A report on

Sunray Day Care Ltd

Long Barn
Waen Farm
Nercwys
Mold
CH7 4EW

Date of inspection: March 2026

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Sunray Day Care Ltd

Name of setting	Sunray Day Care Ltd
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Lynne Northcroft
Person in charge	Emily Dace, Nicola Hayday, Amy Williams
Number of places	159
Age range of children	0 – 12 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	49
Number of children who receive funding for early education	15
Opening days / times	8.00am – 6.00pm Monday – Friday
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	28/02/22
Date of previous Estyn inspection	May 2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	24/03/2026
Additional information	

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	**Excellent**
Teaching and assessment **(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

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 how practitioners use provocations to facilitate child-initiated learning and encourage high levels of engagement and involvement for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Children express their thoughts and ideas confidently, demonstrating a strong voice and trust that practitioners will listen and respond with interest. They use verbal and non-verbal communication effectively to express themselves and their needs, for example, when pointing at items they want to play with. Nearly all children move comfortably around the environment and make confident decisions about where and how they want to play. They select resources purposefully from different areas of the setting to enhance their play, such as choosing to use sand in the construction area.

Children share their interests readily with practitioners and understand that their ideas are used in activities. They have a strong sense of belonging, which helps them feel safe and secure. They build positive relationships with practitioners and feel confident that practitioners will respond well to their needs, for example by encouraging them to sleep when they are tired or eat when they are hungry rather than following rigid routines. Children form meaningful friendships and enjoy playing alongside others. They settle exceptionally well on arrival, and those who need additional reassurance willingly approach familiar practitioners, demonstrating that they feel secure in their surroundings.

Nearly all children follow the embedded daily routines confidently. They demonstrate independence by changing their shoes on their own before heading outside. Additionally, they consistently sit together promptly at the start of circle time, showing both readiness and engagement. Nearly all children engage exceptionally well with both practitioners and their peers and receive genuine sense of understanding and empathy in their day-to-day exchanges. This strong social bond is significant when supporting their speech and language development.

Children enjoy playing alongside others and share resources and space extremely well for their ages and stages of development, for example, when taking turns filling buckets with sand to make sandcastles. Children sit together eagerly with practitioners and their peers at snack and lunchtime, enthusiastically sharing their experiences and ideas. Most children demonstrate good manners, saying “please” and “thank you” at appropriate times.

Children engage enthusiastically in activities and clearly enjoy their play. They explore resources with curiosity and take full advantage of opportunities to follow their own interests, such as using a magnifying glass to search for items in the sand or identifying the best places to find bugs during an outdoor bug hunt. Nearly all children maintain excellent focus during both freely chosen and adult-led activities, such as confidently joining in with songs and rhymes and sitting at a table concentrating intently when colouring their pictures.

Nearly all children access a wide range of toys and resources that effectively support their learning and development. They develop a broad range of skills when engaging with opportunities and experiences provided for them. For example, they climb and balance during outdoor play and use their fine motor skills to make different-sized worms with dough. Children engage in purposeful experiences that helps them build independence from

an early age. They respond positively to practitioners who support them when feeding themselves and attempting to do everyday tasks, such as putting on their own coats and shoes.

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. They make very strong progress in developing their communication skills. They converse naturally with each other, discussing products in the shop and naming various dinosaurs correctly. Nearly all respond confidently when speaking to visitors and enjoy talking about their activities. Most develop their vocabulary well and a few use specific terms to describe their activities, such as explaining 'pressing and twisting' a lemon squeezer and describing a taste as 'sour' when making fresh lemon juice. Most enjoy stories read by practitioners and listen attentively for sustained periods of time. Many children look at books independently turning the pages in sequence and talking about the illustrations with friends. They take dolls into the book nook to read stories to them. Most are developing their mark making skills successfully, making greeting cards and labelling their observational drawings. They explore free mark making with chunky chalks and tissue paper, taking care not to rip the paper. A minority of children recognise letters from their names, and a few succeed in writing their names accurately. Nearly all follow instructions given in Welsh and join in with a wide range of songs and rhymes enthusiastically. Many use Welsh independently during together time when discussing who is in nursery that day and a minority recite the days of the week and months of the year confidently.

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 searching for the Gruffalo's friends in the outdoor area they use positional language accurately to describe where they have found the toys, such as 'on top of the chair' and 'next to the seeds'. Most count to ten confidently and a few count beyond this, for example, when counting how many holes in plastic shapes and matching that number to numerals on a card. Nearly all join in counting their friends at registration time and enjoy discussing the month and day of the week.

Nearly all children develop their digital skills purposefully, such as programming digital toys confidently to follow a track they build with blocks. Many operate a music player to find songs to sing and dance to while others use percussion instruments to beat a rhythm. They manipulate electronic toys in the home corner well, developing a strong understanding of how digital technology affects their lives. As a result, nearly all children use a wide range of digital equipment with confidence and dexterity and make strong progress in this aspect of their learning.

Nearly all children develop their physical skills exceptionally well. They use a range of equipment skilfully to improve their co-ordination and balance, such as ascending the climbing wall and balancing on an assault course. They develop their fine motor skills successfully by using tongs and tweezers or squeezing pipettes to control the amount of water they add to their home-made paints. Nearly all children prepare their own food,

peeling their own bananas, spreading cheese onto crackers and pouring their own drinks. Nearly all are beginning to put on their own outdoor play clothes, and many put wellies and coats on independently. Most consider how to solve problems and persevere with tasks well. They work together successfully to turn taps on and off, and transport water in large watering cans to fill a water trough. Nearly all children express themselves creatively through art, music and dance. They make their own paints by grating chalks with a mini grater and mixing with water and they use these paints to create imaginative pictures.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners place children's well-being at the centre of the care they provide. They demonstrate strong safeguarding knowledge and understand their responsibilities when keeping children safe. Practitioners follow the setting's policies and procedures consistently to maintain children's safety. There is an effective process in place to ensure each child's specific requirements are recognised and addressed. This information is displayed clearly allowing all practitioners to easily access and understand it. Practitioners conduct regular fire drills to ensure they and the children know exactly what to do in an emergency. They maintain up-to-date first aid training, enabling them to manage accidents and injuries safely. Practitioners record incidents accurately and share relevant information with parents. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and ensure they always supervise children appropriately. Practitioners work exceptionally well together, ensuring children receive high-quality care. As a result, the setting meets safeguarding requirements, and there are no areas of concern.

Practitioners actively support and encourage children to lead a healthy lifestyle. They offer nutritious snacks and meals, such as cereals and serve milk or water. Practitioners follow effective nappy-changing procedures and promote proper handwashing throughout the day to maintain good hygiene. They promote physical activity effectively ensuring children spend frequent time outdoors by creating engaging and inviting experiences. For example, they utilise all outdoor areas to provide a wide range of opportunities, including riding bikes and trikes, exploring the newly developed forest school area, and engaging in activities within the exciting poly tunnel.

Practitioners act as excellent role models and consistently manage interactions effectively. They communicate positively with children and actively support their learning and skills development in fun and sociable ways. Practitioners maintain continuous communication, offering running commentaries on children's play and asking purposeful questions to extend learning. They consistently promote good behaviour and manners and provide frequent praise in both English and Welsh, helping children feel proud of their achievements. Practitioners use age-appropriate behaviour-management strategies and model expected behaviours calmly and consistently.

The care and development of children is consistently strong throughout the setting. Practitioners are dedicated and knowledgeable, and they work together exceptionally well. Strong room leaders set clear expectations, delegate responsibilities appropriately, and model high-quality practice for practitioners. Their leadership results in rooms that are well organised and run smoothly. This is a significant strength of the setting.

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

Practitioners' expert teaching methods engage children in their learning and motivate them to become fully involved in their activities. The practitioners have a secure knowledge of child development and an enthusiasm to provide a highly engaging learning environment. Practitioners consider children's interests carefully when planning learning and offer exciting resources to explore. For example, they provide children with a range of unfamiliar fruit, vegetables and herbs to explore with all their senses. This enables children to access provision which builds on their existing knowledge and extends their learning well. As a result, children benefit from the highly effective range of activities and engage in their learning enthusiastically.

Practitioners create a language rich environment. For example, in response to the children's enthusiasm, they converted a reading den into a Gruffalo cave that captivates their imagination. Children use this resource eagerly and share books with their friends enthusiastically, turning the pages sequentially and discussing the illustrations. Practitioners engage in conversations with children skilfully. They continuously ask thoughtful questions to make children think and expand their understanding. They model language effectively, expanding children's vocabulary. They encourage them to describe their environment as they play such as the touch and smell when mixing cornflour and cocoa with water. Practitioners develop children's Welsh oracy skills effectively through regularly singing songs and rhymes and they often speak bilingually to children, especially during their daily routines. They encourage children to respond in Welsh and develop their vocabulary successfully.

Practitioners provide a wide range of resources to support children's mathematical development successfully. When playing alongside children, they encourage them to compare the length of flower stalks and record them on a chart. They develop children's mathematical vocabulary well, for example, by experimenting with capacity as they pour water. They develop children's mathematical skills further through encouraging them to practise at home, by regularly lending useful mathematical resources to parents and carers.

Practitioners plan worthwhile experiences for children to develop and strengthen their core muscles and improve their balance and agility. They carefully encourage children to take managed risks as they play. Practitioners offer engaging opportunities for children to develop their creative skills. Children benefit from a visiting sports instructor and enjoy developing games and gymnastic skills.

Practitioners use their observations of children's achievements to record their progress and to plan the next steps in their learning exceptionally well. They analyse each observation made and identify how they will extend each child's learning to achieve the next steps. They use this information alongside children's individual interests to plan further experiences and opportunities for learning highly effectively. Practitioners intervene appropriately to support children's learning, but are also fully aware of when to step back and observe in order to allow time for children to explore and discover for themselves.

Practitioners enrich children's experiences by inviting visitors to the setting. They prepared the children for the visit of an author and her dog by reading books about them. This enhanced the children's appreciation of books and taught them the importance of caring for animals and other living things. Practitioners promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills very successfully. They encourage children to show consideration for others by sharing their play resources and to join in each other's play. They intervene sensitively on the rare occasions that children disagree with each other, explaining the importance of sharing. As a result, children are developing an increasing understanding of the importance of honesty, fairness and respect. Practitioners involve the children in appreciating the natural world by exploring the outdoor area in all weathers and enjoying the feeling of rain on their faces. They ensure that children understand about the importance of watering plants and they marvel at how plants change as they grow. They promote the children's understanding of other cultures by celebrating special days in the calendars of other countries, and by ensuring that resources such as traditional dress and foods from other countries are available continuously. Practitioners provide opportunities for children to visit residents of a local nursing home which develops their social skills effectively.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders prioritise providing a safe and secure environment where children can play and learn. They maintain the setting to an immaculate standard and implement exceptional infection-control practices that successfully minimise risks to children's health and safety. For example, they ensure sterilising fluid is readily available in rooms so toys can be cleaned when needed. Leaders complete detailed risk assessments and review, update, and share them regularly so all practitioners remain well informed about any changes. Practitioners implement strict safety routines consistently. They keep all gates locked and use internal security gates effectively. Leaders ensure the entrance and outdoor areas remain secure through appropriate fencing and locked access points that prevent unauthorised entry. Practitioners' complete registers for children and staff to ensure everyone can be accounted for. They greet visitors promptly and ensure they sign in, maintaining a clear record of who is in the building.

Leaders and practitioners create a stimulating and inviting environment that actively inspires children to engage enthusiastically in their development. They organise the environment exceptionally well and design it with child-friendly spaces throughout. They decorate all areas in neutral colours to promote a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Attractive displays of children's work and photographs strengthen children's sense of belonging. Leaders and practitioners use the environment effectively to provide children of all ages with wide-ranging opportunities and experiences. They set up quiet areas where children can relax or listen to stories, alongside spaces that encourage creativity, activity, and curiosity. The exciting outdoor areas offer children rich learning experiences and help them develop a broad range of skills and knowledge about the world around them by dressing up in traditional costumes from across the world. Leaders design and develop all outdoor spaces to be both inspiring and fun, and children show clear excitement and eagerness to explore them.

Spaces are creatively designed so children of all ages can access them independently and make choices about their play. Leaders and practitioners maintain a strong balance between

safety and opportunities for children to take measured risks appropriate to their stage of development, such as balancing and climbing on outdoor equipment or using hammers and nails. Leaders ensure all areas of the environment are used effectively and outdoor play is available in all weathers.

The environment offers a wide range of high-quality resources and equipment. Practitioners design each learning area thoughtfully, so it actively invites and inspires children to follow their interests. They create home corners using authentic items and develop investigation areas that includes a variety of sensory materials, such as shredded paper and hay, to form landscapes. Practitioners set up exciting learning areas that spark children's curiosity and use a broad range of natural materials to enhance the environment and create spaces where children want to play and learn. For example, they provide real hair and beauty tools and pots and pans in the various home corners and the mud kitchen. They supply appropriate resources that encourage children to be creative as they paint and make music. Overall, practitioners design an inspiring, creative, and exciting environment that effectively promotes children's learning and development and provides them with meaningful opportunities and experiences.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders have a clear vision and ethos and high expectations of themselves, practitioners and children. The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the service and provides a true and comprehensive picture of the setting and its ethos. This results in excellent teamwork and collaboration amongst practitioners, with a strong focus on well-being, and creates a safe and homely environment in which children and adults thrive. Leaders have a strong commitment to ensuring that practitioners benefit from continuous professional learning and provide regular opportunities for practitioners to reflect on their practice through effective appraisal and supervision. Recent training has improved practitioners' ability to observe children to identify their interests, and this ensures children are fully engaged and absorbed in their activities. All practitioners have a clear understanding of their roles and their personal leadership responsibilities. As a result of strong shared leadership, there is a consistent approach by all staff and high-quality professional interactions with children are maintained throughout. There is an emphasis on promoting a culture of safeguarding and safety at the setting. Leaders regularly review procedures and act swiftly to make any identified improvements. They follow safe recruitment procedures when appointing new practitioners.

Leaders implement highly effective self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures that actively consider the views of all stakeholders. As part of this process, they consult with parents, children and staff to gather their views and use this information to plan effectively for improvement. Leaders reflect on what works well, what could be improved and share this information with practitioners purposefully. For example, a recent focus on developing the outdoor environment has resulted in many stimulating and inspiring spaces.

Leaders have established a range of effective partnerships that benefit children. Procedures for children's transition between rooms in the nursery and from the setting to school are highly effective. For example, leaders hold evening meetings for parents to discuss how they can support their child's transition to school. As a result, children feel comfortable and self-

assured when it is time to move on. Leaders are approachable and have strong partnerships with parents, keeping them well informed about their child's day through an electronic platform. Parents have opportunities to share their children's interests from home. This helps practitioners to gather valuable information around children's learning which they use to inform their plans. The setting offers worthwhile opportunities for families to join in with activities such as a "reindeer evening" when families enjoy seeing the visiting reindeers. Leaders manage budgets and grants effectively and prioritise expenditure against targets purposefully. They allocate funding to promote authentic experiences for children, such as purchasing quality outdoor furniture and equipment to create a well-resourced 'forest area'.

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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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.

CIW has no areas for improvement identified following this inspection.

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

Mae’r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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