Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Dolafon Ducklings

Ysgol Dolyfan, Dolecoed Road, Llanwrtyd Wells, LD5 4RA

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http://www.dolafon.powys.sch.uk/

The inspection visit took place on 08/10/2025

Service Information:

Operated by:	Powys County Council Child Care and Play Services
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	16
Main language(s):	English
Flying Start service:	No
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	Yes
Promotion of Welsh language and culture:	The provider makes an effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture or is working towards a bilingual service.

Ratings:

Well-being	Adequate
Care & Development	Adequate
Environment	Adequate
Leadership & Management	Adequate

Summary:

Children are provided with appropriate opportunities to make choices, which supports their independence. They appear well-settled, interacting positively with peers, cooperating, and engaging in play happily. Children benefit from free play and confidently participate in activities of their own choosing.

Overall, staff respond well to children's interests and individual needs, fostering a self-directed learning environment. The staff team is caring and attentive, building positive relationships with the children. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in safeguarding children. Most staff members hold relevant qualifications and have access to ongoing professional development opportunities.

The premises are fit for purpose, offering sufficient indoor and outdoor space, including a garden area suitable for play. While a range of age-appropriate furniture, toys, and equipment is readily available, some resources require review to ensure continued safety and suitability.

The manager is in the process of implementing policies and procedures to ensure safe recruitment of staff thus promoting the safety and well-being of children and ensuring staff are aware of their responsibilities. Some documentation, such as the statement of purpose and policies, require updating to accurately reflect current practices.

Findings:

Well-being — Adequate

Children are provided with sufficient opportunities to make choices and decisions about their play. Many are confident to explore their environment freely and move between areas with ease. For example, some children chose to engage in activities on the arts and crafts table, while others opted for outdoor play. Children particularly enjoy selecting where in the garden they wish to play and choosing from a range of available resources.

Most children are settled and happy in the setting. They arrive ready to begin their day and engage confidently in their chosen activities. Children who are initially unsettled receive warm, consistent support from staff to help them feel secure. They enjoy choosing from a range of resources, including storybooks and construction toys. Staff engage positively with the children, joining their play and offering encouragement.

Children interact well with staff and peers. They behave appropriately for their age and stage of development. With support, they are beginning to understand how to share and resolve minor disagreements. Children respond well to staff instructions and are learning the rules and appropriate social behaviour. Children are confident communicators and readily engage in conversations with staff and visitors. For instance, children were happy and proud to show us the conkers they had picked earlier that week.

Children are actively engaged in their play and learning. They access a broad range of age-appropriate activities and experiences. Some children chose to spend most of the in time in the garden, exploring and using resources independently. Some were seen to sit at the table and create their own masterpiece. Other children enjoyed listening to a story. One staff member acknowledged a child's book choice by saying, "Oh, I thought you might choose this – it's your favourite," which prompted a positive response and supported the child's emotional well-being and sense of belonging.

Care & Development — Adequate

Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of how to keep children safe. They have completed appropriate safeguarding training and are confident in their roles and responsibilities. During discussions, staff clearly explained the procedures they would follow in the event of a safeguarding concern. Staff implement policies effectively to ensure children's safety, including maintaining accurate records of accidents and incidents, although these are not always signed off by the parents. They also follow procedures to monitor the number of children present. However, they do not currently carry out and record regular fire drills.

Staff interactions with children are consistently warm, positive, and respectful. They are attentive to children's needs and respond with kindness and reassurance. Staff are familiar with individual children and demonstrate genuine care in their approach. They model positive behaviour and promote the use of good manners, encouraging children to say "please" and "thank you." Staff use appropriate behaviour management strategies, such as distraction and calm explanation, and offer comfort to children who are upset. They support turn-taking and sharing, providing praise and guidance during minor disagreements.

Staff effectively support children in their chosen play. They engage in activities alongside children, modelling appropriate use of resources and extending learning through conversation. For example, staff read to the children both individually and in small groups, children are encouraged to self-select toys and materials and take part in tidying up in line with their developmental stage. Planning with an emphasis placed on child-initiated play is in place which promotes independence and creativity. Staff complete observation and assessment records consistently and are used to identify clear next steps in children's development.

Environment — Adequate

Leaders ensures that the environment is generally clean, safe, and secure for the children. Appropriate safety measures are in place, including locked external doors. However, the kitchen area is not currently safely cordoned off from the play areas. Outdoor play areas are securely fenced, and zoned spaces, including a growing area, mud kitchen and a forest area, offer varied learning experiences. Sheltered areas provide cover during inclement weather, supporting outdoor access in most conditions.

Systems to maintain health and safety are in place. Regular maintenance checks are carried out, and staff complete daily safety checklists. Comprehensive risk assessments need to be reviewed.

The indoor environment is warm and welcoming. Children's artwork and photographs are displayed on the walls, helping to foster a sense of belonging and creating a child-friendly atmosphere. Low-level furniture is used throughout, promoting independence by allowing children to access toys and resources freely. Facilities support children's care needs appropriately.

The outdoor environment is safe and offers ample space for children to play and explore. However, some outdoor resources and play spaces need sorting out and tidying up.

Resources provided indoors are appropriate for children's varying ages and stages of development. Equipment is of suitable quality and supports imaginative play. The layout of the rooms enables children to make independent choices about their play, and designated areas allow for quiet time or rest as needed.

Leadership & Management — Adequate

Overall, leadership within the setting is adequate, and the management team is proactive in addressing changes when required. A Statement of Purpose is in place; however, it does not fully reflect current practice.

The setting has an appropriate range of policies and procedures; however, these are not reviewed regularly. Staff maintain clear and accurate records, including accident and incident reports, which are promptly shared with parents and carers. However, these are not currently signed off by them. Daily registers are well maintained and accurately reflect staff attendance, including arrival and departure times.

The manager has completed an annual online self-evaluation, which includes input from children, parents, and carers. This reflective process supports ongoing improvement and development of the setting. Safe recruitment practices are not always followed, with some appropriate checks and processes missing. Not all staff receive induction training, but ongoing training is provided in key areas such as safeguarding, paediatric first aid, and food hygiene. Systems for staff supervision and appraisal are established; however, there has been a lapse in these being completed regularly. The manager acknowledged this and confirmed that improvements would be implemented promptly. Outcomes for children require improvement, as the current processes for staff suitability checks and induction lack sufficient rigour and consistency. We expect the provider to make improvements in these areas. This was reiterated during the inspection feedback session.

Staff report high levels of satisfaction in their roles and feel well supported by management. Positive working relationships have been established with parents and carers, who receive regular updates about their child's day through online diaries or verbal feedback, depending on their preference. Additionally, the management team maintains collaborative working relationships with local authority representatives, further supporting children's development and well-being.

Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

The table(s) below show the area(s) for priority action and/or those for improvement we have identified.

Summary of Areas for Improvement	Date identified
The service provider does not ensure care staff are appropriately vetted and given the level of support and development required to carry out their job safely. Children are at risk because leaders cannot be sure that they have employed suitable staff.	08/10/25

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

National Minimum Standards

Where we find the provider is not meeting the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care but there is no immediate or significant risk for people using the service, we highlight these as Recommendations to Meet National Minimum Standards.

We expect the provider to take action to address these and we will follow these up at the next inspection.

Standard	Recommendation(s)
Standard 13 (Child Minder) - Suitable Person	All staff receive purposeful induction
Standard 24 - Safety	Fire drills to be carried out regularly and recorded
Standard 5 - Records	All children must have contracts in place prior to starting the setting

Best Practice

Where we think it helpful, we may make best practice recommendations. These are to encourage settings that are doing well to become even better at helping children thrive.

Recommendation(s)
Parents sign all accident forms
Policies and Procedures including the Statement of Purpose need to be reviewed
Lone working policy needs to be devised
kitchen area needs sectioning off so children do not have access

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