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

Little Ferns Day Nursery Ferndale

Ferndale Hub
North Road
Ferndale
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF43 4PS

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Ferns Day Nursery Ferndale

Name of setting	Little Ferns Day Nursery Ferndale
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Sian Edwards
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Sian Edwards
Person in charge	Molly Rowlands
Number of places	42
Age range of children	Six weeks to five years old
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	0
Number of children who receive funding for early education	0
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 8am – 5pm
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	25/04/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection	First inspection
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	27/02/2024

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)**	**N/A**
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)**	**Good**
Environment	**Excellent**
Leadership and management	**Excellent**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Develop the outdoor area to provide regular opportunities for children to engage with nature and the natural world

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 the effectiveness of support leaders provide for practitioners personally and professionally and how this contributes to a strong team approach, staff retention and impact on children's learning, for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Children have a strong voice and numerous opportunities to make decisions about how they spend their time. They move confidently and freely between activities that interest them and ignite their curiosity. For example, children in the role play areas choose to chop up real vegetables to make cawl and fill a mixing bowl with real fruits as they pretend to make a cake. Nearly all children are confident to express themselves as they know staff respond to their needs and ideas. For example, babies hold up their arms for a cuddle to seek comfort and older children enjoy sharing story books with practitioners.

Nearly all children arrive at the setting happy and eager to play. They form close emotional attachments with practitioners. This helps children feel relaxed and secure, significantly enhancing their well-being. Nearly all children gain great reassurance from the familiar routines at the setting. For example, babies settle quickly for a nap after a bottle feed and cuddle, and older children excitedly anticipate lunch after story and singing time. As a result, they feel safe and valued.

Nearly all children develop their personal and social skills extremely well. Younger children play happily alongside one another, and older children begin to form friendships. Nearly all children cooperate with others well and understand the need to

be kind, share and take turns. Many children show an awareness of their own and others' feelings, for example expressing their affection for one another with gentle, loving hugs.

Children enjoy their play and learning enormously. They show purpose, curiosity, and excitement as they take part in a wide variety of activities. For example, toddlers in the sensory room express delight as they stamp on images of balloons projected onto the interactive floor. Babies show awe as they gaze at bubbles and colours in sensory lights. Nearly all children concentrate for an appropriate amount of time, responding well to encouragement from practitioners. This enables children to engage in activities, promoting their motivation and learning. For example, they spend considerable time experimenting with mark making on a variety of surfaces in the outdoor area using water, firstly with their fingers and then with paint brushes.

Nearly all children are developing independence and self-help skills extremely well. For example, older children eagerly help to tidy up when they hear the cleanup music, putting away toys with enthusiasm. They demonstrate independence by using the bathroom, washing their hands, and taking responsibility for their belongings. Younger children confidently feed themselves, receiving support if necessary. Older children receive great satisfaction from serving themselves at snack time.

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

There is no report on children's learning. This is because the number of three or four-year-old children present at the time of the inspection that do not receive funded education elsewhere was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners are extremely dedicated in their roles and enthusiastic about the care they provide. They follow the setting's policies and procedures to safeguard children and keep them healthy robustly. All practitioners have current first aid certificates, which ensures that they can deal with minor accidents promptly and appropriately. They record accidents and incidents in detail and share these with parents. Practitioners have a strong understanding of safeguarding procedures and are secure in their knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to dealing with child protection concerns. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners implement highly effective practices which benefit children's health and wellbeing. They provide a vast range of healthy meals and snacks for children including milk or water to drink. Practitioners implement exemplary hygiene routines, such as wearing aprons and gloves when changing children's nappies and to prepare food. They disinfect tables in preparation for snack and are attentive to cleaning areas after they get messy. Practitioners encourage children to spend considerable time playing outdoors every day, which ensures they have plenty of fresh air and exercise. In addition, they regularly practise mindfulness and yoga sessions with the

children. This helps children to self-regulate their mood and behaviour and teaches them the importance of a healthy mind and body.

Practitioners are superb role models. They respond and listen to children's needs and respect their views and ideas. They interact with children in a relaxed and caring manner, which creates an extremely positive and happy atmosphere. Practitioners provide clear boundaries and use a range of positive behaviour techniques effectively. Their calm, gentle and consistent approach to managing behaviour is highly beneficial to children as they learn how to interact positively with their peers. For example, they remind children how to share play resources fairly when playing together. They model how to roll a ball back and forth to each other, showing how to take turns effectively.

All practitioners are highly responsive to children's needs and support them purposefully in their play. They undertake informative daily observations of children, noting their interests, fascinations, and moments of learning. Practitioners use this valuable information to plan future activities and next steps in learning, which ensures that children continue to develop at their own pace. Practitioners obtain useful information from parents and carers about the likes and dislikes of their children. This supports practitioners to gain a better understanding of individual children before they enter the setting.

Practitioners implement highly effective systems that identify and support children with additional learning needs (ALN). They collaborate with other professionals to develop and implement children's individual development plans successfully. Practitioners are extremely knowledgeable about the children and provide invaluable support that helps them develop successfully.

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

Practitioners have a good understanding of how young children learn through play and exploration. They plan a wide range of stimulating activities that promote children's natural curiosity well. Practitioners are developing a responsive approach to planning based on regular observations of children to identify their needs and interests. They note activities that engage children well and provide worthwhile resources that allow children to follow their fascinations. For example, they provide ingredients to make pizza after noting children's interest in making them when playing with dough.

Practitioners are good role models and show children how to use resources appropriately. For example, they model how to use tea bags to make pots of tea in the role play kitchen and how to use chalk to make outlines of adults on the floor. Practitioners model language for children well and introduce them to new vocabulary during their play effectively. For example, when play cooking with children, they name vegetables and ask children if lemons taste sweet or sour.

Practitioners allow sufficient time for children to become engrossed in what they are doing. They identify opportunities to extend children's knowledge and development

skilfully. For example, they discuss where milk comes from during snack times and what types of things metal detectors identify around the room.

Practitioners actively encourage children to respond to questions and express their views and opinions during play. They provide cosy reading areas, where children relax and enjoy listening to stories alone or with others. Practitioners add books to other areas of provision to promote children's interest in stories and nonfiction texts, such as adding recipe cards to the role play kitchen. Practitioners plan a suitable range of opportunities for children to engage in mark making activities, such as providing clipboards and a large chalk board outside.

There are beneficial opportunities for children to develop their mathematical skills while at the setting. For example, they engage in activities such as matching natural items to numbers on cards and counting pieces of cotton wool as they create sheep. These hands-on experiences effectively support children in understanding number and mathematical concepts.

The setting promotes children's physical skills well. For example, there are balance beams for children to travel over and bikes for them to ride, encouraging balance and coordination. Practitioners regularly provide music for children to move and dance to, enhancing their gross motor skills. There are beneficial opportunities for children to use tweezers, pipettes, glue sticks and tongs, which promotes their manipulative skills well.

Practitioners encourage children to speak Welsh and provide beneficial opportunities to develop these skills through their play. For example, they encourage children to count objects and name colours in their play. They support them to sing simple songs and rhymes and choose snack items in Welsh.

The setting promotes the development of children's digital skills effectively. Children freely access mini metal detectors, walkie talkies and pre-programmable toys in the learning environment and use these competently in their play.

The setting has recently developed its outdoor provision to provide beneficial opportunities for children to explore, be physically active and to enjoy stories in a quiet sheltered area. However, they have not considered well enough how they will use the environment to provide opportunities for children to engage with and explore the natural world.

Practitioners support the development of children's spiritual, moral and cultural development through providing a range of cultural resources, dolls and books and celebrating festivals from a range of cultures and beliefs. These experiences help to support children's understanding of people's lives and beliefs that may be different from their own. Practitioners plan activities that promote the cultural heritage of Wales appropriately by celebrating St David's Day and having resources such as flags, costumes, and images in the environment.

Practitioners have developed valuable ways to make regular observations of children's play. They use the information effectively to evaluate how well they are

progressing in their learning and development. This also helps them to identify and respond to children's next steps in learning successfully.

Practitioners provide parents and carers with beneficial information about their child's progress and well-being through daily updates and written termly reports.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders prioritise children's safety. The entrance to the setting is secure, and the locked doors ensure that practitioners grant only authorised access. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for the premises, potentially risky activities, and any outings, which are reviewed regularly. Leaders evidence how risks are managed to identify the value and benefits of allowing children to take managed risks in a secure environment, for example allowing children access to woodworking tools under supervision. Practitioners complete thorough daily checks to ensure that there are no obvious risks. They practise fire drills regularly so that children and staff become familiar with evacuation routes and procedures.

The setting is welcoming, warm, and maintained to an extremely high standard. Leaders ensure that areas provide innovative and varied learning and play opportunities suitable for all ages. For example, there is a dedicated sensory room equipped with an exciting range of equipment such as an interactive floor and wall. The setting has access to the onsite community library, where leaders enrol children as library members when they start, and host stay and play sessions. The indoor and outdoor area has been set out to entice and invite children to play and learn. Leaders ensure that there are a wide range of resources to enrich children's play experiences. For example, real resources such as chopping boards and safety knives and herbs capture children's imagination and enhance their play. The outdoor area offers purposeful and exciting activities and opportunities for children such as construction, reading, painting and mark making, climbing and a mud kitchen. In addition, there is an additional outdoor space that the setting uses at times to conduct enriching activities such as observing wildlife.

Leaders ensure that resources are of high quality and are stored at a low level so that children can choose them independently. Leaders provide designated areas for children to store their personal items and display children's creations attractively across the setting. Photographs of children and their families support a sense of belonging and promote children's self-esteem admirably. There are resources reflecting the diverse society children live in, such as costumes from other cultures, books about different religions and dolls and puzzles that promote inclusion.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders have a clear vision for the setting, which is based on providing supportive environments with worthwhile opportunities to enhance the lives of children, their families and practitioners who work at the setting. This is shared with others effectively.

Leaders create and maintain an exceptional team ethic, where practitioners feel highly valued and nurtured to develop themselves personally and professionally.

Leaders prioritise practitioners' emotional health and well-being and the support they provide is exemplary. For example, they ensure that working hours fit appropriately with family commitments, provide information and resources to help them to keep healthy and hold events such as 'feel good Friday' where practitioners take turns to cook for one another. This approach has a positive impact on staff retention and teamwork and creates a positive and happy ethos where children learn and develop in a warm and nurturing environment.

Leaders evaluate all aspects of the work of the setting well and are highly focused on making it the best it can be. They collect and use the views from external organisations, parents and carers, children and practitioners to develop the provision, staff skills and opportunities for children's learning. Leaders make effective use of grants to contribute to priority areas in improvement plans. For example, they purchased resources to promote children's digital and literacy skills.

There is a clear and comprehensive statement of purpose that provides an accurate picture of the setting. Leaders have developed an effective range of policies, which are shared with parents and carers. There are enough suitably qualified practitioners at the setting and a well-developed recruitment and induction process.

Leaders have devised high-quality appraisal systems that give practitioners the opportunity to reflect on their work and develop expertise in areas that interest them. For example, practitioners have visited early education centres in Italy to learn about the responsive learning environments they provide.

All leaders and practitioners have engaged in a wide range of worthwhile training opportunities, such as implementing the Curriculum for Wales and improving practitioners' Welsh language skills. Practitioners value the support from the local authority advisory teacher and have acted on advice to support them with the implementation of the new assessment arrangements.

Leaders provide extremely valuable information for families, such as daily updates and observations about children's well-being and learning using a social media app. They hold regular face-to face meetings and provide regular written reports on children's progress. Leaders invite families to stay and play sessions, parents and carers complete 'all about me' forms to help children settle in the setting effectively. These are reviewed regularly as children develop.

Leaders have beneficial links with a range of healthcare professionals and act on their guidance effectively to support the development of children with additional needs. Links with local schools are well established and children have beneficial opportunities to take part in activities such as Easter parades and sports days. Teaching staff visit children at the setting and practitioners accompany them on their first school visits. This ensures a smooth transition to school for all children.

Leaders make good use of the local environment to enrich children's experiences, such as visiting local shops, soft play centre and care homes to chat with residents. They lay a wreath on Remembrance Day. These activities help children understand the world around them successfully.

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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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. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

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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