Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Seren Bach Pre School

Gurnos Community Centre, Spruce Tree Grove, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 9AU

07860593015

The inspection visit took place on 15/06/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Child Care and Play Services
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	26
Main language(s):	English
Flying Start service:	Yes
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	No
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	Good
Care & Development	Good
Environment	Good
Leadership & Management	Excellent

Summary:

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the setting. They are curious learners, showing delight and enjoyment while following their own interests. Children engage in purposeful activities, and their curiosity is extended as they take part in a broad range of interesting experiences outdoors. They confidently make choices about what they do and how they spend their time. Children develop strong relationships and express their views openly, knowing they will be listened to.

Staff are extremely professional and work seamlessly together as part of a team. They are confident in their role and knowledgeable about individual children and their families. This helps them keep children safe and promote their health and development. Staff provide a large variety of interesting and fun activities, to support children's learning.

The environment is clean, welcoming, and well organised, with best use made of the space available. Staff make effective use of the outside area and there are plans in place to significantly improve outside facilities. There is a varied selection of very well-maintained resources both inside and outside. Staff follow procedures to ensure the environment is safe and suitable, completing risk assessments and daily checks consistently.

The leadership and management of the setting is strong. Leaders are enthusiastic and committed to providing high quality childcare. They have extremely thorough processes in place to ensure that staff are fully involved in working together to provide extremely good care for the children. There is a clear culture of continuous improvement and building strong partnerships with parents and other agencies to support children to reach their full potential.

Findings:

Well-being — Good

Children have many opportunities to make choices and decisions about what affects them and as a result, their well-being is flourishing. They are confident communicators as their wants, moods and needs are fully considered. Children have opportunities to grow holistically and confidently in this child-centred setting. They make choices on where they wish to spend their time, whether it may be exploring the outside area or enjoying role play indoors. Children know their opinions and interests are highly valued and acted upon, and as a result they confidently access activities.

Children are happy, relaxed, and confident. They develop strong attachments with their key staff, seeking them out for comfort or to celebrate success, and bonds of trust are evident. Children are also comfortable to approach other familiar people when they need help or reassurance. They feel secure by knowing the daily routines and confidently respond to directions from staff such as sitting at the table for snack and cleaning their teeth. Children who choose to play alone are content and are soon joined by other children or staff in their games. They sing as they climb the steps of the slide and chat together happily before going down it. Children are provided with opportunities to share their thoughts and knowledge as they discuss a story and reflect on what it was about.

Children are learning to behave very well. They use good manners that they have successfully learned, respecting each other and staff. Children co-operate well, take turns and share. For example, they listen to instructions such as allowing their friends space to ‘wash their car’ before having a go themselves. On the rare occasion it is required, children respond positively to gentle reminders from staff to ‘shall we wait a little minute’ to use a particular resource, to slow down or to use kind hands. Children sit happily together and chat to each other and staff, listening to others talking about subjects that were important to them, for example what they were going to do on the weekend or their favourite food.

Children are motivated and fully engaged in their play and learning. They have freedom to make their own choices and direct their play following their interests successfully. Children enjoy participating in interesting and stimulating opportunities such as painting ice and mixing the colours. They enthusiastically ride on trikes, joined by a member of staff, laughing as they pass each other, waving. Children play imaginatively with dinosaur figures, talking about their size and colour. Other children spend time mixing potions in the mud kitchen.

Children are given time and encouragement to do things for themselves, build confidence in their own abilities, become resilient and solve problems. This was evident as children worked together to wet cloths to wash the cars and fetch more water. Children take responsibility for their belongings as they have easily accessible hooks which are labelled with their name. They are learning good hygiene habits such as hand washing and wiping their own nose at the ‘snuffle station.’

Care & Development — Good

Staff are highly motivated and passionate about their work. They follow procedures confidently to keep children safe and healthy within the setting. Staff have a clear understanding of the safeguarding procedures. They promote healthy lifestyles, emotional well-being and resilience, alongside the health benefits of outdoor play and fresh air. Staff promote personal hygiene practices effectively. For instance, children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating and fresh drinking water is always accessible. They teach children good dental hygiene by supporting them to clean their teeth. Staff carry out regular fire drills to ensure they can evacuate the building safely and are in the process of drawing up a policy to support practice if they need to lock down the setting. They communicate very well with their colleagues to ensure they always supervise and support children effectively.

Staff create a calm, safe and relaxed atmosphere. They are good role models for children and interact respectfully. They sit with children during snack time and chat with them in a relaxed manner. Staff consistently respond to children's interests and questions. They spontaneously offer explanations and extend children’s ideas and understanding. For instance, they patiently encouraged children to engage in a story and those who were initially disinterested, soon settled and joined in, answering questions confidently. Staff have an excellent understanding of children’s needs and how to promote positive behaviours. They have a warm and friendly approach to care giving. Staff consistently encourage children’s curiosity and problem-solving skills. For example, they allow children to try and resolve issues and only intervene if they feel they need further guidance.

Staff are motivated, and keen to promote children’s development and support them to reach their full potential. They operate a key worker system, but all staff know the children’s individual needs very well. They monitor children’s progress effectively, conducting regular observations and using developmental progress tracking systems to identify areas where additional support may be required. Staff communicate with each other consistently and are aware of their individual roles in delivering nurturing, responsive care. Staff attend to children’s personal needs promptly and discretely. They set up an exceptionally good range of interesting activities based on what they know children like and adapt this to accommodate their interests on the day. Staff have completed a broad range of training, enabling them to support children confidently. They manage children’s interactions with sensitivity and skill, kneeling to their level and using calm voices to guide them. Staff use the Welsh language during activities and children engage well with this.

Environment

Good

Leaders provide an environment that is safe and well managed. Staff operate a well-established procedure for the safe handover of children and ongoing security of the premises. They record visitors to the setting and staff sign in appropriately. Leaders manage and monitor hazards effectively by providing systems for staff to complete daily checks of all areas. They have clear risk assessments in place for activities and equipment, and these are regularly reviewed. Leaders ensure that routine safety checks and certificates for the building and appliances are in place and kept updated as required. These include, gas systems, electrical and fire equipment. They have developed effective means of communicating any maintenance issues with relevant parties and this ensures that matters are addressed as soon as possible.

Leaders have designed the space to a high standard and with children's needs at the forefront of the ideas. They provide inviting, well-equipped areas that are light and decorated in neutral colours with many natural materials, providing a calm ambiance. Play areas are spacious, welcoming, and homely, set up to reflect the real world, such as a large home area. Children have access to a cosy room that provides them with opportunities to relax and enjoy sensory activities. Staff have organised the environment so that children have the option to play in the outdoor area when they choose to. The outside area provides good facilities for children to play in the fresh air. Children have easy access to bathroom facilities which also provides a suitable nappy changing area.

Leaders ensure that there are plenty of excellent resources to stimulate the children's interest and imagination. Play resources are varied and highly suitable for the age of the children. Staff change areas regularly to maintain children's interest and extend their skills. There is an extensive range of good quality, real life resources, such as pots, pans, and crockery. Staff maintain a rich environment for play and learning. Some resources reflect the Welsh culture and a diverse society, and leaders told us that this is an area where they have plans to make improvements. Children can easily access all resources as they are visible and stored at their level. This ensures that children can always access developmentally appropriate resources that promote their curiosity.

Leadership & Management — Excellent

Leaders are exceptionally skilled and experienced, providing very strong leadership. They have a clear and inspirational vision for the setting which they outline in the Statement of Purpose. Leaders promote a strong ethos of child-centred care, and this is evident when you speak to staff. They are very aware of national priorities and developments in childcare. Leaders have developed detailed policies and procedures, which are reviewed and updated when required. They give staff the opportunity to familiarise themselves with policies on a regular basis and ensure that parents are kept informed of any changes. Staff maintain daily records such as attendance, accidents, and incidents well and leaders monitor these effectively.

Leaders have a robust system to review the quality of the service they offer. They consult effectively with a wide range of relevant parties who contribute to an effective self-evaluation process and create a culture of continuous improvement. They fully consider and respond to parent, staff, and children's requests. Leaders set high expectations for themselves and their team. They produce a comprehensive report of their annual service review, including their plans for future improvements.

Leaders have effective systems in place to recruit, induct and employ staff. They keep organised records that show that all the required checks and information required by regulations, is sought prior to staff being employed at the setting. Daily records such as registers and staff rotas show that a suitable number of staff are employed for the numbers of children attending. Leaders promote a strong culture of continuous development. Staff have many opportunities to complete an extensive range of training that supports them to fulfil their role to an exceedingly high standard. All staff hold a childcare qualification. They all have current certificates in first aid, safeguarding and food hygiene. Staff told us they felt supported to do their jobs to a high standard and they receive regular one to one supervision. They have pride in their roles and work very well as a team.

Leaders have established systems to enable them to work in close partnerships with parents and other agencies. They seek detailed information about children's individual needs and preferences, including any medical and dietary requirements. Leaders keep parents well informed via secure social media, discussion, information on display in the setting and by regularly inviting parents to join sessions with their children. Parents tell CIW that they are very happy with how the setting communicates with them and keeps them updated regarding their child. Leaders and staff have established links with a wide variety of external organisations and individuals such as health visitors, medical professionals, and childcare support organisations. The setting also has strong links with internal teams across the local authority which supports the leader in the effective operation of the setting.

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.

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)
	No NMS Recommendations were identified at this inspection

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)
Further promote the Welsh culture and diversity in the environment

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