Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Camau Cyntaf - First Steps Pontypridd

Camau Cyntaf - First Steps Nursery, Unit 6 Maritime Offices, Woodland Terrace, Pontypridd, CF37 1DZ

01443406831

https://www.firststeps.wales

The inspection visit took place on 09/06/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Camau Cyntaf I Ddysgu C.B.C
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	40
Main language(s):	English
Flying Start service:	Yes
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	No
Promotion of Welsh language and culture:	The provider is not promoting the Welsh language and culture needs of people, and this requires improvement.

Ratings:

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

Summary:

Children are extremely happy and settled in the setting. They receive nurturing, responsive care which helps them feel very safe, secure and valued. Children thoroughly enjoy a wide range of engaging play and learning opportunities that support their overall development and growing independence. They form excellent relationships with their peers and staff and interact with others with confidence and enthusiasm.

Staff show kindness, patience and sensitivity in their interactions with children, providing comfort and reassurance whenever needed. They know the children exceptionally well, enabling them to respond effectively to individual needs and preferences. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to promote children's safety, health and wellbeing.

Leaders provide an extremely welcoming, spacious and secure environment that supports children's wellbeing and development. A variety of high-quality play areas and rich resources

encourage children to explore, learn and engage in meaningful play. The outdoor area is used alongside the indoor provision to provide rich opportunities for all-round development.

Leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the service and manage the setting exceedingly well, creating a well-organised and positive environment. They support and develop staff to achieve high standards of practice through robust recruitment and ongoing guidance. Strong partnerships with families and the wider community enhance children's experiences, and parents value the quality of care and support provided.

Findings:

Well-being — Excellent

Children are strong communicators. They are confident in making their own choices about what they want to do and where they want to play, selecting activities which stimulate and interest them. Children's opinions and interests are highly valued and acted upon and we saw their contributions included in the weekly planning. Children use their voice to communicate their needs in their own way. For example, we saw babies use sound and gesture to tell staff they wanted more snack. All forms of communication are recognised and valued.

Children are extremely happy, settled and relaxed. They benefit from consistent staff who know them very well, building affectionate bonds and developing positive attachments. Children receive lots of attention from staff and they interact very well with them. They clearly have a strong sense of belonging, forming strong relationships and making friends. Children and babies cope well with separation from their parents and carers on arrival and eagerly begin their play.

Children engage extremely positively with one another and benefit from many opportunities to strengthen their social skills. For example, we saw children pick up colourful scarves and dance with them, handing them out to others so they could join in. Other children interact quietly, smiling and gesturing as they play. They are beginning to show an awareness of the feelings of others. For example, when one child was unhappy not to sit where they wanted, another child gently rubbed their back to make them feel better. Children respond well to instructions and take pride in their achievements, beaming when staff praise their efforts or recognise their accomplishments.

Children are enthusiastic, curious learners who thoroughly enjoy their play. They fully absorb themselves in the provision, clearly enjoying the experiences available to them. We saw one child scooping up the shaving foam and clapping their hands to make it 'snow'. Children have access to a careful balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. They constantly laugh, smile and chatter during their play. Children experience a range of play activities both indoors and out, which promote their all-round development.

Children demonstrate a strong level of independence throughout the session. Babies are able to feed themselves at snack time and older children serve themselves and pour their own drinks. Children are encouraged to manage their personal needs and develop good hygiene habits through wiping their nose, putting on their coat and washing their hands at the sink. Nearly all children remaining purposefully engaged in their play without the need for frequent adult support.

Care & Development — Excellent

Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children safe and healthy. They fully understand and consistently implement their policies and procedures around healthy lifestyles, personal safety and well-being. Staff speak with confidence about the procedures they follow should they have a concern about a child, with robust safeguarding arrangements in place. They have gained the Healthy Pre-School award and offer a range of healthy foods at mealtimes. Staff are clear about the systems they have in place when managing food allergies or preferences, ensuring children's individual needs are met safely and consistently. Staff record children's attendance times accurately and are meticulous with all record keeping, such as accident, incident and medication logs. They effectively analyse this information to identify patterns, enabling them to monitor when, where and how incidents occur across the nursery. Staff follow nappy changing procedures appropriately, ensuring children's privacy and dignity is maintained through the use of a curtain around the changing table. Staff consistently follow safe sleep guidance in the baby room. Babies are placed in cots in a foot-to-foot position and staff undertake regular monitoring checks to ensure they remain safe and comfortable while sleeping.

Staff manage interactions extremely well and are excellent role models. They implement the behaviour policy consistently, providing children with constant praise and positive reinforcement. For example, one child was being supported and encouraged to balance across the wooden logs. When she finally did it herself, she was met with excitement and applause from staff, leaving her beaming with pride. Staff treat the children with warmth and kindness and are consistently engaged in their play. We saw one staff member join a child in the role play, allowing them to brush, 'straighten' and accessorize her hair. The child gave a huge smile and said *"you done now!".* Staff model aspects of the routine to children so they can join in with confidence. E.g. tidying away the toys or wiping down the tables.

Staff place children at the heart of their learning and encourage them to make choices, pursue their interests and contribute to planning activities. They monitor and assess children's progress to identify next steps in development and provide experiences that reflect individual interests and needs. Staff respond promptly to children requiring additional support and use effective strategies to promote positive outcomes. They use a communication tracker to identify and support children's speech and language needs as promptly as possible. The Welsh language is sometimes used as part of the daily routine, however it is not consistently used by all staff. Staff know all children extremely well and can adapt their care accordingly to meet the individual needs of each child.

Environment — Excellent

Leaders ensure that the setting is extremely safe and secure. The entrance is fitted with a doorbell and camera, allowing staff to check who is visiting before providing access. All visitors are signed in and out of the setting and their identity badge is checked on arrival. Leaders have detailed risk assessments in place for the premises, activities and resources and these are reviewed on a regular basis. Leaders complete daily checks of the premises when opening and again before closing to identify and, where possible, eliminate any risks to children's safety. Leaders carry out regular fire drills, ensuring staff and children know how to exit the building in the event of a fire. However, these are not conducted evenly across morning and afternoon sessions, meaning some children have had fewer opportunities to experience and practise evacuation procedures. Leaders ensure they have oversight of all required safety checks and certificates, all of which are valid.

Leaders provide a warm, welcoming environment that is organised to a very high standard. They organise the provision into clearly defined play areas, where rich learning experiences stimulate children's curiosity and encourage exploration. For example, we saw children accessing a 'home from home' area, exploring water play and enjoying messy play. Leaders use low level furniture and open shelving effectively to foster children's independence. These allow children free access to the resources they need during the session and enable tidy up time to be a team effort. An additional playroom adjoining the main base room provides a calm, spacious environment where children can enjoy focused one to one support or take time away from the busier main room. Since their registration visit, leaders have installed a new ramp that allows children easy access to the lower level garden area. During our visit, we saw children of all ages enjoying the outdoor provision. Leaders have created separate areas for different age groups, enabling all children to play safely and independently. For example, one-year-olds enjoy water play, while two- and three-year-olds engage in activities such as the mud kitchen and balancing on logs. The outdoors provides many opportunities to support children's overall learning as well as their physical development.

Leaders ensure that children have access to a wide range of excellent quality resources. They provide a broad variety of real-life items that children naturally integrate into their play. For example, one child was looking in the mirror, putting on pearls and brushing their hair. Leaders use high quality toys and equipment that are inviting and appealing to children. They are frequently rotated to provide further choice and variety for children.

Leadership & Management — Excellent

Leadership and Management of the setting is outstanding. The Responsible Individual (RI) and Person in Charge (PiC) have a clear vision for the service they provide and the PiC feels very well supported in delivering this. Leaders ensure the Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the setting, enabling parents and carers to make informed choices about its suitability. They have an Operational Plan in place that details how the setting is run and by who. Leaders have extensive policies and procedures in place that are written with usability in mind. This ensures that both staff and service users are able to read and review them in a way that is manageable. Leaders have a robust system in place when it comes to record keeping and documents, such as safeguarding logs, are completed to a very high standard. Children's contracts contain all mandatory information as well as individual needs and parental consents. However, there were no records of children's cultural or religious beliefs noted in the folders. Following our visit, the RI confirmed that updated children's contracts do contain this information.

Leaders implement effective systems to evaluate and improve the quality of the service. They engage meaningfully with parents, staff and umbrella organisations, ensuring their views inform ongoing self-evaluation and service development. Leaders maintain high expectations for themselves and their staff, involving the team in identifying and working towards realistic improvement goals. Leaders also produce a detailed annual quality of care review, outlining strengths, areas for development, and planned actions to enhance the service.

Leaders operate effective recruitment and induction processes. They maintain well-organised records that demonstrate safe recruitment before staff begin at the setting. Registers confirm that appropriate staffing levels are maintained to meet the needs of children attending. Leaders actively promote a culture of professional development. Through their in-house training centre, they ensure staff have access to a broad range of training opportunities that enhance their knowledge and skills. Staff are appropriately qualified and hold up-to-date training in key areas, including first aid, safeguarding, and food hygiene. Leaders provide ongoing support through regular supervisions, annual appraisals and peer-observations. These, along with well-being reviews, enable staff to perform their roles confidently and effectively. Staff value this input and speak positively about how they are supported.

Leaders have developed strong, meaningful relationships with parents and carers. They have effective systems, such as newsletters and a family app, in place to keep families updated about their child's time at the setting. Leaders encourage families to engage with the setting through 'Stay and Play' sessions, which are well attended. They have forged strong links with the local community, for example, two supermarkets make regular donations to the setting's food bank.

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

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)
Increase the consistent use of Welsh during daily routines, activities and interactions to support children's familiarity with the language
Ensure all children have opportunities to experience and practice fire evacuation procedures.

Mae’r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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