

Vale Play Team



Palmerston Community Learning Centre, Cadoc Crescent, Barry, CF63 2NT



01446 704809

Date(s) of inspection visit(s): The inspection visits for this service took place between 19/08/2025 and 01/09/2025

Service Information:

Operated by: Vale of Glamorgan Council Child Care and Play Services

Care Type: Children's Day Care

Registered places: 100

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 service 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

Excellent

Summary:

Children are very content and settled at this setting. They have excellent opportunities to develop their skills, and they thoroughly enjoy their play. Children are very familiar with those who care for them and eagerly invite them into their play. They have highly developed independence and problem-solving skills in line with their age and stage of development.

Playworkers have an exceptional understanding of their role and fully implement policies and procedures to promote children's personal well-being, health and safety. They consistently promote positive outcomes for all children through their knowledge, providing a highly nurturing and child-led setting. Staff show a genuine passion and commitment to their roles and responsibilities.

Leaders ensure the environment is extremely safe, clean, and well maintained. There is ample space and a wide range of high-quality resources. The setting is inclusive and accessible, with areas adapted to meet all needs. The environment is regularly reviewed and kept to a very high

standard.

Leaders demonstrate excellent oversight and set very high standards for the service. They ensure all policies and records are current and followed. Staff are well supported and understand their roles. Leaders actively seek feedback and work closely with families and professionals to achieve the best possible outcomes for all involved.

Findings:



Well-being

Excellent

Children are at the heart of this setting and confidently interact with both staff, their friends and the environment around them. They have many choices, such as what to play with or whether to play outdoors, in the main hall or the craft room. Children decide whether to work independently or with adult support. In the craft room, some followed a playworker's guided activity, while others chose to use the available materials to create their own projects. Children know that playworkers listen to their requests and ideas. For instance, when children asked a playworker to participate in a game of hide and seek, they responded and enthusiastically joined the activity.

Children are happy, very settled, and interact well as they enthusiastically take part in activities. Most children arrive accompanied by parents at the start of each session, while a small number arrive independently. Although children are allowed to depart at their discretion, all chose to stay until the end of the session, which leaders told us is typical practice. Children establish new friendships and build strong relationships with playworkers. Children with additional learning needs receive targeted support and highly effective guidance from kind and patient staff. This ensures all children can participate in activities and enables them to explore various areas of play, based on their interests. As a result, children experience an extremely strong sense of well-being and belonging.

Children of all ages interact and play together. Many demonstrate thoughtful awareness of the needs of others. Older children help and guide their younger friends, and children of all ages work well together during group activities. For example, they work together on craft projects, like building fairy houses and enjoy playing together as a group when doing sporting activities such as football. Children are confident to engage with visitors, like us and share information about themselves and what they like to do.

Children thoroughly enjoy their play and learning. They are very excited about the play activities provided and those they create for themselves. Children loved creating tree swings and hammocks from nets while outdoors. We saw children talking with each other about their creations and we saw them dreaming up plans for making larger hammocks in the future. Children show a strong sense of pride in what they achieve. When their parents arrived to collect them, they eagerly presented their projects and spoke with excitement about what they had accomplished.

Children develop independence and individual skills according to their age and stage of development. They confidently request help when needed, such as during meals or when using the toilet. Many show respect for the setting by helping tidy up and assisting with simple cleaning task such as sweeping the floor.



Care & Development

Excellent

Playworkers fully understand and expertly implement policies to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of children. They follow robust plans to support children's medical conditions and there are enough first aid qualified playworkers to meet the required ratio. Playworkers have a thorough understanding of child protection procedures and responded well to scenarios discussed during the inspection. They are aware of the safeguarding policy and their duty to report concerns to the designated safeguarding officer. We saw playworkers effectively supervise children when climbing trees and making hammocks. They asked children to consider their next steps and encouraged them to reflect on their actions asking questions such as "*how does that feel to you?*" and praising them for their efforts. Playworkers are skilled in teaching children how to keep safe whilst taking risks in their play, considering their own wellbeing and of others. As a result, children can make decisions independently and are developing an understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Playworkers have an exemplary understanding of the behaviour management policy and consistently implement positive strategies. They consistently collaborate effectively as a team to apply positive behaviour interventions as needed. They are responsive to the individual needs of children and support them accordingly. For example, when a child becomes upset, a playworker skilfully steps in and uses their prior knowledge of the child to distract and support them to calmly deal with the situation. Playworkers know the children extremely well and are confident in anticipating when a child may start to feel uneasy, over excited or anxious. Whilst children are playing, playworkers show real interest in what the children are doing. They give instructions calmly and offer lots of praise and support. We saw playworkers join in role-play games, which generated lots of giggles and laughter whilst everyone had fun together. Their interactions are always warm, caring, and show genuine understanding and kindness towards the children.

Playworkers ensure children are at the centre of their own play and learning experiences. They observe children as they play and identify strengths and areas for individual development effectively. Playworkers then use this information purposefully to ensure activities and experiences are interesting and relevant to each child. Playworkers ensure children can access inclusive play provision that enables them to participate in activities and worthwhile experiences. For example, a sports coach is always present at the setting to ensure children have access to a variety of different sports activities including football, tennis and badminton. Playworkers work closely with the children's families to provide care in a relaxing and safe environment away from home.



Environment

Excellent

Leaders take clear and proactive steps to ensure the environment remains safe and secure for all children. They carry out thorough risk assessments across all areas, including indoor rooms, hygiene facilities, and outdoor spaces, acting promptly to address any identified issues.

Playworkers complete daily safety checks before children arrive, and report concerns immediately. Leaders manage access to the premises effectively by using temporary fencing to section off the car park and keeping gates closed to prevent unauthorised entry. They maintain the building to a high standard, keeping it clean, hazard-free, and suitable for children with a wide range of needs. They provide a hygiene room with a changing bed and hoist to support children who require personal care. Leaders provide an environment where children are encouraged to explore freely, including climbing trees and building dens, while maintaining appropriate boundaries. These actions show that leaders prioritise children's safety while supporting their freedom to play.

Leaders design and organise the environment to meet the diverse needs of all children. They create a welcoming and inclusive space with clearly defined areas for different types of play and rest. Indoors, they provide a craft room, a main hall with small world play and construction materials, along with a cosy quiet area with quilts and pillows. Leaders furnish the setting with child-sized tables and chairs and arrange the layout to promote independence and comfort. Outdoors, they enable children to move freely between spaces, including a large yard with water play stations, a shaded sandpit and a field set up for sports. Leaders enhance the outdoor area with blackboards, hammocks, and den-building materials, offering a wide range of sensory and physical play opportunities. They adapt the environment in response to children's interests and needs, ensuring it remains flexible, accessible, and developmentally appropriate.

Leaders provide a wide range of high-quality, age-appropriate resources that support children's play, learning, and development. They regularly check all equipment for safety and cleanliness and replace damaged items promptly. Indoors, they offer materials for craft and junk modelling, magnetic building shapes, puppets, and themed activities. Outdoors, they supply pallets with hoses and funnels for water play, musical stations made from pots and pans, scooters, large blocks, and parachutes. They encourage creative use of natural and recycled materials, such as fabric strips for skipping ropes and paper bags for imaginative play. Leaders use funding effectively to enhance the provision and ensure resources reflect children's interests and abilities. These efforts result in a stimulating, inclusive environment that supports children's development across all areas of learning.



Leadership & Management

Excellent

Leadership and management of the service is excellent. Leaders provide strong, consistent, and inclusive leadership that sets high expectations for the quality of care and play. They communicate a clear vision based on children's rights, inclusion, and play-based learning, which is evident throughout the setting. The Statement of Purpose is detailed, accurate, and regularly reviewed to reflect the service provided. Leaders ensure the setting complies with regulations and national minimum standards. They promote a positive culture where playworkers feel valued and where children's wellbeing is central to all decisions. Leaders maintain clear records and ensure policies are up to date and consistently implemented.

Leaders use self-evaluation as a meaningful and ongoing process to drive improvement. They complete a detailed annual Quality of Care review, which includes feedback from children, parents, and professionals. They act on this feedback to make improvements, such as introducing 'Family Friday' sessions and visual guides to support transitions for new families. Leaders also use reflective tools like the 'Wellbeing Wheel' and daily debriefs to monitor and improve practice. They use funding strategically to enhance the environment, securing grants to improve outdoor play areas and purchase new equipment.

Leaders manage staff and resources exceptionally well. They ensure all playworkers and volunteers receive a thorough induction and complete mandatory training, including safeguarding, first aid, and disability inclusion. Despite the casual nature of the workforce, leaders maintain strong communication through daily briefings, wellbeing check-ins, and team-building sessions. Playworkers report feeling supported and valued, which contributes to a positive and consistent experience for children. Leaders deploy playworkers effectively to meet children's needs and maintain safe ratios. These actions demonstrate a high level of organisation, foresight, and commitment to quality.

Leaders build and maintain strong partnerships with families, professionals, and the wider community. They work closely with health and education services to ensure children receive the support they need. They communicate regularly with parents and carers, using a range of methods including surveys, suggestion boxes, and informal conversations. Parental feedback is overwhelmingly positive. One parent commented, *"My child absolutely loves coming to playscheme. Everybody makes them feel really comfortable and understands them."* Another said, *"Such great help for parents during the long summer holidays."* Leaders also collaborate with local organisations to enhance the play offer and access additional resources, such as healthy food initiatives and inclusive play projects. These partnerships significantly strengthen the quality and inclusivity of the service and ensure children and families feel supported and involved.

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

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