Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Little Rays Early Years Hub

The Cabin, Southdown Primary School, Linderick Avenue, Buckley, CH7 2NP

07985427588

Date(s) of inspection visit(s): The inspection visit took place on 23/10/2025

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Service Information:

Operated by:	Little Rays Early Years Hub
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	24
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 makes an effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture or is working towards a bilingual service.

Ratings:

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

Summary:

Children's well-being is excellent. Nearly all arrive happy and excited and settle very quickly. They make choices about their play and learning confidently. Children express themselves freely and are listened to. They play together enthusiastically, interactions are positive, and a few co-operate well to solve problems. Children take considerable pride in their achievements. They feel safe, secure, and respected. Children develop their independence and a love of learning through play.

Practitioners prioritise children's safety, health, and well-being. They implement clear policies and procedures, which support consistent practice and provide clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities. Practitioners successfully promote children's emotional development through warm interactions and a strong understanding of individual needs. Practitioners fully understand the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales, allowing children to follow their own interests and to fulfil their potential through being active and curious learners.

Leaders provide an extremely safe, clean, suitable, and well-resourced environment. They implement and monitor detailed risk assessments. Leaders maintain high standards of hygiene to minimise cross infections. Indoor and outdoor play areas are safe, stimulating, and inclusive. Resources are of high-quality and fully support children's well-being, learning and creativity.

Leaders manage the setting effectively, ensuring good standards through clear policies, strong organisation, and supportive teamwork. They regularly evaluate their practice, respond to feedback, and make improvements. Some Welsh Government initiatives and best practice have been implemented. Annual appraisals are completed for all practitioners; however, supervision meetings are informal, and the records kept are not sufficiently detailed. Leaders develop positive partnerships with parents, school staff, and professionals.

Findings:

Well-being — Excellent

Children make choices and decisions confidently. They select activities which excite and interest them. They communicate effectively and are comfortable to express themselves and their ideas in creative and imaginative ways. For example, they build ramps for vehicles and dress up during role play. Children's ideas are consistently listened to and valued. They are enthusiastic when they tell us about their clay Diya lamps and why they choose jewels to decorate them. They are excited when gathering for stories spontaneously and ask for them to be read to them. Children receive warm responses and are consistently encouraged to speak up. They know their voices matter and that their ideas will help shape activities, themes, and special events.

Children arrive happy and separate well from parents. They join in with others effortlessly and settle very quickly. Children explore their play areas freely and confidently know the routine for registration and snack time. Children have a keen sense of belonging and can access a variety of resources which reflect the diverse world in which they live. For example, they have a safe place to keep their belongings and have books in several languages, in their reading corner.

Children form strong bonds with practitioners and their friends and feel safe and supported. They interact warmly and respectfully when they play and chat with others, creating a happy and caring environment. Children share toys, take turns, tidy up after themselves, and solve problems together. For example, they co-operate to fill a witch's cauldron and complete jigsaw puzzles together. Children ask politely for help and feel proud when they are praised for their efforts and good manners with, "*da iawn,"* "very good," and a 'high five' to encourage kindness and cooperation. Children show empathy, helping friends and respecting each other's space and ideas. They behave well and treat others and resources with care and respect consistently.

Children are highly engaged, independent, and thriving in their purposeful, child-led, and nurturing environment. Their play is rich, imaginative, and meaningful. Children follow their own ideas, for example dancing to music and playing ghosts with blankets. They confidently take risks, jumping onto large cushions and feel pleased when practitioners support their choices, and join in with their play. Children are proud when they talk about what they have created. They show high self-esteem and motivation. For example, they rush to fetch a new puzzle after one is completed.

Children are highly independent and confident. They seek thrills and fun when they balance on large floor cushions and jump from chairs. They wash their hands and wait patiently for a space at the snack table. They fetch their own plate and cup and pour their own drinks. Children show responsibility and problem solve when collecting hangers for dressing-up clothes. They hang them correctly, eventually, and place them back on the trolley.

Care & Development — Excellent

Nearly all practitioners use policies and procedures effectively to prioritise children's health and safety. They do so with great care and consistency. For example, they understand and follow clear safeguarding procedures, and can confidently explain their responsibilities. Practitioners ensure registers and accident forms for example, are managed carefully at drop-off and collection times, ensuring parents/carers are made aware of events, and how their children's needs are met. Practitioners conscientiously maintain a secure environment. They access different areas around the premises using digital keypads, and close doors behind them. Leaders ensure risk assessments are reviewed regularly and when needed. Practitioners perform daily health and safety checks and monthly fire drills. Nearly all practitioners follow good hygiene routines minimising the risk of cross infections. They promote healthy eating effectively, providing nutritious snacks and ensuring children with allergies and food intolerances are supported carefully and sensitively.

Nearly all practitioners consistently use positive behaviour strategies, and when questioned, fully understood the setting's policy. They model respect and kindness, creating a calm, supportive environment where children feel valued and behave positively. For example, leaders warmly welcome children into their office to chat and explore, promoting inclusion and well-being. Practitioners understand how child development affects behaviour. They respond appropriately, giving children choices, gentle guidance, and by distracting them. Practitioners praise children often, using encouraging words like "*da iawn," "very good,"* and *"*bendigedig" "*excellent"* during songs and rhymes to reinforce participation and good behaviour. The children learn from each other and in time learn to take turns, wait patiently for 'rolling snack' and to help to tidy up together at 'Amser Tacluso.' These approaches help children develop strong social and emotional skills.

Nearly all practitioners successfully implement the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. They provide a rich, imaginative environment with open-ended materials that encourage creativity and independence. For example, practitioners facilitate physical and creative play indoors using loose parts, and children create structures, demonstrating how they lead their own learning through play. Practitioners ensure children can thrive in a nurturing, inclusive setting that supports their all-round development. They support children's emotional well-being by responding warmly to their communication, celebrating home languages, and introducing basic Welsh words and phrases into daily routines. Nearly all practitioners plan engaging child-led activities that reflect children's interests and developmental needs. They share photographs, electronic messages and class journals to show others the progress children make. For example, photographs of children creating Rangoli patterns when mark making in coloured sand, and painting with conkers were shared with parents.

Environment — Excellent

Leaders keep children safe, secure, and healthy through well-organised and effective systems. For example, the premises are secure, with clear sign-in procedures for visitors, identification checks, and controlled access at the gate. Indoors and outdoors are well maintained, with regular checks carried out for hazards such as stagnant water. Practitioners told us they check continuously for slippery surfaces and trip hazards. Leaders ensure daily cleaning routines are followed. Infection control practices are robust, protecting children's health after activities and before eating. Fire and general risk assessments are completed accurately, reviewed regularly, and shared with practitioners. Fire drills are adapted for younger children to minimise distress. Leaders ensure practitioners supervise children well and understand how to balance risk and safety, allowing children to explore safely. Leaders create a safe, clean, and nurturing environment.

Leaders make excellent use of the premises, indoors and outdoors, to promote and support children's learning, safety, and well-being. The indoor environment is spacious, stimulating, and welcoming, with well-organised learning areas. A continuous provision which meets children's needs well is set up permanently, allowing children to explore freely and follow their interests. The cabin is well maintained, with good heating and ventilation. Toilet and nappy changing areas are clean, and a safe kitchen space has a partition and gate to restrict access. The outdoor space is well maintained and provides excellent opportunities for exploration and challenge. However, during the visit, children were not observed using it. Risk is managed well, with safe outdoor storage solutions like a bottomless storage drum to prevent water collection. The cabin entrance is secure with clear fire procedures displayed close to registers, and accessible exits. Leaders use their office space effectively for meetings with staff, parents, and professionals.

Leaders provide a rich variety of high-quality resources and equipment that support children's development and inspire play, learning, creativity, and curiosity. Indoors, children access age-appropriate furniture, toys, and imaginative play items such as wooden kitchen units, dressing-up clothes, dolls with accessories, and sensory materials such as a large light box. The environment is homely and inviting, with soft furnishings, ambient lighting, and decorative touches like bunting and seasonal displays. Outdoors, leaders have invested in exciting areas including a mud kitchen, sand pit, gardening beds, and large loose parts such as tyres and planks for building and den-making. Resources promote cultural awareness and equality. For example, the continuous provision included Diwali trays to attract children's attention, Rangoli pattern cards in the mark-making area alongside conker painting, and a collection of dolls with a variety of skin tones, being used on the day in the home corner. This demonstrates that inclusive play and learning resources are always available, not only during special occasions.

Leadership & Management — Good

Leaders show passionate, proactive leadership that supports a safe, well-managed, and inclusive environment. They demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining high standards across the setting. They share a clear vision and ensure all staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Leaders engage appropriately with CIW and notify them of significant events and maintain an accurate and up-to-date statement of purpose that reflects the service. Leaders comply with regulations and review policies regularly to ensure they are followed in practice. Records such as registers, contracts, and signing-in sheets are well organised and consistently maintained. Leaders set high expectations, encourage their team, and address any poor practice effectively. Leaders follow some Welsh Government guidance, for example on food and nutrition but do not adopt all of its recommended best practice initiatives. Leaders reflect on their use of Welsh at the setting. They show commitment by attending courses and by using weekly Welsh phrases, which they display in partnership with the school.

Leaders actively self-evaluate to improve the quality of care and learning in the setting. For example, they regularly seek feedback from children, parents, staff, and other professionals through questionnaires, staff meetings, supervisions, and informal conversations. They encourage staff to reflect on the effectiveness of activities and how well they promote children's curiosity, interest, and engagement. Leaders respond positively to suggestions, as seen in the development of the outdoor area using grant funding. Parents' responses to questionnaires show high satisfaction, with comments praising the homely feel, hardworking staff, and approachable leadership. They use this feedback to plan improvements and apply for further funding.

Leaders manage practitioners and resources very well, ensuring a safe, well-organised, and supportive environment. They follow robust recruitment procedures and ensure all practitioners hold current disclosure and barring service (DBS) certificates and complete mandatory training. Staff files are well maintained and include contracts, qualifications, and supervision records. Leaders actively promote continuous professional development, encouraging practitioners to undertake additional training, such as courses on additional learning needs and diversity, to enhance outcomes for children. Leaders deploy staff effectively to meet ratios and children's needs, with consistent staffing across the setting. However, a deputy person in charge is not named. Appraisals are up to date; however, supervision meetings are not formalised. There is a dedicated team culture and attention to staff well-being. Leaders maintain effective communication systems with parents through accessible platforms, including interactive messaging, educational apps, email, and social media. They work in partnership with the school staff and parents. For example, leaders arrange joint outings during the summer term to support transitions into school. Leaders engage effectively with professionals, responding positively to advice to support children's well-being. However, children are handed over at the gate limiting parents' access and informal

contact with practitioners. Occasional open events partially address this gap.

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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.

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 14 - Organisation	Ensure there is a named deputy who is able to take charge in the absence of the person in charge.

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)
Consider giving children unrestricted access to the secure outdoor play area.
Review current practices for staff supervision and annual appraisal by referring to guidance provided by 'Social Care Wales'.

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