Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School

Nant-y-cwm Rudolf Steiner School
Llanycefn
Clynderwen
SA66 7QJ



Date Inspection Completed

23/09/2024

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About Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School
Registered places	50
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	This is a post registration inspection.
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	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.

Well-being	**Excellent**
Care and Development	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and Management	**Good**

For further information on ratings, please see the end of this report

Summary

Children have a very strong voice and communicate confidently with each other and with the staff. They develop strong relationships and express their views openly, knowing they will be listened to. Children are extremely happy and make purposeful choices and decisions independently.

Staff promote children's well-being purposefully. They understand and implement policies and procedures to keep children safe. They are qualified, knowledgeable, kind and very caring towards children, providing a nurturing and child-led setting. Staff show a genuine passion for their roles and the ethos of their approach.

People who run the service have effective measures in place to ensure the environment is safe and secure. However, not all safety certificates have been renewed in a timely manner. They provide children with a range of natural resources indoors. People who run the setting offer an exciting outdoor space in which children are free to explore and discover. However, the outdoor areas require some attention to reach its full potential.

People who run the service have efficient and clear policies and procedures in place. They monitor and review their service regularly. People who run the service ensure staff are suitable to work with children and carry out meaningful professional development. They have developed positive relationships with parents.

Well-being Excellent

Children have a very strong voice and their opinions and interests are highly valued and acted upon. At snack time children are given the option of where they would like to sit and they all confidently choose their seats at the table. They sit together as a family to have their lunch and have many interesting conversations about their weekend. Children have many opportunities to make choices and decisions such as choosing where and what to play with when outdoors. For example, some children chose to play hide and seek while others sat on a tree trunk and listened to the calming river.

Children are extremely happy and engaged and have a strong sense of belonging. They have formed close relationships with their peers and staff and are familiar with all routines and rhythms of their day. Their feelings and needs are acknowledged and valued, and we observed very strong bonds of affection and attachment. For example, children are hugged and reassured when needed and supported in a gentle and caring way.

Interactions between children and staff are consistently stimulating and children cooperate enthusiastically. Children express empathy and care towards each other and listen carefully, responding and communicating with affection. For example, one child made space for his friend to sit during storytelling, smiling at him when he made himself comfortable. They are fully engaged and show respect for others and to the setting. A group of children played with saucepans and jugs, filling them with sand, mud and water, and asked each other *"what would you like in your potion?"* and *"thank you"* when resources were shared.

Children thoroughly enjoy their play and learning and are immersed in the exciting opportunities that are available to them. Children explored the autumn leaves responding with, *"look at that colour… that's a different shade".* Children demonstrate excellent physical skills through managing different gradients and slopes in the outdoors. They experience a wide range of learning opportunities that fully promote their all-round development as they follow their own instincts, ideas and interests. Children enjoy interactive storytelling sessions of enchanting fairy tales that are performed by the staff. They are fully engrossed and absorbed in the magic of the tales, the simplicity of the natural resources and the cosy atmosphere.

Children are independent and we saw them competently wash and dry their hands in preparation for lunch and when collecting the china teacups and bowls from the table. Children problem solve successfully and are supported when making decisions. For example, we saw one child hold onto another for balance whilst stretching to reach the tree swing. Under the supervision of staff, children are completely independent in their ability to be curious and explore further. Children feel great self-esteem and pride as a result of their success in play and discovery.

Care and Development — Good

Staff are highly motivated and are passionate about their work. They have a good understanding of how to keep children safe and healthy within their setting. They are knowledgeable around the children's allergies, dietary requirements and medical needs. Staff have a clear understanding of the safeguarding procedures. They complete records relating to accidents, promptly sharing these with parents. Staff champion all round healthy lifestyles. For example, they promote healthy eating, emotional well-being and resilience, alongside the health benefits of being immersed in nature with daily outdoor play and fresh air. Staff regularly practice fire drills and evaluate each evacuation. Staff have excellent relationships with their colleagues and communicate very well with each other; this ensures they supervise and support children effectively at all times.

Staff have a good understanding of the children's needs and how to promote positive behaviours. They treat children kindly and with a great deal of dignity and respect. Staff consistently encourage children's curiosity and problem solving skills. For example, they allow children to try and resolve their own conflict and only intervene if they feel they need further guidance. Therefore, children develop an understanding of why it is important to listen, follow instructions and share, as opposed to it being an external rule imposed upon them. All staff are very good role models, they take time to explain and give reasons for their expectations, which impacts the way children show empathy towards each other and compassion for the world around them. Their soft approach works most of the time and there are some occasions where staff are aware of the need for more clear and direct instruction.

Staff have sound knowledge of their setting's approach, providing children with creative and artistic learning opportunities. Most staff have the relevant childcare qualifications and plan suitable activities to develop a range of the children's skills in their play. Staff know the children well and are familiar with their likes and dislikes. Staff will arrange home visits prior to the children starting at the setting and this supports the transition from home to the setting. They also use this knowledge to meet children's interests and needs effectively. Children's development and learning are documented in individual profiles which is based on cross curricula blocks, first hand experiences and child focused activities.

Environment — Good

People who run the setting ensure the environment is safe, secure, and well maintained indoors. They complete detailed risk assessments where potential risks are considered and carefully monitored in all aspects of children's play, activities and the environment. They complete and review fire risk assessments and communicate emergency procedures clearly to all relevant people. People who run the setting carry out fire drills regularly and evaluate these accordingly. However, safety certificates were not renewed in a timely manner but during the course of the inspection, evidence was shared of future booked appointments.

People who run the setting organise the environment well so that it provides a good range of play opportunities suitable for the mixed age ranges cared for. They offer premises, which are welcoming, warm, and accessible to all. People who run the setting provide buildings which are interesting, unique and fully meet the needs and the ethos of the setting. Their indoor areas provide a calming and carefully planned sensory environment with muted colours and natural materials. They use as much natural light within the setting as possible and have introduced cosy areas with soft lighting which creates a relaxed and magical atmosphere. Both large outdoor spaces of the setting are safe and provide exciting opportunities for extensive learning and development. However, these spaces require some extra attention in order to reach their full potential. For example, there were areas that had not been cleared and other areas that lacked resources. Children enjoy exploring the woodland area where they can fully appreciate the changing seasons and nature.

People who run the setting ensure all children can access good quality and a broad variety of age-appropriate furniture, toys, and equipment indoors to stimulate interest and imagination. They ensure children can access natural and loose play materials to explore. People who run the setting offer resources which are stored at low levels and many of which are real life objects. They ensure they provide children with authentic and open-ended resources that enable them to lead their own play. People who run the setting are successfully implementing an educational approach which prioritises creativity and holistic development.

Leadership and Management — Good

The setting has seen significant change of leadership and management since registering in 2023, and are now entering a period of stability. People who run the setting have a strong and clear vision. They maintain and share an up-to-date effective statement of purpose that accurately reflects the service provided and meets the National Minimum Standards (NMS). They have a wide range of clear, worthwhile policies which they review annually and ensure these are largely implemented in practice. People who run the setting ensure the required records are accurately kept, including contracts, accidents, and medication records, which are shared with parents. They ensure these records are monitored regularly with action taken if necessary. Staff told us how much they enjoy working at the setting and their pride and enthusiasm was evident throughout the inspection visit.

The setting is currently in the middle of a transition of leadership and management. During the inspection visit, the people who run the setting shared their vision for the service. They explained how they will access parent and child feedback, action and development plans and how this will inform their next quality of care report.

People who run the setting follow a safe recruitment process to safeguard children. They have satisfactory systems in place to update suitability checks as required. People who run the setting implement an appropriate induction procedure for new staff. The performance management process is good and encourages staff to consider their own practice as individuals and as part of a mentoring arrangement. This system encourages staff to work in pairs and reflect on their job satisfaction, priorities and self-observation. Findings of these mentoring sessions are fed back to management and inform supervisions and longer term appraisal targets. People who run the setting record children’s actual times of attendance and ensure staff are deployed well to ensure staffing ratios are met and often exceeded. Staff responses were positive and they said they felt supported and listened to.

People who run the setting ensure that communication and engagement systems with parents are good. They keep parents informed, using messages and verbal feedback at the end of the session, along with regular individual and group parent meetings. Feedback from parents was very good, they told us they feel supported, the setting is flexible, and staff are approachable. People who run the setting are working on improving links with the community by holding summer classes, seasonal fairs and outdoor workshops.

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.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this	N/A

	inspection	

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.

National Minimum Standards	
Standard	Recommendation(s)
Standard 24 - Safety	To ensure safety certificates are renewed in a timely manner.

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.

Best Practice
Recommendation(s)
To improve the outdoor areas to further promote learning and development.

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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