attending the service settle quickly and enjoy their time there. They benefit from a wide range of play and learning experiences and make good progress. Children are cared for by a team of caring, competent, experienced staff. The environment is stimulating, safe and secure and well maintained. Children have free access to wide range of good quality toys, materials and equipment, which encourages them to explore and learn. The service is well run. Leaders work in partnership with parents and other professionals in health and education to ensure that children's needs are identified and addressed. Parents told us that they are very happy with the service and they were full of praise for the staff and activities available. They said their children were developing well and that they felt supported and involved in the service.

2. Improvements

- Leaders have involved families more by inviting them to attend cooking sessions and a Welsh song group with their children.
- Leaders have purchased a new mud kitchen.

3. Requirements and recommendations

There were no regulatory requirements.

We made recommendations that leaders:

- add more detail in the statement of purpose about the facilities available;
- ensure that in staff records there is a satisfactory explanation of gaps in employment and that the verification form on staff files is signed.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children are happy; they settle in quickly and they enjoy their play. Children choose what they do and benefit from a range of interesting activities. They interact and cooperate well with each other and with staff. Children are developing well and are becoming independent. They experience a quality, nurturing service which gives them a good foundation for their learning and development.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children have opportunities to choose and communicate their needs in different ways.

Children had a wide range of activities available during free play sessions and we saw them move between the indoor and outdoor area freely, choosing activities that interested them and which friends to play with. Children joined group activities and had the freedom to leave to do something else at any time. We saw that sessions were adapted to meet the needs and preferences of children, expressed verbally or non-verbally. Most children were confident to choose what they wanted to do and we saw children playing alone or with others; helping themselves to drinks of water; and tapping staff to ask them to help or play along with them. We saw that children chose the songs they wanted to sing and the story they wanted at circle time. Children enjoyed a snack of cereal, with or without milk, and then chose a coloured plate for their banana and apple portions. Children ate snacks at their own pace and we saw them ask for second helpings and receive them.

Children have a strong voice in this service.

1.2 To what extent do children feel safe, happy and valued?

Children cope well with separation from their parents and enjoy their time at the playgroup.

We saw that most children arrived happily at the service and settled quickly. We saw children pick their name card from a table when they came in and put it in a little basket to show they had arrived. The cards had different fruit symbols to help them recognise their individual names. Children experienced a sense of belonging because their photographs were on their coat hooks and displayed on the walls. We saw children smiling and pointing proudly at photographs of them with newly hatched chicks and making pizzas. We heard children sing a welcome song, which helped them get to know everyone's name. There was a relaxed atmosphere and children were happy to explore the playroom and to play independently or with others. Children approached staff readily, they asked questions, asked for cuddles and assistance and smiled proudly when praised for trying or for their contributions. Parents told us that they had attended link sessions at the playgroup so that staff understood their children's needs, routines and preferences. All of this helped children to feel happy and secure.

Children have a good sense of belonging, which helps them feel safe and happy.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children interact well with each other and with staff.

Children mostly played happily and joined in with group activities. We saw them absorbed in activities for extended periods, sharing toys and taking turns. During circle time the children sat together and mostly listened to what others had to say in response to questions from staff. They hooted with laughter as they held hands and danced the hokey cokey; they waited patiently and in line to wash their hands and sat at tables for snack time, singing as they waited. In the playground, children played very happily together in the new mud kitchen; balanced across stepping stones one after the other; kicked a ball to each other and took turns on the cars and bikes. We saw that children's behaviour was generally very good, we saw some minor disputes but they were quickly sorted out with the support from staff who reminded them about being kind and sharing. The children mostly remembered to say 'please' and 'thank you'.

Children are learning the importance of sharing and turn taking in preparation for more formal education.

1.4 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Children are interested and motivated in their play and learning.

On arrival most children smiled and we saw that they immediately went independently to a play area or to staff. We saw that they persevered in activities for a suitable length of time for their stage of development. Children chose dressing up and role play in the home corner, dolls and soft toys, construction, picture books and sat together for structured adult-led activities such as sing-along and story-telling. We saw children smiling and laughing outside, when they jumped, balanced, kicked balls, and played on cars and trikes. They nodded when we asked if they enjoyed coming to the playgroup and said they liked the toys and activities. We saw that children particularly enjoyed dancing and making mud pies with mud and bits of vegetable from the vegetable patch playing outside; and they were very attentive during story time. All the children thoroughly enjoyed a guitar music session and smiled a lot as they sang along and took turns at strumming the guitar. Most children fervently sang the farewell song in English and Welsh as each child left the group at the end of each session. Parents told us that their children had settled in well and that they enjoyed coming.

Children thoroughly enjoy their play and learning experiences.

1.5 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?

Children have good opportunities to learn and become independent.

Children had access to a rich and imaginative play environment. Toys, equipment and resources were arranged so that children could help themselves and routines and staff-led activities supported children's development. We saw that most children were confident to choose their play and try new things. They followed their own interests, explored, made choices, participated with others and learned through play. We heard them learning to count and singing songs in English and in Welsh. We saw that some children were able to

use the toilet independently and they were encouraged to wash their hands and brush their teeth without adult support. We saw children help themselves to water, choose their own plate for snack and some children cleared away their own plates and cups after snack time. Parents said, "She has come on great, she's developing well and she loves it", and "He talks more and remembers colours and can count. It's brilliant". Children's development records evidenced that they were making good progress and developing new skills in line with set targets.

Children are developing well and are becoming independent.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Staff are very caring, motivated, enthusiastic and responsive to children's needs. They work well together to keep children safe and promote good health. They know the children well and provide a good range of interesting activities to help them to learn and develop. They manage behaviour well.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff keep children safe because they follow the policies and procedures and know their responsibilities.

Staff were familiar with the service's policies to keep children safe. They had attended relevant training including health and safety, paediatric first aid, food hygiene, safeguarding training and the prevent duty relating to terrorism and radicalisation. Our conversations with staff evidenced that they were clear about what to do if they had concerns about a child or in case of an accident. We saw that keyworkers ensured that records of children's health needs and any allergies were up to date. Staff used registers when children arrived and left; the number of children attending was recorded; and we saw head counts when children went outside and came in for snack time. Parents or named persons were required to sign their children out at the end of the sessions. Staff made daily checks on the premises, toys and equipment to keep children as safe as possible. We saw that toys, equipment, the kitchen and toilets were very clean and well maintained; and staff cleaned the tables before and after snacks. Staff consistently promoted healthy lifestyles. They encouraged children to brush their teeth; they prompted children to wash hands before snack time and after using the toilet. Drinking water was available for children to help themselves throughout the day and children had a choice of water, milk and a healthy snack in each session. Staff encouraged outdoor access whenever possible and a covered area outside ensured that children could play safely outdoors in all weather. We heard staff giving safety messages to children, for example 'please don't stand on the chairs', 'keep your coat on; it's cold', to 'use kind hands' and 'be careful' when balancing outside.

Staff promote children's health and safety effectively.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

Staff are good role models for the children and help them understand the importance of sharing and being kind to each other.

Staff followed the service's behaviour management policy and set a good example by always speaking calmly and politely to each other. They listened to the children or watched their expressions and body language closely to understand their needs and wishes; and they gave them plenty of time to express themselves or finish activities. This created a calm and positive atmosphere. Staff used action songs or counting games effectively to keep children busy while waiting for snack and while lining up to put coats on. They also used quiet voices and whispers to gain their attention during story time and a musical activity, for example all children watched wide eyed as a staff member whispered, "What do you think

is in here?" We saw that staff used every opportunity to praise positive behaviour such as when children were helpful and shared. We heard lots of praise and encouragement such as 'Well done everyone!', 'Excellent', 'and 'Good boy/ girl for sharing!' and children responded with smiles and nods. Staff are good role models. They spoke politely to each other, always saying 'thank you' and 'please'. They managed minor behaviour and sharing disputes well. They made good eye contact with children and spoke calmly and clearly so that children understood what was expected. We heard staff refer to the golden rules which were about being kind and helpful, listening, tidying up, playing and having fun.

Staff manage behaviour well.

2.3 How well do practitioners promote children's play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?

Staff know the children well and respond appropriately to their needs.

Prior to starting, staff introduced children to the service through link up sessions with the children and their parents and there was a staggered intake at the start of each term to give children time to settle in. The key worker system then ensured that children's needs were identified and activities were tailored to promote their confidence, self-esteem and development. All staff in the service were familiar with the needs of individual children and we saw that they monitored children's expressions and body language to ensure that they were happy and settled. We saw that staff shared relevant information with other staff and provided a good balance of child and adult led activities using a good range of resources to stimulate interest. Children had good opportunities to develop their skills such as creativity, coordination, dexterity and social skills through free play; and we heard staff extending children's learning by introducing numbers, colours, shapes, colours, taste and sounds whenever they could. There were photographs of recent activities including making pizzas, dressing up, craft work and hatching eggs and caring for the chicks, which children were still very excited about. Staff also provided children with opportunities to use and experience the Welsh language. We heard children singing songs in Welsh, staff counting in Welsh and asking children to repeat the words, we heard them use Welsh words for numbers and colours, and to say 'da iawn' (well done) and 'diolch' (thank you) during each session and there were bilingual posters on the walls. We saw that responsibilities for activities and routines were rotated weekly so that all staff had a turn. Staff said this kept them motivated and helped them to share good practice and learn from each other. The service uses the 'Foundation Phase Profile' to track children's development and WellComm assessments (to assess language and communication skills), which are the same tools used in schools. This supports a smooth transition from the service to school. The records we saw showed that the children's needs and progress were clearly recorded and reviewed regularly.

Staff promote children's play, learning and all round development effectively.

3. Environment

Summary

Children are cared for in a safe environment which offers a wide variety of play and learning opportunities indoors and outdoors. Risks and hazards are identified and minimised or eliminated to ensure children's safety. Resources and furniture are good quality and suitable for the needs of the children. Children benefit from an environment that is easily accessible and has been designed to meet their needs.

Our findings

3.1 How well do leaders ensure the safety of the environment?

Leaders ensure that children are cared for in a safe, clean and secure environment and that unnecessary risks to children are identified and reduced or removed.

Safety is a priority at the playgroup. The entrances to the service are secure from unauthorised access. There is a secure external door with a key fob entry system and the outdoor play area has a secure boundary and lockable gate. Visitors must show identity and sign in and out. There were clear policies and risk assessments relating to health and safety and staff followed them. We saw annual tests for heating and electrical equipment and that staff had carried out fire drills each term. Staff confirmed that they checked the indoor and outdoor play areas and equipment each day to ensure they were safe and clean. We saw that all areas, equipment, furniture and toys were very clean and in good condition. The kitchen had been awarded a level five rating from the Food Standards Agency and all staff had completed food hygiene training. We saw very good hygiene practices, for example, when staff prepared snacks, cleaned the tables prior to and after snack time, when they supported children to wash their hands after playing outside and after using the toilets. The outside play area has a soft surface to minimise injuries if children fall and an extended covered area next to the building that provides shelter from the sun and rain.

Leaders keep the environment as safe as possible.

3.2 How well do leaders ensure the suitability of the environment?

Leaders provide a stimulating environment for children's play and learning.

The indoor and outdoor areas have been purpose built to provide a rich and stimulating learning environment. There is a main playroom, a smaller playroom (known as the Nurture Room) and two children's toilets with nappy changing facilities and a disabled toilet. The playrooms had a variety of play and learning areas as well as areas where children could relax and reflect. The outdoor play area is a large open space for children to run, play balancing games, ride trikes, scooters and cars and includes a covered area to enable play in all weather, a mud kitchen and a play house. Children could move around and explore freely and toys and resources were within easy reach to promote choice. The main play room included drawing/ mark making, a home corner with a kitchen, threading and sorting, dressing up, a carpet area with a tent and bean bags for relaxing and circle time, and areas for messy play with sand and water. The Nurture Room was set up with a soft play area, dolls and construction, a home corner and a quiet book area with cushions. Staff told us

that equipment was varied and areas rotated to ensure children experienced a good range of activities and we saw many photographs on display to evidence this. The toilets are located on one side of the main playroom and we saw that children were encouraged to access and use them independently. There are also two offices (one links to the adjoining school), a kitchen and a staff toilet. The Nurture Room is sometimes used for family link up sessions and also as a reception area for parents or family members to wait in if the weather is poor. Parents told us that this was welcomed when it was cold, particularly if they had to wait with other children.

Leaders ensure that the environment is very suitable for children to play, learn and grow and that it is welcoming to families.

3.3 How well do leaders ensure the quality of resources and equipment?

Leaders provide a wide range of good quality resources which are accessible to children.

We saw children engrossed in playing with dressing up items, building blocks, cars and dolls, crayons and paint, looking through books and playing outside where they rode trikes and cars, balanced on small rubber stepping stones, played inside a play house and made mud cakes in the new mud kitchen. The toys and equipment were clean and in good condition and we saw that different cultures and identities were reflected and celebrated. For example, there were books about different children and homes around the world, dolls of different races and posters on the walls with Welsh numbers, colours and shapes. Leaders offered a balance of good quality play equipment as well as low cost items such as home-made play dough, raw pasta for sorting/ threading and natural items such as vegetables, shells and pine cones.

Leaders ensure that children have access to a wide range of good quality resources and equipment that suits their interests and supports their learning and development.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

Leaders provide clear direction in line with the service aims to put children at the centre of all its practice and to give children a flying start in life. Leaders regularly review the quality of the service and the feedback from children, parents, staff and other professionals is used to inform the future planning of the service. Staff are well trained and they receive regular supervision and appraisals to improve their skills and knowledge. Leaders have developed effective partnerships with parents and other professionals.

4.1 How effective is leadership?

Leaders ensure that the service is well run and complies with the regulations and the national minimum standards.

Leaders were clear about the aims of the service. The statement of purpose was up to date and provided a clear description of the service and what it sets out to provide. Policies and procedures were reviewed annually; were easy to understand and focused on children's needs and well-being. Leaders ensured that they were translated into effective practice through regular meetings and discussions with staff. Staff said they had 'brilliant support' to do their work and they felt valued because they were listened to, involved in planning activities and encouraged to develop their skills and interests. The systems to monitor the development of children were very effective. Staff met regularly to discuss children's progress and to evaluate what had gone well and also what could be improved and how. We saw that everyone was involved in planning interesting activities to promote learning and development. We suggested minor additions to the statement of purpose to fully reflect the facilities available.

Leaders are motivated and effective.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

Leaders have good systems to monitor the quality of the service and plan for improvements based on feedback from children, parents, staff and other professionals.

We saw that staff regularly reflected on their practice using question boards and there were records of meetings when staff reviewed what the children enjoyed and what had gone well so they could plan suitable activities linked to needs and preferences. As the children were young and many were pre-verbal, their feelings about activities were often gained through watching what they enjoyed and how they reacted as well as asking them, using simple child feedback questionnaires and collating the responses. Parents were consulted regularly through an open door policy as well as more formally through evaluation questionnaires. There is also a suggestion box. We saw records of meetings with staff from other Action for Children playgroups and with health professionals to seek views on best practice and to evaluate performance. The service is also monitored by the Flying Start coordinator and link teacher. Leaders had collated the feedback and outlined the achievements of the service and areas for improvement. We saw evidence that suggestions and issues raised are valued and incorporated into the service, for example parents could wait in the Nurture Room in cold or wet weather; the playroom had been re-organised and

there were plans to provide soft seating outside for children to rest. We also saw that activities were continually evaluated and changed to meet children's identified needs and preferences and to ensure that developmental targets were met, which supported the children's transition to school.

Leaders evaluate the quality of the service effectively and make improvements that benefit children, parents and staff.

4.3 How effective is the management of practitioners, staff and other resources?

Leaders ensure that there are always sufficient numbers of suitable staff on duty, who are well supported and know their responsibilities.

There were sufficient numbers of qualified staff and contingency plans with other Action for Children services to cover staff absence. The records evidenced that staff ratios were usually higher than the minimum standards of 1 staff to 4 children and this was seen during the inspection. The person in charge was on a training course on the first day, but normally she was in addition to the staff numbers. Leaders followed safe recruitment processes. We saw that staff records contained the required information including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and identification checks and references. We noted some unexplained gaps in the employment records on one file we looked at. We brought this to the leader's attention and the staff member completed the record immediately. We also noticed that each file had a checklist at the front to verify that all the required information had been checked but some had not been signed by the leader. Staff attended monthly team meetings as well as informal daily chats morning, lunch time and at the end of the day. They received induction, essential training, regular supervision and an annual appraisal. Training records showed that the leaders had provided all the required training for staff as well as specialised training to meet the needs of individual children. This included speech and language, nutrition, attachment theory, story-telling and the use of puppets. All staff had access to a range of professionals including speech and language therapists, early years advisors and health visitors to support their work with children. Discussions with staff revealed that they were aware of their roles and responsibilities, that they enjoyed their work and that they received 'brilliant' support. Staff told us that they were listened to and this enabled them to provide a successful service for children and families. We saw that the leaders deployed staff effectively to meet the children's needs as well as to promote their job satisfaction. For example staff took turns for different activities and responsibilities and said that this helped them learn from each other.

Leaders manage staff and resources very effectively.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

Leaders and staff have good relationships with parents and excellent links with other professionals.

Leaders and staff worked closely with parents to meet children's needs and to keep them informed of their child's development. Before children start at the playgroup, parents were invited to attend link up sessions with their children to get to know the staff and new environment. There is an open-door policy and staff encourage parents/carers to communicate informally each day. Open sessions are held each term to give parents the

chance to visit the service and discuss their child's progress at playgroup with their key worker. Parents/carers are also offered stay and play sessions, funded trips and workshops to encourage them to become involved in their children's education so that children experience maximum benefits from attending. Parents told us that these sessions helped them to feel confident and to give information about their children's routines, needs and preferences. They particularly enjoyed cookery sessions and trips to the local market garden and community centre, which they said gave them lots of information about what was available in the area. We saw that children's progress was recorded regularly and that keyworkers shared relevant information with the team relating to each child's development and their family life/circumstances. As a result, additional needs and support were quickly identified and parents were supported to access additional services they needed. We saw that staff regularly sought additional advice and support from other professionals including health visitors, the early years advisory teacher, the speech and language team and educational psychologists in order to provide the care each child needed. There were good links with schools which supported an easier transition for the children.

Leaders have developed effective partnerships which benefit the children.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Areas of non compliance identified at this inspection

None

5.3 Recommendations for improvement

We made recommendations that leaders:

- add more detail in the statement of purpose about the facilities available;
- ensure that in staff records there is a satisfactory explanation of gaps in employment; and;
- ensure that the verification form on staff files is signed to confirm that all the information is in place.

6. How we undertook this inspection

- One inspector made an unannounced visit to the service on the morning of 27 September 2017 for 4.5 hours and then arranged a further visit for the afternoon of 2 October 2017 for 3.5 hours. We:
- talked to children and spoke to nine parents, four staff, the person in charge and a line manager from Action for Children;
- observed children and staff in the playroom and outside;
- observed two children using the SOFI-2 tool to capture evidence of children's engagement and the care provided by staff;
- inspected the premises;
- looked at a sample of documentation and policies including the last CSSIW inspection report, the registers and diary, children's records, staff files, the statement of purpose, the self-assessment and of quality of care report for 2017 and a sample of policies and procedures;
- gave some feedback to the person in charge and staff after the inspection; and
- we gave feedback to the registered provider by telephone.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website www.cssiw.org.uk

7. About the service

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Sessional Day Care
Responsible Individual	Jane Weeks
Person in charge	Alexis Bater
Registered maximum number of places	20
Age range of children	2-3 years
Opening hours	9am-11.30am and 12.30pm to 3pm Monday – Friday Term Time only
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous CSSIW inspection	15 October 2014
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	27 September 2017 and 2 October 2017
Is this a Flying Start service?	Yes
Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	No
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	<p>This is a service that is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and demonstrates a significant effort in promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture</p> <p>We saw staff incorporate Welsh language and songs into each session and we heard a lot of incidental Welsh.</p> <p>Action for Children provides Welsh language places for children whose parents seek Welsh language education at a separate service nearby.</p>
Additional Information:	