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

# Puddle Ducks (South Wales) Limited

# Station Road
# Raglan
# Monmouthshire
# NP15 2EP

## Date of inspection: November 2024

## by

## Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

## and

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

# About Puddle Ducks (South Wales) Limited

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of setting | Puddle Ducks (South Wales) Limited |
| Category of care provided | Full Day Care |
| Registered person(s) | N/A |
| Responsible individual (if applicable) | Jennifer Rennie |
| Person in charge | Lydia Clifton, Lucy Kilminster, Angharad Thomas |
| Number of places | 150 |
| Age range of children | 0 months to 12 years |
| Number of 3 and 4 year old children | 34 |
| Number of children who receive funding for early education | 24 |
| Opening days / times | Monday – Friday: 08:00 – 18:00 |
| Flying start service | Yes |
| Language of the setting | English |
| Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer? | Yes |
| Welsh Language Active Offer | This service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture |
| Date of previous CIW inspection | 13/05/2022 |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection | 08/10/2019 |
| Dates of this inspection visit(s) | 26/11/2024 |
| No children speak English as an additional language<br>We did not consider the after-school club or holiday club at this inspection. | |

## Summary

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

## Non-compliance

**No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.**

## Recommendations

R1 There are no specific recommendations relating to this inspection. The setting should continue to implement the highly effective practice to support children's development, well-being and learning.

## Main findings

**Well-being: Excellent**

Nearly all children engage enthusiastically when playing in the well-resourced environment. They choose their own resources independently, which enables them to develop their creative and imaginative skills extremely well. For example, they gather a variety of natural resources outdoors to make a chocolate cake in the mud kitchen, adding ice to make it crunchy. Nearly all children are confident communicators. For example, the youngest children use gestures and sign language to introduce themselves. Older children explain their thinking exceptionally well, such as when explaining that the ice was melting because of the sun.

Nearly all children are happy and settled, and cope exceptionally well when separating from parents and carers. Upon arrival, they quickly become engaged in their play, directing themselves towards areas of their choice. They form extremely positive attachments with all practitioners, which has a highly beneficial impact on their well-being. For example, when children are upset, they readily approach practitioners for comfort and reassurance. Children are familiar with the routines of the day, which helps them to develop a sense of belonging and has a positive impact on their self-esteem.

Nearly all children are beginning to talk about their feelings with practitioners and develop sensitivity to the feelings of others. For example, they show compassion and empathy as they share that they are feeling tired during breakfast time. Many children play in friendship groups whilst others are content to play alone. Most children share resources without prompting and younger children do so with gentle verbal reminders from practitioners. Older children play sensitively together, demonstrating kindness and consideration for one another. For example, they ask their friends if they would like to play on the swing and suggest taking turns to push one another.

Nearly all children are actively and continuously engaged in their play. They make decisions around where they play, moving seamlessly between activities. They demonstrate high levels of excitement and sustain their interest in their play for long periods of time. For example, younger children become deeply absorbed in role-play,

pretending to cook dinner in the oven, pour tea and serve food at the table. Babies show delight and excitement in playing musical instruments, looking at picture books and joining in with movement and action songs. Nearly all children thrive on the praise they receive from practitioners.

Nearly all children develop their independence skills highly effectively. For example, they self-register their attendance placing their photograph or name onto their registration tree. A few of the youngest children wash and dry their own hands with encouragement and direction from practitioners, then dispose of their paper towel in the bin. Most children attempt to put on their aprons before using child friendly cutlery to spread butter on their toast. Toddlers attempt to put on their own wetsuits and wellies to go outdoors. Older children cut up their own fruit, pour their own water and manage their own personal care successfully.

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

Nearly all children, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make excellent progress from their individual starting points. Nearly all children make very strong progress in developing their communication and independent skills during their time at the setting. They listen carefully to practitioners and other children and most respond confidently when talking to visitors. Most enjoy stories and listen to them attentively for sustained periods of time. They know how to handle a book as a reader and understand that the words and pictures have meaning. A few children choose to look at books independently and talk about the pictures with their friends. Most children develop their vocabulary well with a few using specific terms to describe their activities during play. For example, when making biscuits in the home area, they discuss the oven temperature and how long the biscuits need to cook. Children who are initially reluctant to speak when they arrive gain confidence quickly within the setting's nurturing environment.

Children have varied and numerous opportunities to develop their mark making skills. As a result, nearly all children use a wide range of equipment with confidence and dexterity and make strong progress in this aspect of their learning. For example, after a walk through the woods they draw pictures of the animals they have seen and label them before posting them to the local care home. Many children enthusiastically make notes on chalk boards as reminders for a shopping list during their play in the mud kitchen.

Nearly all children follow simple instructions given in Welsh and join in with a wide range of songs and rhymes enthusiastically. A few children use Welsh independently in their play and at snack time when they respond to questions about what they would like to eat and drink.

Nearly all children make strong progress in their mathematical development. They use mathematical language accurately in their play and are developing a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, when filling cups with snow or water they describe them as full or empty. Most children count to ten confidently and a few count beyond this. For example, they count how many blocks and cylinders they have used to make a seesaw. When building towers of different sizes, more able children count to sixteen and compare the towers to identify which is

bigger or smaller. Most children confidently recognise a range of two-dimensional shapes, such as circles, squares, and triangles, when printing a repeating pattern around their picture frames in the creative area. Nearly all children join in singing a range of number songs and rhymes enthusiastically.

Nearly all children develop their digital skills purposefully. They use cameras confidently to take photographs of their own work and have a good understanding of how to use technology to discover facts. For example, with the help of practitioners, they use the internet effectively to look for information about squirrels after observing them on a forest walk.

Most children consider how to solve problems and persevere with tasks well. For example, they try different methods to remove 'polar bears' that have become frozen in ice overnight in the outdoor water trays. Nearly all develop strong creative skills. For example, they use natural material to produce imaginative pictures of Chinese and Welsh dragons after comparing their similarities and differences.

Nearly all children develop their physical skills exceptionally well. They use a range of equipment skilfully to improve their co-ordination and balancing skills, such as when they try to stand on a 'scooter' they have made with wooden cylinder and blocks without wobbling. Nearly all children develop their fine motor skills successfully, for example when using spoons to scoop up different powder paints and threading bamboo to make bracelets and necklaces.

**Care and development: Excellent**

Practitioners adhere diligently to the setting's policies and procedures in relation to hygiene, health and safety. They follow thorough infection control guidelines For example, they wear disposable gloves and aprons when preparing snacks, wipe tables before food is served and encourage regular hand washing. Practitioners achieve recognised high standards in relation to promoting healthy eating. Food is freshly prepared and is healthy and nutritious and include a wide variety of fruit and vegetables. Leaders ensure that children have free access to milk or water so that they remain hydrated throughout the day. In addition, they provide opportunities for outdoor play throughout the day, which gives children access to plenty of fresh air. Practitioners follow effective procedures to support children with allergies and dietary needs, rigorously adhering to detailed care plans. They implement embedded, efficient systems for administering medication and managing the specific health needs of individual children.

Practitioners keep detailed records of concerns, accidents and incidents and leaders regularly monitor these to identify any emerging trends and eliminate possible risks to children. Leaders and practitioners have a thorough knowledge of how to protect children and know what to do if they have any concerns about their welfare, taking prompt action where necessary. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leaders and practitioners work seamlessly together, role-modelling politeness and collaboration effectively. Nearly all practitioners receive behaviour management training, enabling them to identify patterns in children's behaviour and manage more challenging behaviour effectively. They have a calm and gentle approach and, as a

result, children learn to manage their own behaviour in an atmosphere that fosters and promotes their self-esteem. Practitioners follow the setting's behaviour management policy consistently and use a range of positive behaviour techniques effectively. For example, they talk to the children sensitively and use positive praise for doing their best and succeeding at tasks such as sharing. They use achievement leaves, stickers and kindness jars to support children to adopt good behaviour and continuously encourage 'kind hands' and 'careful feet'.

Practitioners are highly successful in promoting children's feelings of security and emotional well-being. They keep clear and effective records about children's likes, dislikes, interests and fascinations, which empowers them to support and nurture children successfully. Practitioners are highly responsive to children, supporting them purposefully in their play and asking questions that prompt their thinking. They use children's interests and ideas skilfully in their planning and make effective use of observations to track children's progress.

Leaders have robust procedures in place to support children with ALN. The ALN co-ordinator supports those requiring additional support effectively. They work closely with parents and outside agencies to produce profiles that contain highly informative support plans, which are shared with keyworkers to ensure best outcomes for children. Practitioners promote equal opportunities and diversity successfully. For example, throughout the setting, children have access to a wide range of books, musical instruments and costumes from around the world.

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

Practitioners have high expectations of themselves and a good understanding of child development and how children learn. They have an excellent knowledge of children's individual strengths and needs and use this knowledge well to plan a wide range of stimulating learning experiences that build systematically on children's skills and knowledge as they move through the setting. They use the information gathered from their observations and assessments of children's play to inform their planning highly effectively. They provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop their mathematical and literacy skills such as counting and describing natural materials collected for printing pictures of woodland animals. This purposeful, teaching captures children's interests and fosters their independence successfully.

Practitioners treat children in a warm, friendly and gentle manner and use effective and consistent strategies to promote positive behaviour. They play alongside the children, listen attentively to their stories, respect their ideas and develop children's understanding by questioning them skilfully. They manage interactions, praise children for their efforts with positive language and encourage them to be polite and say please and thank you.

Practitioners provide an extensive range of indoor and outdoor activities that encourage children to take risks and become confident explorers of their environment. For example, when it snows, practitioners encourage children to consider the sounds and patterns they make while walking over snow covered fields and to ride bikes and scooters on icy surfaces. They plan meaningful experiences for children to investigate and engage with the natural world. For example, they create

sensory boxes with natural materials collected in the forest to ask children what textures they can feel and what scents they can smell. These experiences nurture their sense of awe and wonder effectively.

Practitioners plan the use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments highly effectively. They ensure that activities derive from children's interests, and adapt provision to respond to these interests skilfully. For example, after discovering many children's interests in cars, they created an area and resourced it with books about cars and real car parts for children to explore. As a result, children extended their interest in cars successfully into other areas of the setting, for example making cars out of blocks and drawing pictures in the creative area. Practitioners gather the children's feedback weekly to understand what they enjoyed or did not enjoy about their learning the previous week and what they would like to explore in the upcoming weeks. This informative approach is a key strength of the planning process.

Practitioners are good language models and develop children's communication skills well. For example, they share books with children, model how to read a book correctly and discuss the story enthusiastically, which in turn develops children's enjoyment of reading. Practitioners observe play and intervene skilfully to support children's learning. They use questions effectively to encourage children to think for themselves and develop their imagination as they play.

Practitioners model the use of Welsh throughout the session extremely well. They speak clearly and take every opportunity to introduce new vocabulary to children and encourage them to respond in simple words and phrases. They encourage children to join in singing a range of Welsh songs and rhymes. They use incidental Welsh appropriately to give instructions, greet children and congratulate them when they have done well.

Practitioners use a variety of play materials to promote children's Welsh heritage and cultural awareness effectively. For example, younger children explore books that feature a range of people from different cultural backgrounds and older children explore musical instruments from Thailand and authentic costumes from Africa. Practitioners enhance children's understanding of sustainability effectively. For example, they use the bamboo they grow to make bracelets and necklaces and explain the impact of growing their own bamboo has on the sustainability of the planet.

Practitioners make effective use of the local area to enrich children's learning. For example, they join in the Harvest Festival in the local church and bring the fruit and vegetables they have grown to donate to the local foodbank. Valuable opportunities such as this foster a sense of belonging to the local community and enrich children's knowledge of Welsh history and traditions.

Practitioners plan high quality experiences that enable children to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. A notable example of this is through a poppy making activity and observing a minute's silence before placing their poppies around a memorial when learning about Remembrance Day.

**Environment: Excellent**

Leaders have comprehensive and effective policies and procedures in place to ensure that all practitioners understand their responsibilities. They carry out daily checks of the environment both indoors and outdoors and follow rigid procedures relating to visitors accessing the setting. They implement highly effective and comprehensive risk assessments for all areas and review them regularly Practitioners encourage children to consider the risks involved with activities for their own personal safety. For example, children consider the risks that may happen if they do not keep sand inside the sand tray and, during summer months, they consider how to best protect themselves on a hot day. Fire risk assessments and any emergency procedures are communicated clearly to children. Monthly fire drills take place to ensure that children know what to do in an emergency. Practitioners follow highly robust procedures for recording children's arrivals and departures and ensure that staffing ratios are always maintained. Leaders ensure that there are high levels of supervision and practitioners consistently communicate to ensure that everyone is safe. This is a very strong feature of practitioners' work.

The building is purpose built and is of an exceptional quality. Leaders and practitioners ensure that it is extremely welcoming and celebrates children's uniqueness, creativity and successes through a multitude of attractive wall displays where everyone's work is valued. They ensure that the layout and arrangement of the premises meet children's needs exceptionally well. Within each base room, they provide designated areas for children to store their personal belongings and items including their waterproof clothing, wellingtons and artwork. Photographs of children and their families support a sense of belonging and promote children's self-esteem well. The base rooms are large, which allows space for children to move freely and access and explore toys and resources independently. Sleep spaces are calming and relaxing. Bathroom facilities for older children are directly off base rooms, which supports their growing independence well.

The highly enabling outdoor environment provides children with a variety of stimulating spaces for play, learning and exploration. For example, children develop an array of physical skills using large equipment such as play apparatus, an underground tunnel, balance beams and trikes. Leaders have recently developed a forest cabin area and woodland walk where children have opportunities to experience nature. They grow their own plants and vegetables to enhance their learning and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Leaders provide an excellent range of high quality, furniture, equipment, and resources for children of all ages. An abundance of natural, sustainable and authentic objects and materials empower children to investigate and use their imagination. For example, children build their own car from natural and recyclable materials such as pebbles, milk tops and wooden items.

**Leadership and management: Excellent**

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, practitioners and children .There are robust procedures in place for recruitment. They have high aspirations for practitioners, which empowers them to take on leadership roles across the setting and make decisions for the benefit of the children. Their clear vision and ethos lead to excellent teamwork and successful co-operation among practitioners. This creates

a safe and homely environment in which children can thrive. As a result, children enjoy attending the setting and make excellent progress.

A particular strength of the leadership is a clear focus on providing high quality professional development for practitioners. They ensure that all practitioners have access to valuable training opportunities such as those on assessment and planning. This approach to professional development ensures that the quality of teaching is of a consistently high standard throughout the setting. As a result, children make excellent progress. Leaders encourage practitioners to reflect on their own practice daily. This, alongside regular supervision and appraisal processes, ensures that practitioners participate in an effective cycle of self-improvement. There are worthwhile opportunities for practitioners to work together and to benefit from learning from each other.

Leaders implement robust self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures that actively consider the views of a wide range of stakeholders. Practitioners regularly reflect on what works well and identify areas for improvement, sharing their insights during monthly staff meetings and informal weekly discussions. Leaders also consult parents and carers regularly to seek their views about the setting and what needs to be improved. This feedback is used to plan for improvements purposefully.

Practitioners regularly reflect on their own roles, responsibilities, and areas of learning. They regularly feed back their thoughts and ideas to leaders, which further strengthens the self-evaluation processes. For example, they identified practitioners' strengths and interests in outdoor learning, which has enhanced children's learning experiences. They collaborate effectively to assess what works well in their areas and identify ways to  further enhance and develop provision. This teamwork results in high-quality provision that fosters a wide range of skills, particularly children's independence and understanding of how to take measured risks during play.

Leaders manage budgets and grants effectively and prioritise expenditure against targets purposefully. They allocate funding to promote exciting educational experiences for children by purchasing valuable resources, such as a creative and water play equipment and furniture, which successfully encourage children to engage in these activities.

Leaders have established highly beneficial partnerships that have a positive effect on outcomes for children. Practitioners work well with outside agencies including the local authority advisory teachers. This has had a highly effective impact upon the overall progress of the setting and the children in their care. Leaders and practitioners have established excellent links with parents and carers. There are highly effective procedures for children's transition from the home to the setting and from the setting into local schools. For example, parents, carers and grandparents are invited into the setting for a morning to join in children's learning activities. This enables them to get to know the setting's arrangements, and establishes beneficial relationships between them and the practitioners.

Parents report that their children enjoy coming to the setting and participating in the wide range of experiences available to them. Practitioners are very approachable, and parents are confident that any concerns they may have are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

## 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 |

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Publication date: 24/01/2025

| 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.

| Area(s) for Improvement | | |
|---|---|---|
| Regulation | Summary | Status |
| N/A | No non-compliance of this type was identified at this | N/A |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | inspection | |

| 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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