



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

Childcare Inspection Report on

The Venture

**Garner Road
Wrexham
LL13 8SF**



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Description of the service

The Venture (Wrexham Ltd) runs an adventure playground, which is a well-established open access play service situated on the Caia Park Estate, Wrexham, where children are free to come and go as they choose. The service is registered to care for 200 children up to the age of 12 years and adhere to staff:child ratios as required. Children under the age of 5 years can attend if accompanied by a parent/adult and children between the ages of 12 and 16 years may also attend. The playground is open Tuesday to Sunday in term time from 4pm until 7.30pm and during school holidays, it is open Tuesday to Sunday from 1pm until 7.30pm. The responsible individual is Malcolm King OBE and person in charge is Linda Platt.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

The adventure playground provides an exceptional service where children are offered creative and flexible opportunities for free play in a supportive environment. Staff are highly motivated professionals who provide a safe place for children to play and develop skills.

They support children to keep themselves safe both within the playground and within the wider community. The playground is a stimulating space which offers a variety of areas for play and there are a range of policies and procedures in place to support children to take risks whilst playing safely. The responsible individual and staff have excellent relationships with parents and professionals working with children from the locality. The service is highly organised and highly valued within the community.

2. Improvements

Adaptions to the play area have had to be made when fire destroyed part of the castle structure.

3. Requirements and recommendations

We made recommendations about risk assessments, updating the CSSIW telephone number and recycling food packaging.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children are offered the choice to come and go as they please and play freely. Their views are highly valued and they are offered opportunities to talk to staff when there are problems in their lives. Children are able to make friends through play and are offered an extensive range of play opportunities where they can develop a range of physical and social skills.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children and young people are involved in making decisions about the service and in their play.

We saw questionnaires completed by children asking for their views about the service. Some comments by the children included “happy to play with friends” and “would like more staff”. We saw the responsible individual take time to meet with a small group of young people who had been excluded from the playground to hear their views. Children are free to choose to play in any area of the playground at any time when the service is open. We saw children making choices to play in different areas without staff involvement, while others chose to be part of organised activities. We were told there are art therapy sessions, which provide children with opportunities for 1:1 discussion with staff and to express themselves.

Nearly all children participate well and are encouraged to express their opinions and contribute to ideas about how the service is run.

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

Children are happy and settled and their rights are respected. New attendees are welcomed and made to feel part of the group.

We saw most children had formed positive attachments with staff and were happy, settled and secure in their company. We saw children separated from their parents/carers with ease. We found children had formed friendships and happily chatted to other children during the afternoon. This was the first day of the holidays and there were a total of 51 children attending during the day. Eleven children were attending for the first time. They easily settled and were welcomed by staff and other children. We were told about a workshop provided for the children and young people to talk about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This has helped children to realise they have rights and these should be respected. The children approached staff as and when they wanted to

ask them a question and knew that they were close by at all times to support them if needed.

Children are highly valued and respected.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children are supported to develop social skills and trusting relationships.

We saw staff encourage good manners, challenging the use of swearing by warnings of a ban if the swearing continued. We read some questionnaires from children and their parents which stated that children had made friends at the playground. We watched two children gathering items from around the playground to build a pirate as part of the party celebrations taking place the following Saturday and working together to decide what to build. We saw children of different ages playing team games throughout the session and children taking turns to complete gymnastic moves on mattresses supported by a member of staff. We noted children have developed sufficient trust to make disclosures to staff, which has enabled staff to directly support children and signpost/refer to other services to provide advice and support where necessary.

Children develop resilience and social skills through play and the support of staff.

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

Children are stimulated and enthusiastic and are involved in a range of planned and free play activities.

We saw children making good use of the large wooden structures on site, including the ship and the series of walkways and towers. Some children enjoyed using the MUGA (multi use games area) for football and team games. Children enjoyed games of tag with staff and informal “wrestling” sessions on the mattresses with two members of staff. Some children took part in a painting activity, while others enjoyed lying in the roof space of the hut chatting to one another. Children enjoyed playing on the American swing, zip wire and the series of water troughs. Some children had water guns which they had fun with chasing others around the playground.

Children enjoy the opportunities for free and planned play activities.

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

Children learn and become independent through play.

The play opportunities available within the playground offer children excellent opportunities to develop new skills and take on challenges in a supportive environment. We saw a locked

gate at the top of the ship structure which is used for children to jump off onto mattresses. It offers children the opportunity for children to challenge themselves whilst supported by staff. We saw children playing with the water troughs, which help them to consider water flow and volume. The woodland area provides opportunities for making dens and “pretend” play. The MUGA is a safe area for ball games in all weathers and allows children to play as part of a team.

Children are able to explore their environment freely and safely.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Policies and procedures are in place to support staff to keep children safe and healthy and this is a top priority for the service. Staff are skilled in engaging with children and knowing when support or intervention is required. Reflective practice is in evidence on a daily basis.

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff are knowledgeable and experienced in keeping children safe and healthy.

The service has a comprehensive list of policies in place and staff are required to be familiar with the policies on appointment. We saw written evidence of staff following the safeguarding policy appropriately, and all staff have completed safeguarding training during 2017. Health and well being is an important aspect of the service and staff are committed to providing a range of activities to support this. A gardening club and yoga sessions are provided regularly as are workshops to support children in being safe and well. We saw potatoes and other vegetables and fruit being grown around the site, which will be cooked and eaten by the children when they are ready. This summer, the service has been fortunate to receive food packs from the local church, providing all children with a free, healthy packed lunch each day. It is important to consider the additional packaging on site as a result of this initiative and how this can be recycled. Staff were very aware of the effects of the heat and sun cream is kept on site and given to children to apply on a regular basis.

Staff understand and implement the policies and procedures for the service provided.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

Staff manage the interactions with children consistently, providing clear expectations for children regarding what is and is not acceptable behaviour.

We saw staff respond in a positive manner to children, welcoming new children to the service and engaging with others who were known to them. The service has implemented positive phone calls. Staff meet at the end of the session and discuss children's behaviour. It was agreed that some parents would receive a phone call to praise their child for their behaviour at the service because they had helped to pick up litter or been involved in helping in the café, observing rules of hygiene. The service has a few rules which are aimed at keeping everyone safe and happy and include no swearing, no spitting, no throwing stones or hurting people, their bodies or their feelings. Staff discuss challenging behaviour at the feedback meeting and staff meetings and inform parents on issues such

as spitting. Meeting after each session to discuss behaviour makes sure that there is a consistent approach to managing behaviour.

Staff show a consistent understanding of agreed boundaries and strategies for dealing with situations they may find challenging.

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

Staff offer a flexible and adaptable range of activities to meet the individual needs of the children attending.

The staff identify one staff member for each session to be responsible for children under the age of 12 years. This person provides activities suitable for this age group and oversees their needs, although the children are free to make use of all aspects of the playground. The staff recognise children do not always want to be active and activities such as art and craft are provided. We saw one member of staff assisting two children to make a plan to create a pirate in preparation for the party the following Saturday. Staff were able to recognise when to engage with children and provide an activity and when to leave the children to their own play.

Staff choose an appropriate intervention style that allows children to extend their own play

3. Environment

Summary

The service offers a versatile and stimulating play space which is well maintained and where safety is given a high priority. Risk management is well documented and the area is resourced with equipment to meet the needs of free play.

Our findings

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

The premises are safe, well maintained and suitable for purpose.

We saw some areas of the playground have been put out of bounds due to safety hazards, whilst staff were assessing another area where children have been using the space in a different way to staff expectations. Staff were looking at how this area could be made safe for children to use.

The playground makes use of the risk benefit system which considers the evidence of the benefit to certain areas of play such as den building, free running and fire building in addition to considering the risks. We saw risk assessments completed for specific equipment and including trips such as D of E (Duke of Edinburgh Award), fishing and camping. We discussed making actions within the risk assessment more visible so that staff are fully aware of the actions required to minimise risk.

The staff meeting at the end of each session considers any “near misses” so that staff can react where necessary. The person in charge reviews the playground at the end of each session to check for any damage or items in need of repair.

Leaders ensure staff understand how to apply risk-benefit assessment and the rationale for doing so.

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

The premises provide a rich environment for play.

The outdoor environment is designed to allow children to move freely between different spaces offering a good variety of play opportunities. Children have been involved in the design of the playground and have helped to build some of the structures and it offers space to play outside in all weathers. The playground incorporates areas where children can have some privacy or quiet places for play. Some of these areas are used in particular, by older teenagers to sit together and chat. The wooded area has been left natural for children to explore the natural environment of trees and long grasses. There is a building as

part of the playground, but this is generally used for small group work or workshops. The service has the services of a qualified woodworker to help build and maintain structures.

Leaders ensure that children have access to the natural world such as weather, trees, plants, insects and mud.

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

Children benefit from good quality resources, equipment and materials.

The playground benefits from having space for a variety of areas of play making use of natural resources such as the woodland area and an all weather area for ball games. The main play space contains wooden structures which draw children in to explore. Shipping containers are used for secure storage of small resources and equipment. Wood working equipment, arts and crafts, dressing up and gardening tools are all available as are games and sports equipment.

Leaders ensure staff are able to provide a wide variety of loose parts and play resources

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

The responsible individual has dedicated 40 years to creating a service which is effective in meeting the needs of the community it serves. The service has a system in place to monitor and plan for improvement, taking into account the views of children, parents and other professionals. The service is well managed with policies and procedures which meet the national minimum standards and are regularly reviewed. Partnership is key to the success of this service and there are excellent communications with children, parents and other professionals.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

There is a positive ethos created by leaders, where everyone is valued.

The service is meeting the national minimum standards for open access and works to the principles of playwork. The statement of purpose is a comprehensive document which incorporates the principles of playwork. The telephone number of CSSIW should be amended within the document. Registration forms for each child are provided and staff are vigilant in making sure that they have forms for every child attending. A temporary form with basic information recorded is completed if children attend unaccompanied and don't live close enough to take the registration form home to complete. Staff are excellent at reflective practice and this was evident at the meeting held at the end of the session. Each member of staff keeps a notebook to record anything significant during the session and feeds back to other staff. We saw supervision records and an appraisal (only one member of staff has been employed for more than 12 months) which showed that staff are encouraged to reflect on their practice and consider further training to improve practice where necessary. The responsible individual is on site on most days and is fully involved in the day to day running of the service.

Leaders ensure time is made for reflective practice through; team meetings, session debriefs, 1 to 1 supervision, staff training and mentoring.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

There are systems in place to evaluate and monitor the service.

We saw staff wearing t-shirts identifying them as a staff member which is a result of staff reflecting on how visitors and new children attending the service for the first time can

identify who to approach. Staff stated this has been beneficial to the service. We saw questionnaires completed by parents and by children and their views are fed into the review of quality of care. Staff are pro active in this process, carrying questionnaires around with them together with a list of people who have already completed a questionnaire. External agencies such as local schools have also been approached to obtain their views and these show that the service has a positive effect on the lives of children living on Caia Park estate. The quality of care review was completed in June 2017 and includes priorities for improvement which will be monitored and reported on next year.

There is a process for gathering and recording feedback from children, parents and external agencies. This is recorded and used to plan the service.

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

Leaders ensure staff recruitment processes are effective and resources are managed well.

We saw files for staff included a checklist to record all of the necessary information as part of the staff recruitment process. The contract for staff includes details about roles and responsibilities so that staff are clear about these. A number of staff including the person in charge live within the community and have played and volunteered at the service before becoming members of staff. They have an excellent understanding of the needs of the service and the importance of a safe place to play for children on the estate. Children aged 16 years and above are encouraged to volunteer at the playground and this provides them with transferrable skills and a reference for paid work or attendance at a college course on leaving school. We saw volunteers playing an important role on the day of the inspection helping with games and craft activities.

Leaders ensure the recruitment process ensures that the most appropriate people are recruited for their roles.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

There are excellent partnerships with children, parents and other professionals. Children are fully involved in service, helping to plan new structures and building them. They have opportunities for informal and more formal discussions with staff in addition to completing questionnaires. The service has excellent relationships with parents. A number of parents were present on the day of the inspection and said the playground was a great place. Some parents are present on a daily basis and provide additional help if required.

Some parents had used the service when they were children and were now bringing their children. Parents are informed of their child's positive behaviour and when there are any issues with poor behaviour. Parents value the support provided by the staff team for the children and for the whole family as staff are often able to sign post families to other

professionals.

The premises are used by a wide range of professionals for meetings with families including Welfare Rights, Health Visitor clinic, and tenants meetings.

Leaders have good links with the community to enhance the work of the service and promote good outcomes for 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 recommend:

- The contact number for CSSIW is updated;
- the actions for risk assessments are clear to staff;
- further consideration is given to recycling the packaging from the lunches provided by the local church.

6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full inspection undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. We visited from 2.25pm until 8.40pm on 25 July 2017.

- We observed the children and the care they received;
- spoke to the responsible individual and a member of the committee;
- spoke to the children present;
- spoke to staff;
- spoke to four parents of children attending the service and
- looked at a wide range of records. We focused on the policies, procedures, registers and children's records.

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

About the service

Type of care provided	Childrens Day Care Open Access Play Provision
Responsible Individual	Malcolm King
Person in charge	Linda Platt
Registered maximum number of places	200
Age range of children	5 years to 16 years Children under 5 years may attend if accompanied by a parent
Opening hours	Term time Tuesday – Friday 4pm – 7:30pm Saturday and Sunday 1pm – 6:30pm School Holidays Tuesday – Friday 1pm – 7:30pm Saturday and Sunday 1pm – 6:30pm
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous CSSIW inspection	22/04/2014
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	25/07/2017
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	The service is working towards the active offer
Additional Information:	