Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Estyn
Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

The Mill Child Care Centre Ltd

5 Lon Parcwr
Ruthin
LL15 1BX

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About The Mill Child Care Centre Ltd

Name of setting	The Mill Child Care Centre Ltd
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Ffion Roberts
Person in charge	Gillian Kensall
Number of places	118
Age range of children	0-10 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	38
Number of children who receive funding for early education	9
Opening days / times	07:30 – 18:00 (Monday to Friday)
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	No
Welsh Language Active Offer	This is a service that is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and intends to become a bilingual service or demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	14 March 2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection	February 2016
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	02/05/2023

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Well-being	**Excellent**
Learning **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Excellent**
Care and development	**Good**
Teaching and assessment **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Excellent**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Excellent**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Develop the storage and labelling of resources to further promote children's independence

What happens next

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

CIW and Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a case study on its work in relation to promoting the well-being and care of all staff for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

The children are very happy and settled, and have formed close bonds with their peers and with practitioners. They approach practitioners for cuddles and reassurance when they need it, knowing that this will be provided promptly and without question. Children move freely around the available activities and choose how to spend their time at the setting. Children's individual preferences are respected throughout their time at the setting. For example, children can sleep whenever they are tired and not at set nap times and they can access a drink or snack when they feel hungry.

Children clearly feel secure in their surroundings. They are confident to approach visitors to talk about what they are doing. They are highly confident to express their wants and needs to staff, knowing that their wishes will be respected. For example, when children ask to go play outside not long after they arrive at the setting, they are supported to put their shoes and jacket back on so they can play outside as they wish. When children express that they do not want their milk from the cup provided, practitioners quickly provide their milk in their preferred bottles. Nearly all children are extremely eager to share their achievements and involve practitioners in their play as they know they will respond with enthusiasm.

Nearly all children interact well together and have formed strong friendships with other children. For example, children work together well to create a garage for the cars in the outdoor construction area. They help each other choose some of the junk modelling materials, and discuss which they can use to create a garage before working together to build the garage. Most younger children co-operate well with each other during play and respond positively to staff instruction. For example, while playing in the sand pit, the toddlers take turns appropriately to place turrets on a sandcastle. They happily share the resources and enthusiastically show their friends when they manage to successfully create turrets, cheering each other along and celebrating each other's achievements.

Nearly all children are highly motivated to explore their environment and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the activities on offer. For example, a group of children enjoy watering the vegetables they had planted, using the spray bottles effectively to spray the leaves and concentrating well while they independently fill the jugs to pour water into the soil. Another group of children enjoy spending time experimenting with water in the outdoor classroom. They have lots of fun trying to move different shapes down the pipes by pouring water in the correct place before sorting the shapes into the correct groups on the tray. Lots of laughter, cheering and happy chatter ensued during these activities as children excitedly show staff and their friends what they are doing.

All children are encouraged and supported to do things for themselves. Older children complete self-care tasks independently, with support provided if needed. Babies are able to practise self-feeding during lunch and snack times with plenty of time and space given to do so independently. They are also supported to wash their hands as independently as possible. Nearly all children are happy to help tidy up at

the end of activities. All children are able to lead and direct their play and choose resources as they wished as toys and activities are set out in a way that enables children to access them easily and independently.

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

Nearly all children make excellent progress from their starting points. Nearly all are enthusiastic when talking about themselves or friends and enjoy meaningful discussions. For example, they talk about their favourite colours, their homes and the daisies they find in the outdoors.

Nearly all children join in with a welcome song and they use Welsh to sing and to talk about the weather and days of the week. They show enjoyment when listening and carry out simple tasks in response to instructions, for example when hunting for butterflies in the forest school area and shapes in the coloured rice. Nearly all children speak confidently to adults and to their friends and have well-developed language skills and an extensive vocabulary. For example, they enjoy participating in conversations when talking about castles, and discovering worms in the outdoors and caterpillars in books. Nearly all children use simple sign language and Welsh phrases confidently during conversations. This is a strength of the setting and promotes inclusion and bilingualism successfully. Many children love looking at books, making their own choices independently and talking happily about illustrations and stories with their friends. They do this naturally in all areas. For example, in the outdoors they look at a Welsh book and enthusiastically talk about the pictures. Nearly all children develop their mark making skills appropriately in both the indoor and outdoor areas. They use a variety of writing tools, such as chalks and pencils to make meaningful marks, such as a racing track with a bridge.

Nearly all children use mathematical language in their play successfully. They talk about long and short sticks in the forest area and the number of different foods eaten by the caterpillar in a story. Many children count reliably to ten in English and Welsh and join in enthusiastically with counting songs, rhymes and activities.

Most children develop their co-ordination well. They confidently run and climb in the outdoors and confidently use glue to stick paper to decorate their model castles. They are confident within their environment and handle resources skilfully. They use balls and space hoppers to develop their physical skills and they engage with all areas of the setting, such as the slope to climb and run. Nearly all children pour their own drinks maturely and help themselves to a healthy snack, buttering their own oat cakes. Nearly all make independent choices about where they want to play and access all areas with confidence.

Most children develop creative skills well and use their imagination in their play. For example, when playing in the forest area children use string to make imaginary fishing lines to catch crabs. Nearly all children use information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately. For example, they use a tablet to take photographs of what they found in the outdoors, and they use the large interactive tablet to engage with counting and sorting activities.

Nearly all children enjoy beneficial opportunities to learn about other cultures and beliefs, through discussions, stories, songs and activities. For example, they sing Welsh songs and enjoy celebrating Diwali and Easter, which promotes the children's cultural awareness well.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners are confident regarding their duties to protect children; they have received training on safeguarding children and their knowledge is also updated regularly during team meetings and staff supervision sessions. All practitioners we spoke with were confident in the correct steps to follow should they have a concern about a child. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Practitioners ensure that children know how to exit the premises quickly and safely if required by completing regular fire drills. Nearly all practitioners have current paediatric first aid certificates and accidents or incidents are recorded effectively and shared with parents. Practitioners encourage healthy lifestyles by providing plenty of opportunities for physical activity and for children to spend time outdoors in the fresh air. They promote children's physical development through a range of activities where they practised climbing, balancing, and taking appropriate risks. Good hygiene is promoted, with practitioners encouraging and supporting all children to wash their hands as needed.

Practitioners interact with children with warmth and affection. They provide comfort and reassurance when children need it and treat them with respect. Practitioners encourage positive interactions using effective strategies. They model positive interactions throughout the day, giving plenty of praise for being nice to each other, completing activities and trying new things. Practitioners use distraction techniques to positively engage children in activities and gently give clear instructions whilst explaining to children when their behaviour is not appropriate, for example when children disagree about something when placing an egg timer on the table. A practitioner calmly asks each child why they are unhappy, giving them the opportunity to have their say. They then decide upon a compromise together, helping the children to feel happy and listened to before they quickly settle back to play.

Practitioners ensure that activities are varied, with a good mixture of outdoor activities that encourage exploration and curiosity, and more focused activities that develop writing, reading and numeracy skills. All practitioners know the children well and respond to their individual needs effectively. Comprehensive details about children's preferences and individual needs are sought prior to them starting to attend the setting and these details are used to plan a variety of stimulating activities and experiences for children. There are effective systems in place to seek additional support for children with additional learning needs. Practitioners recognise when children will require additional support to take part in activities and provide this support as required. They also work closely effectively and have strong partnerships with outside agencies to ensure that children's needs are met effectively. They have strong, well-developed partnerships with a range of outside agencies to ensure that children's needs are met successfully.

Practitioners ensure that information is shared effectively with parents so that they are kept up to date regarding their child's needs and development. Regular information is shared via a secure online application. This includes information about

children's daily routines as well as photographs and information about children's successes and development.

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

Practitioners have an excellent understanding of how children learn through play and exploration. They provide an effective range of stimulating learning opportunities that support children to develop well in all areas, for example planting vegetables and flowers in the setting's garden, and caring for them as they grow.

Practitioners ensure that children have access to a range of purposeful and stimulating learning experience and encourage them to develop a broad range of skills across all areas of the provision. They provide children with a wide range of exciting experiences in the indoor and outdoor areas, for example using a letter in the forest area to encourage the children to look for butterflies.

A particular strength of the setting is the way practitioners ensure that the provision is varied, interesting and stimulating for the children. They ensure that children enjoy a wide and thoroughly engaging range of purposeful play opportunities and they support children to follow their interests. For example, they provide opportunities for the children to plant cress seeds, handle different coloured rice and taste a range of different fruits.

Practitioners plan for children to experience awe and wonder, for example listening to birds singing, making butterflies and looking after the setting's goldfish. They encourage children to make purposeful choices and decisions about their play and use effective questioning to support the children's understanding.

Practitioners provide excellent opportunities for children to develop their physical skills successfully. Practitioners encourage children to enjoy the outdoors through a range of exciting experiences, for example pretending to fish for crabs, hunting for butterflies and developing physical strength and co-ordination through regular yoga sessions. They support the children to pedal bikes, play with mud and develop their balance during their play with increasing confidence. Practitioners allow children to navigate uneven surfaces and to enjoy well supervised risky play in the outdoors. This ensures that the children are challenged to develop their physical skills and to enjoy the world around them.

Practitioners promote children's communication and problem-solving skills well. They encourage children to ask and answer questions and provide thought provoking comments about what they are doing. For example, when talking about learning new signing of words and when talking about butterflies, practitioners allow the children to join in and talk about their own experiences. Practitioners provide children with plenty of opportunities to enjoy books. They read stories with enthusiasm and warmth, allowing the children to develop a love of books and stories.

Practitioners encourage children to develop their sign language and Welsh skills naturally and constantly throughout sessions, this is a strength of the setting as children make excellent progress in their Welsh development. Practitioners

encourage children to develop independence when putting on wellington boots, and buttering oat cakes at snack time.

Practitioners are confident about the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales and they ensure that children make purposeful decisions about their play. They challenge the children skilfully so that they develop confidence to engage with a range of opportunities and there is an excellent balance of child led learning. Practitioners know the children well. They record useful comments about progress during the children's play and highlight opportunities to develop the children's skills further. Practitioners share information with parents on a daily basis, ensuring that parents understand what their children have been learning about during their time in the setting. They use detailed regular assessments to ensure that children are making overall progress in all areas and that their interests are followed.

Environment: Good

Leaders prioritise children's safety and ensure that effective systems are in place to manage, monitor and minimise any potential hazards to children's safety. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place, which identify any potential hazards to children's safety and the steps taken to eliminate or minimise the risk to children. These risk assessments are reviewed regularly, as well as considering the regular reviews that are conducted into any accidents which do occur. Regular safety checks take place to ensure that all areas and resources are free from any potential hazards and practitioners are vigilant in ensuring that areas are cleaned and cleared regularly to minimise the risk of potential accidents.

All play areas are comfortable and welcoming with plenty of space to allow children to move around freely. Leaders ensure that children have a sense of belonging by displaying photographs and samples of children's work on the notice boards throughout the nursery. Playrooms are well organised into different learning areas, with a good range of natural resources and materials both indoors and outdoors. For example, a wide range of recycled boxes, bottles and packets are available for junk modelling and a range of brushes, combs, mirrors and home-made shakers are included in discovery boxes for children to explore. Leaders place emphasis on using natural, calm colours and decoration throughout the nursery, providing a calm and homely environment that is not over-stimulating for children.

Leaders ensure that the outdoor areas offer children a range of interesting and exciting play opportunities that help children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. For example, mud kitchens, sand and water play areas are available for all age groups, as well as opportunities to explore rocks, twigs, branches and planting areas. Leaders ensure that all play rooms have suitable furniture and equipment to aid children's independence, such as low level sinks, toilet seats for younger children and low level tables and chairs. There is also a good range of toys and resources, which promote diversity and help children to learn about different cultures, such as books, jig saws, dolls and posters.

Leaders ensure that they provide a wide range of interesting and exciting toys and resources in each play room. These are of good quality and are appropriate for the ages of children in each room. In the play rooms for younger children, activities were chosen by practitioners and set out ready for children to choose from. All toys and

resources throughout the setting are stored at low level in labelled boxes. However, they are labelled with small print, which makes it more difficult for younger children to choose independently. Practitioners ensure that children's interest in the toys and activities is maintained by rotating the toys regularly. This also enables them to clean and check them regularly, ensuring that they are kept in good clean condition.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders are enthusiastic and passionate about the work of the setting. They share a clear vision for the setting and have a good range policies and procedures in place, which contribute effectively to the smooth running of the setting. All practitioners work together successfully to provide kindness, nurture and care for children. There is an excellent commitment to collaborative work throughout the setting and staff feel valued and supported in their roles.

Leaders have excellent arrangements for identifying strengths and areas for improvement and all practitioners are committed to improving the quality of provision and outcomes for children. For example, leaders identify monthly successes and updates that detail what they do well and what they want to develop further.

Leaders make excellent use of practitioners and resources to support children's well-being, play and learning. Strong systems for appraisal encourage reflection and identify areas for improvement successfully. Practitioners are supported to continually improve their skills and to progress in their qualifications. Leaders make sure that the setting meets the required numbers of suitably qualified practitioners to care for children safely. Practitioners feel valued and supported and leaders work hard to ensure that all staff feel valued and cared for through excellent strategies, such as staff newsletters, monthly well-being raffles and regular kind gestures.

Leaders promote well-being and practitioners' confidence in Welsh through the use of Welsh ambassadors, who provide useful strategies and support for all staff. The Welsh ambassadors develop practitioners' confidence, which allows them to provide meaningful opportunities for the children to develop confidence in using the language.

Excellent procedures are in place to keep parents and carers well informed about what their children are learning and how well they are progressing. Useful daily diaries and regular informal updates are provided for parents. Worthwhile visits to the local community enhances the setting's work.

Leaders and practitioners work effectively with the local authority and respond diligently and quickly to advice and training offered to the setting. This ensures that leaders and practitioners continue to strive to develop all aspects of the provision, Transition arrangements for children joining different areas of the setting support them to settle well. The setting has strong links with local primary schools and works closely with the liaison officer. This collaboration supports the children well as they transfer to the next stage of education.

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)

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
Poor	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required

This document has been translated by Prysg (English to Welsh).

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Publication date: 06/07/2023

Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	**What each means**
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

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