Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Little Friends Nursery

Ffynnon Taf Primary School
Cardiff Road
Taffs Well
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF15 7PR

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Friends Nursery

Name of setting	Little Friends Nursery
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Little Friends Childcare Ltd
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Alison Jones
Person in charge	Alison Jones
Number of places	30
Age range of children	18 months to 12 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	8
Number of children who receive funding for early education	3
Opening days / times	08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday
Flying start service	Yes
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	April 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection	Not applicable
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	27/02/2024
A few children speak Welsh at home or attend a Welsh medium school part-time.	

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 its improvement journey

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 its effective use of the outdoors to promote high-quality well-being and learning, for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Children have a strong voice at the setting and make choices and decisions purposefully. They are happy, confident and excited on arrival and separate well from their parents and carers. They express their feelings clearly, making effective choices about where and with whom they play. Children are familiar with routines and expectations, which helps them to develop a sense of security. They play for extended periods of time, chatting, laughing and giggling together, which demonstrates their happiness and contentment. Nearly all children develop close and warm relationships with practitioners and respond eagerly to them when they engage in their play.

Nearly all children feel safe and enjoy sharing news that is important to them with practitioners. For example, children are happy to talk about a recent holiday they have been on with their family. They collaborate and share extremely well with each other and show empathy and excellent creative skills. Nearly all move around independently and select the resources they want to use. For example, they move sand from the tray into the water area to create slime.

Nearly all children form exceptionally positive attachments with staff who show genuine care and affection for the children. This has a positive effect on children's well-being and, as a result, they feel confident that practitioners will respond to their

needs promptly. They naturally seek out adults to help them if needed. Nearly all children are developing very good social skills and co-operate extremely well for their age. For example, when playing with the musical instruments, they share with others and take turns with the different resources.

Nearly all children are highly motivated in their play and learning, particularly when they follow their own ideas and experiment with resources both indoors and outdoors. For example, children enjoy playing in the shaving foam, splattering it to spray everywhere, pretending that it is snow and then adding dinosaurs and vehicles to create a variety of marks and tracks. They show growing confidence when moving around the setting and selecting resources. As a result, children learn very successfully through play. As they develop, they concentrate and persevere for longer in their play. They thoroughly enjoy their learning experiences and talk animatedly about what they are doing. They show pride when completing tasks, such as chopping vegetables, and respond extremely well to praise when they succeed.

Nearly all children develop excellent independent skills and have the confidence to make the most of opportunities available to them. They take pride in demonstrating their skills as they experiment with a wide range of learning experiences. For example, the helper of the day asks their friends what they would like to drink and takes the jug to them. This has a positive effect on children's self-esteem. Nearly all children help themselves to ceramic cups and plates and serve themselves at snack time.

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, make excellent progress from their individual starting points.

Nearly all children make very strong progress in developing their communication skills during their time at the setting. They listen carefully to practitioners and other children and generally respond confidently when talking to visitors. Most enjoy stories and listen to them attentively for sustained periods. They know how to handle a book as a reader and understand that the words and pictures have meaning. A few children independently choose to look at books together and talk about the pictures. Most children develop their vocabulary well and a few use specific words to describe what they are doing in their play. For example, they talk about the right foods and environment for the setting's pet tortoise. Children who are reluctant to speak when they arrive at the setting develop their confidence quickly in the nurturing environment.

The varied and numerous opportunities for children to develop their mark making skills result in nearly all children using a wide range of equipment with confidence and dexterity and making very good progress in this aspect of their learning. For example, they print with stalks of daffodils to create designs for St David's Day and make notes on chalk boards as reminders for a shopping list during their play in the mud kitchen.

Nearly all children follow simple instructions given in Welsh and join in enthusiastically with a wide range of songs and rhymes. A few use Welsh independently in their play and at snack time when they respond to questions about what they would like to eat and drink.

Nearly all children make at least good 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 filling cups with sand or water they describe them as full or empty. Most children count to ten in English and Welsh and a few count beyond this. For example, they count how many scoops of rice they need to add to a container to make a musical shaker. When building towers of different sizes, more able children count to twenty and identify which tower is bigger or smaller. Most recognise a range of two-dimensional shapes when playing on the interactive board. They recognise repeating patterns and talk about these in their creative work. Nearly all children join in enthusiastically with a range of number songs and rhymes.

Most children consider how to solve problems and persevere with tasks. For example, they try different methods to remove items from blocks of ice and think about how to use a potato peeler when peeling potatoes to make soup. Nearly all develop strong creative skills. For example, they produce imaginative pictures of Chinese and Welsh dragons after comparing their similarities and differences.

Nearly all children develop their physical skills exceptionally well. They use a range of outdoor equipment skilfully to improve their coordination and balancing skills, such as when they cross a wooden beam without wobbling. Nearly all develop their fine motor skills successfully, for example when using spoons to scoop up different materials to fill containers or using scissors to cut materials for making models.

Through using a wide range of equipment, nearly all children develop their digital skills effectively. For example, they use cameras confidently to take photographs of others at work and use remote control vehicles purposefully in their play.

Care and development: Excellent

There are rigorous and robust systems and procedures to ensure children's health and safety. Practitioners have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities and provide exceptional opportunities for children to develop through daily routines. Practitioners promote excellent practices to ensure that children stay healthy, for example by providing nutritious food and encouraging children to wash their hands regularly. They teach children how to keep safe during their activities through considering the potential risks in their play. For example, when children use the balancing equipment outdoors, practitioners explore with them the risks they need to consider when the equipment is wet and slippery.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a high priority and promote children's health and well-being successfully. Practitioners have a sound understanding of child safeguarding processes and are aware of the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. They maintain comprehensive records for safeguarding as well as accident

and incident reports. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Practitioners are sensitive to children's individual needs and support their privacy and dignity at all times.

Practitioners are excellent role models and manage interactions with children extremely well. They relate to them in a very gentle and nurturing manner, praising them consistently for their efforts and achievements. As a result, children are happy and relaxed. Practitioners successfully support children to develop close friendships, manage their feelings and cope with disagreements by modelling kindness and respect. They remind children of routines so that they feel reassured and know what to expect. This builds children's confidence and develops a sense of security. Practitioners model how to share resources and praise children for positive behaviour. As a result, children co-operate and listen well to practitioners and other children. The gentle and calm attitudes of all practitioners have a very positive effect on children's behaviour and interactions with others.

Practitioners have excellent knowledge of how to meet children's individual needs. They observe children effectively and facilitate play that focuses well on the stages of child development. They use this information very effectively to plan provision to ensure that all children make good progress. Practitioners actively encourage curiosity and allow children a good range of opportunities to explore and follow their own interests.

There are very effective processes to ensure that children develop a strong understanding of the need to act sustainably. For example, practitioners help them to recognise the importance of recycling and disposing of their food waste appropriately. They carefully explain how electricity can be produced from food waste. Practitioners plan purposefully to develop children's Welsh language skills. They use Welsh phrases throughout the session as children play and sing songs in Welsh to help children to learn numbers and colours.

Practitioners discuss children's individual achievements as a team and undertake specific individual assessments of their progress. They have sound procedures to support children with additional needs and collaborate extremely well with external agencies to support and promote positive outcomes for children.

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

Practitioners provide a rich variety of high-quality learning experiences that they match well to children's stage of development. They take exceptionally good account of children's interests when facilitating new activities, but also make sure that there are beneficial opportunities for children to return to areas to practise their skills in a familiar setting. This supports children to develop new skills and consolidate aspects that they have learned very successfully.

An outstanding feature of the provision is the quality of interaction between practitioners and children. Practitioners make excellent use of the exciting and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments, allowing children to choose

independently where they wish to learn. At the same time, they support children's learning by playing alongside them and skilfully using questions to extend learning. In doing this, they know when to stand back and observe and when to intervene to develop children's skills. They model language and behaviours very effectively and introduce new vocabulary seamlessly as children play. This creates a purposeful atmosphere at the setting where children are engrossed in their play and learning and have the confidence to take risks and try new things. There are many beneficial opportunities for children to hear and use the Welsh language in their play.

The setting makes highly effective use of visits to the locality and regularly welcomes visitors. These experiences enhance the curriculum and develop children's knowledge of the wider world. For example, children are excited to receive a return visit from a local musician and talk about the instruments and songs enthusiastically. The outdoor environment provides numerous excellent opportunities for children to develop a sense of awe and wonder about nature. Recently, the children have been fascinated by the number of worms that have appeared in the planting areas and, through the sensitive response of practitioners, have found out interesting facts about them. Practitioners provide good opportunities for children to learn about the lives of others at the setting and to celebrate different customs and beliefs in addition to learning about Welsh heritage and culture.

Practitioners have high expectations of what children can do. They have an excellent understanding of child development and know the children's individual needs and strengths extremely well. Through ongoing assessments, they identify very effectively where children require additional support or challenge. This ensures that all children develop a range of skills progressively. For example, they realise that some children do not have the confidence to try different instruments during a music session. They extend this more informally throughout the morning, incorporating dance, movement and singing and encouraging the children to experiment for themselves. As a result, many more children join in, try different instruments and respond to the rhythms and patterns in the music.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders provide a rich learning environment for children. There is an array of valuable and challenging opportunities for them to develop a wide range of skills, especially their independence and problem-solving skills. Leaders and practitioners organise the learning areas extremely well to motivate children to investigate and be inquisitive. They provide a warm, and friendly environment for the children, which is welcoming and homely. Practitioners celebrate children's creativity by displaying their work and photographs of them in their play. This gives the children a strong sense of pride, ownership and belonging.

Leaders have effective measures to ensure the environment is safe, secure, and well maintained, both indoors and outdoors. They ensure that visitors sign in and that no-one can access the setting or the outdoor area without permission. They complete comprehensive risk assessments that cover every aspect of the environment. Practitioners ensure that children are safe and healthy by following a range of clear and comprehensive policies. They practise fire drills regularly so that children and

staff become familiar with evacuation routes and procedures. Practitioners follow rigorous hygiene procedures and conduct infection control audits regularly.

All furniture, equipment, and resources are appropriate for the age of the children, are of good quality and very well maintained. Practitioners keep resources at an appropriate height to enable children to reach items independently. Leaders and practitioners place a strong emphasis on using a variety of sustainable and recyclable materials to enhance children's play. For example, children have access to empty boxes, cartons and bottles to develop their creativity skills. Leaders ensure there is sufficient space for the number of children and there are suitable toilets and appropriate facilities for washing and drying hands. These facilities provide good opportunities for children to be independent.

Practitioners have considered children's feedback and their interests to provide an exceptional outdoor area that provides excellent experiences for children to learn, play and relax. The outdoor environment is an extension of the indoor area, and it is extremely well planned and allows children to develop physically, imaginatively and creatively. Children develop the confidence to make mature decisions about their play and learning. They explore the wide range of areas that are available confidently and adapt resources according to their interests, for example they turn a tunnel into a den and engage in a game of hide and seek with staff. Children enjoy exploring messy play activities with shaving foam and ice. They engage in music sessions in the outdoor studio and are proud to show off their allotment where they grow their own vegetables.

Leaders ensure that the resources provide appropriate challenges to extend children's skills. This ensures that children make their own decisions about how they would like to use the equipment and the risks they feel confident to take. For example, children choose how they want to use the climbing equipment and they confidently ask for support from staff when they feel they need it.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders place the well-being of children at the centre of everything that they do. They have a clear vision for the setting, which they share with practitioners, parents and the wider community. This ensures that everyone involved with the setting understands the high levels of care and education that it aspires to. The setting's statement of purpose provides parents with an accurate picture of what the setting has to offer. Leaders successfully create a caring and friendly ethos where children thrive and reach their potential. There is a focus on children leading their play and learning in an exceptionally creative and happy environment. Leaders have high expectations of practitioners and children. They lead by example and take an active part in all aspects of setting life. This means that, in addition to providing inspirational leadership, they are constantly monitoring the quality of the provision and ensuring that everyone and everything meets their high standards. Leaders consider well the impact of poverty on children's well-being and have introduced systems to mitigate against this, for example sharing resources and introducing a uniform bank.

There is a strong emphasis on promoting a culture of safeguarding and safety at the setting. Leaders review procedures regularly and act swiftly to make any identified improvements. They follow safe recruitment procedures when appointing new practitioners.

The setting's processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning are comprehensive, reflective and evaluative. They are based on first-hand evidence, take good account of the views of all stakeholders, and clearly identify areas for improvement. Leaders encourage practitioners to contribute to all parts of this process and they have a strong voice in the development of the setting. Leaders prioritise areas for improvement extremely effectively. When changes take place, leaders ensure that practitioners appropriately identify the benefits that these are having for children and evaluate their effectiveness. Recently, practitioners have created a softer and more natural homelike environment to support children's well-being and developed the construction and discovery area of the garden to enable greater access to resources without adult intervention. These actions, although just tweaks to the overall outstanding provision, have been very successful and, as a result, children are making more sustained use of these areas and have increased confidence in their use of resources. Over time, leaders have planned strategically to improve standards of Welsh at the setting for both practitioners and children. Although this is an area that they continue to work towards, there has been a significant, positive impact on the quality and use of Welsh at the setting.

A particular strength of the setting is the quality of teamwork and collaboration among practitioners and leaders. There is a strong commitment by all practitioners to continuous professional learning. Leaders provide regular, high-quality opportunities for practitioners to develop their skills and gain qualifications. They encourage practitioners to reflect on their practice through effective appraisal and supervision. This ensures that there is a consistency of approach by all staff and that a high quality of professional interaction with children is maintained consistently. This contributes very effectively to children's high standards of well-being and learning.

Leaders have established a range of very effective partnerships that benefit the children. They have strong links with parents and keep them well informed about their child's day through a computer app. Leaders are approachable, supportive, and eager to collaborate with parents to ensure that children are happy and settle well. They arrange a review meeting with parents a few weeks after a child starts at the setting, which ensures that valuable information is shared and that practitioners are aware of children's individual preferences. The setting works effectively with local schools to aid transition. Practitioners accompany children to the schools they are transferring to, and leaders provide information about children, including their likes and dislikes, as appropriate. The setting benefits from close links with the local community and this helps leaders to provide rich and engaging learning experiences for children.

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

This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).

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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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