Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Playworks St helens

St. Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School, Lansbury Park, Caerphilly, CF83 1QH

02920864780

The inspection visit took place on 27/02/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Playworks Childcare Limited
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	30
Main language(s):	English
Flying Start service:	No
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	No
Promotion of Welsh language and culture:	The provider is not promoting the Welsh language and culture needs of people, and this requires improvement.

Ratings:

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

Summary:

Children experience positive well-being. They feel happy, settled and confident, forming warm relationships with staff who listen and respond to their needs. Children make meaningful choices, play purposefully and interact kindly with others. They enjoy activities, show pride in their achievements and develop independence through daily routines and supportive guidance.

Staff provide consistently warm, nurturing care and follow effective procedures to promote children's safety, well-being and development. They encourage healthy habits, celebrate cultural events, and support children's independence and choices. Staff plan meaningful activities, monitor progress well, and work with external agencies to meet individual needs.

Leaders maintain a safe, clean and secure environment through effective supervision, daily checks and regular fire drills. Their recent move to the hall provides ample space for confident play, with access to a secure outdoor area. Children benefit from suitable furniture, well-maintained

resources, cultural activities and opportunities to make independent choices.

Leaders manage the setting well, communicating a clear vision and promoting a positive, child-centred culture. They consult children and families, act on feedback, and support staff through regular supervision. Strong recruitment, effective partnerships and open communication with parents help ensure safe, consistent care and positive outcomes for children.

Findings:

Well-being — Good

Children feel happy and settled at the setting. They form positive relationships with staff and approach them with confidence for guidance or comfort. Children know staff very well and feel confident that they will respond to their moods and needs in a warm and attentive manner. They communicate confidently because staff listen to them and value their views. Children have worthwhile opportunities to make choices and influence their experiences. For example, they contribute to 'Children's Choice' meetings, where they decide on activities and select resources for the play area. Each child is given the opportunity to talk with the club leader to share their ideas, and their preferences are recorded. This supports children to feel respected and ensures their interests shape the provision.

Children move freely around the play space and choose from a range of activities and resources. They are familiar with routines and have adapted well to the recent move to the school hall. Many children play purposefully for sustained periods. During the inspection, a group of children engaged in imaginative hairdresser play, demonstrating confidence and strong social skills.

Children interact positively with their friends and with staff. They wait patiently when preparing to go to the snack table and enjoy sociable snack times, chatting with staff and each other about their day. Many children form friendships appropriate to their age and stage of development and show kindness to one another during play. They treat toys and resources with care and behave calmly throughout the session.

Most children enjoy the activities on offer. They enjoy a good balance between adult led activities and the freedom to take play in the direction of their choosing, using the resources on offer. They explore the indoor environment freely and spend time on activities that interest them. Children are keen to share their achievements with adults. For example, several children proudly showed the pom poms they had created.

Children develop their independence skills successfully. They choose whether to have a snack and decide how much they want to eat. They work with staff to establish routines that allow them to access the bathrooms independently. Children demonstrate good hand-washing habits with minimal reminders. They can request additional resources during 'Children's Choice' meetings and feel confident to ask staff for things they need, such as new foods to add to the snack table or science experiments they would like to try.

Care & Development — Good

Staff implement thorough and effective procedures that promote children's safety, well-being and development. They follow robust hygiene practices when preparing snacks and provide a varied, healthy menu that encourages children to try new foods. Staff ensure children have continuous access to fresh drinking water. They also make good use of cultural events, such as *Dydd Gŵyl Dewi* and Lunar New Year, to introduce themed snacks and meaningful conversations about their significance. Staff are developing purposeful opportunities for team games and outdoor play as the setting settles into its new space in the school hall.

Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They know the procedures to follow if they are concerned about a child's well-being. Staff offer interactions that are consistently warm, kind and respectful. They use positive behaviour management strategies that align with the setting's policy. Staff record children's attendance accurately and meet required ratios. They carry out regular fire drills and evaluate them well, ensuring staff and children know how to leave the building safely. Leaders record and monitor accidents, incidents and pre-existing injuries effectively, helping them identify any emerging patterns. Staff maintain medication records, although a small number were not fully completed.

Staff listen to children and respond sensitively to their views. They recognise when children need reassurance and ask how they would like to be helped, which supports them to feel in control and understood. Staff are engaged in children's play and learning. They take time to hold warm, meaningful conversations and celebrate achievements through praise and encouragement. Staff act as strong role models, promoting good manners and creating sociable snack-time routines. They support children to make choices and follow their interests as they explore the indoor environment.

Staff ensure that the atmosphere is nurturing and calm. They create a familiar, 'home-from-home' feel and respond well to individual needs. Staff promote independence by offering opportunities for children to serve their own food and suggest new snack ideas. They involve children in planning activities, which supports their sense of belonging and encourages curiosity. Staff offer a balanced range of child-led and adult-led play, including art and creative opportunities. They plan themed activities linked to the time of year to enhance children's learning and understanding of the wider world.

Staff monitor children's progress effectively by reflecting on their engagement in activities and using this to plan next steps. They gather helpful evidence to support collaborative work with external agencies, including the Local Authority and Social Services, for children with Additional Learning Needs. Staff promote Welsh cultural traditions, and the setting has successfully achieved the Welsh Promise bronze level. However, incidental Welsh was not consistently heard during the inspection.

Environment — Adequate

Leaders have suitable arrangements in place to keep the environment safe, clean, and secure. Staff supervise children well and ensure they do not leave the hall without permission. They see that the premises remain locked during the session, and the doorbell system supports safe handover at collection times. Leaders complete daily checks of the indoor and outdoor areas and review risk assessments regularly. They balance children's safety with opportunities for supported risk-taking, such as offering planned STEM activities that include simple science experiments. Leaders carry out regular fire drills, so staff and children know how to evacuate safely, and they ensure fire safety equipment is tested. They ensure that gas and electrical safety certificates are kept up to date.

Leaders create a welcoming environment that is appropriate for play and learning. They have responded reasonably to the challenges of relocating to the school hall, which provides enough indoor space for children to move freely. Leaders see that children can move confidently around the large hall and choose to play on the floor or at tables. They have access to the outdoor area under staff supervision, and this gated play space is secure, although it was not used during this inspection. Leaders are developing arrangements to help children use the bathrooms independently where appropriate. They see that the number of toilets is sufficient for the children who attend, and private space is available for confidential discussions with parents or for staff supervision meetings.

Leaders ensure that children have access to furniture, toys and equipment that are suitable for most age groups who attend. They choose furniture that is appropriately sized and offer bathroom facilities which promote children's independence. Leaders provide a small range of toys and materials, including dolls, role-play accessories, construction vehicles, board games and craft resources. They offer resources which are of suitable design and condition and are clean and well maintained. Staff use the 'children's choice' system to show children the available resources in the storage room and encourage them to select their own activities. Leaders offer a number of stimulating toys and activities, but the limited storage space means that there are not enough age-appropriate resources available to fully meet the needs of older children attending the club.

Leaders promote cultural awareness through themed activities, such as food tasting for St David's Day and creative activities for Lunar New Year. They provide a mix of natural and man-made materials and some authentic resources. Leaders place great importance on how children's interests influence the purchase of new resources, responding to their requests for doing certain activities and working with them to evaluate their success.

Leadership & Management — Good

Leaders organise the service well. They provide an accurate, up-to-date statement of purpose that clearly reflects the childcare offered. Leaders communicate their aims effectively and ensure staff and parents understand the vision for the setting. They focus strongly on securing positive outcomes for children and monitor progress towards these aims. Leaders set clear aims through child-focused policies. They seek children's views regularly and use this information to shape the running of the setting. Leaders set high expectations and evaluate their service consistently to support ongoing improvement. This results in a positive working culture where staff feel listened to and valued. Leaders also celebrate Welsh culture through a range of meaningful activities and have gathered strong evidence to support the Welsh Promise award.

Leaders complete an annual quality of care review that identifies strengths and areas for development. They gather feedback from parents, children and staff through questionnaires, discussions and the suggestion box. They act on ideas where appropriate, which helps ensure meaningful improvement. Leaders work effectively with other agencies and professionals to ensure the best outcomes for children.

Leaders follow safe and robust recruitment procedures. Staff files contain all required information, and recruitment records meet regulatory expectations. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably qualified and show a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They make sure there are clear plans to cover absences, supported by access to bank staff across other settings within the company. They set realistic targets for themselves and staff, and they share action plans openly with the team and with parents. Staff have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice through meetings, supervision sessions and annual appraisals. They told us they feel well supported and described leaders as approachable and kind.

Leaders recognise the importance of building trust with parents. They communicate openly and keep parents well informed about routines, events and any changes at the setting. Staff share information through handover and phone calls when needed. Leaders gather useful details about children's needs during the settling-in period and record this information clearly so all staff can support children safely. Parents told us they value the regular communication and the information shared during the settling-in process. Leaders maintain strong links with the school and contribute positively to the sense of community, which was evident during our visit.

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)
Standard 11 - Medication	Ensure medication records are completed fully
Standard 22 - Environment	Ensure there is a sufficient range of toys and resources available which are appropriate to the ages and individual development needs of the children attending

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)
Develop the use of the Welsh language
Ensure children are encouraged to access toilet facilities independently where appropriate

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