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Arolygiaeth Gofal
Cymru
Care Inspectorate
Wales

A report on

Village Playgroup Garw Valley

**Gofal Dydd Lawn
Pontcymer
Bridgend
CF32 8NN**

Date of inspection: September 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Village Playgroup Garw Valley

Name of setting	Village Playgroup Garw Valley
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Gillian Rosser
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Louise Challen
Number of places	16
Age range of children	2 years to 5 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	4
Number of children who receive funding for early education	3
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 9.15am to 2.45pm – term time only Monday to Thursday 9.15am to 11.45am for education
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 not making a significant effort to promote the use of Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	This is the first inspection since the setting was registered with CIW on 6 October 2023.
Date of previous Estyn inspection	This is the first inspection since the setting was registered to provide education
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	30/09/2025
Additional information	

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Well-being	Good
Learning (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	Good
Care and development	Good
Teaching and assessment (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	Good
Environment	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

- R1. Provide more opportunities to promote and aid children's understanding of cultural diversity
- R2. Ensure that staff supervision meetings are recorded

What happens next

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Children are confident to make decisions about how to spend their time at the setting. They choose activities that interest them and move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas. Many children speak and express themselves confidently with verbal and non-verbal communication. They know practitioners will help them to do what they want, for example by taking a tape measure to a practitioner and smiling as they help them to measure various items.

Nearly all children are settled, relaxed and happy at the setting. They arrive enthusiastically, with big smiles and settle quickly. Some children go to practitioners for a cuddle before playing, showing they are developing positive attachments with them. Children are proud of their achievements and respond very well to praise from practitioners. For example, children share their excitement as they reach the top of the climbing frame or succeed in taking their coat off. They sing the 'wow song' and have a 'wow wall' of certificates to celebrate their achievements. As a result, the children feel valued and develop a strong sense of belonging at the setting.

Nearly all children are learning the routines of the setting. They respond quickly to the songs used to transition between activities, such as handwashing and finding a mat in readiness for circle time. Many children feel a sense of security through the routines. Very few children choose not to join in, and they enjoy other activities while being supported by practitioners, until they decide to join the others.

Nearly all children are learning to manage their behaviour successfully. They are developing an understanding of right and wrong. Most are learning to share resources and take turns well, such as waiting appropriately for their chance to pour water and allowing others to have a go. Many children happily share their space with others as they build with blocks in the outside area. Nearly all children are learning good manners, are polite and use 'please' and 'thank you' spontaneously.

Nearly all children are interested in activities and enjoy their play and learning. They immerse themselves in their play for an extended period and thoroughly enjoy using their imaginations. For example, they play for a long while in the outside shop, buying vegetables to make their soup, while others joined in circle time, singing songs enthusiastically.

Nearly all children are learning good self-help skills and are becoming independent learners. For example, children pushing a toy trolley filled with pumpkins patiently work out how to balance it across a 'bridge' and negotiate a step. They help each other and work together to successfully move the trolley, celebrating their success. Many children wash their hands independently and use the toilet with appropriate levels of support from practitioners. Nearly all children are successfully developing independence at snack time. They use equipment carefully, using tongs to serve themselves food, pouring water from the dispenser and putting leftover food in the recycling bin.

Learning (only applies to three- or four-year-old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Good

There is no report on children's learning. This is because the number of three or four-year-old children present at the time of the inspection that do not receive funded education elsewhere was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners are extremely motivated and place a high priority on children's health, safety and wellbeing. All practitioners have a childcare qualification and have many opportunities to undertake training relevant to their role. They all have up-to-date training in safeguarding, food hygiene and paediatric first aid. Practitioners have a clear understanding of the safeguarding procedures and other policies and implement them well. Practitioners keep thorough and accurate records of accidents, incidents, and pre-existing injuries, and share this information promptly with parents. Leaders have set up a system to monitor and audit these records so they can identify any patterns or trends. Practitioners follow useful risk assessments and identify emerging risks effectively. Practitioners encourage children to understand and develop good lifestyle habits. They promote a choice of healthy food at snack time and ensure that children have daily outdoor play for exercise and fresh air. The setting's arrangement for safeguarding children meets requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners know the children exceptionally well and use this knowledge to adapt behaviour management strategies. They are calm and patient, using positive language, good eye contact and facial expressions at every opportunity. Practitioners are nurturing and develop warm and encouraging relationships with children. They discretely support children to resolve disagreements and to show kindness and respect to each other. Practitioners are very skilful in teaching children to share, by reinforcing their expectations and demonstrating the benefits of accepting others into their play, for example helping each other to build a taller tower of blocks and enjoying the challenge of finding dinosaurs in the outside area. Practitioners are good role models, speaking with each other respectfully, using positive language and using good manners.

Practitioners support children's learning and development effectively. They successfully implement systems to identify and support children with any additional learning needs (ALN). They address the diverse needs of their children, in particular those with ALN, for example by using Makaton signing and using calming spaces to help children regulate themselves.

Practitioners have a particularly good understanding of children's needs and use this to plan activities around their individual interests and abilities. They know many children enjoy playing with dinosaurs and put out a variety of dinosaur focused activities to support their interest and to encourage learning through the use of these. For example, they hide dinosaurs in leaves for children to find and the investigation area includes dinosaurs. Practitioners use children's invitations to play effectively to extend their learning, by engaging them in discussions about dinosaur's size and colour. Practitioners make activities

fun and support all children to engage in them and develop good learning skills and habits, such as concentration and perseverance.

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

Practitioners know the children very well. They have high expectations and understand children's individual strengths and needs. Practitioners demonstrate a good understanding of child development and how children learn. They make good use of the space to develop children's skills through an engaging environment with access to authentic resources. For example, they provide real carrots, pumpkins and butternut squash in the mud kitchen for the children to cut and mash to make soup.

Practitioners play alongside children, skilfully knowing when to support and when to step back. This approach builds on children's confidence successfully and supports them to explore new experiences for themselves. They have a good balance of allowing children extended sessions of uninterrupted play alongside clear daily routines. Practitioners explain things clearly, model activities and allow children to explore and develop their independence skills.

Practitioners are good language role models and actively support children's language development. They encourage children to express themselves using gestures and words to develop the way they communicate. For example, they use simple Makaton signing during play and at snack time. They give clear and concise instructions to support the children's understanding and communication. As a result, children happily interact with practitioners, other children and visitors to the setting.

Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities to develop children's numeracy skills. For example, they support children to order numbers, they use the outdoors well to explore capacity and to measure the worms they found in the garden. Practitioners provide a range of digital resources for children to develop their digital skills. For example, children take photographs of their dinosaur play, which practitioners then upload to share with parents. As a result, children are beginning to choose equipment independently and are starting to understand the purpose of digital technology.

Practitioners are providing purposeful opportunities for children to develop knowledge of their local community and develop their sense of belonging, for example they collect harvest donations for the local food banks. They develop children's spiritual, moral and social development appropriately. Practitioners encourage children to demonstrate kindness and respect to others when at the setting. However, the resources and experiences that promote learning about Wales and other cultures is more limited.

Practitioners ensure that children develop their physical skills effectively. They encourage them to take calculated risks in their play. For example, practitioners encourage children to be confident and careful when using the climbing wall, when jumping off different surfaces or when using knives to cut the carrots.

Practitioners work together to ensure a consistent approach in using Welsh language with the children. For example, they sing songs to greet their friends, to learn about the weather

and to count in Welsh. Practitioners use Welsh songs as part of the daily hand washing routine. They all join the train and sing as they move to wash their hands singing “Golchi Golchi dwylo bach.”

Practitioners use observations and assessments to inform their weekly planning. They know the children well and their insights help them to plan appropriate support for each child. They keep parents informed of the progress their children make in their learning and how they can support at home.

Environment: Good

Leaders have established effective procedures to ensure a safe and secure environment. Practitioners understand these procedures and implement them well. For example, practitioners adhere to the robust risk assessments that are in place and undertake daily checks to identify any unexpected risks. Leaders liaise closely with the local authority to ensure that the premises are well maintained and that safety checks, including fire and electrical systems, are undertaken regularly. Leaders monitor the outside areas to ensure safety and to manage any risks effectively, for example the large trees. Practitioners are confident in operating emergency procedures. They practice the fire evacuation procedure regularly and have drawn up a policy outlining action they would take if the setting is required to lock down.

Leaders ensure the environment is bright and welcoming for children, with a warm and homely feel. Practitioners display children’s paintings and there are some photographs in the playroom, giving children a sense of belonging. They use neutral, calming colours and natural materials wherever possible and soften the lighting to create an inviting atmosphere. Practitioners set up interesting areas where children can access a good range of activities that promote their all-round development. Children can easily access the toilet and handwashing facilities, which are designed for their age and support their independence. Leaders provide spacious facilities outside, which children can freely access for most of the session. Covered areas allow children the benefit of playing outside in most weather. This is a great strength of the setting.

Leaders ensure that equipment and resources are plentiful and are of high quality to meet the needs of the children. Practitioners set up areas to stimulate and promote children’s curiosity, with many ‘real life’ resources such as musical instruments and kitchen items. They change the focus of some areas regularly, to sustain interest. For example, they use leaves and twigs to enhance areas during the autumn season. Practitioners make good use of the outside area and set up play areas that mirror the inside areas. For example, they provide construction resources, messy play, a reading area, mark making and role play. Children have plenty of space to enjoy physical play such as running, digging in the sand trays and exploring the playhouses. Practitioners ensure that children can develop physical skills, such as climbing and balancing on large outdoor equipment, low-level climbing frames and slides, Practitioners place wet weather clothing on racks outside, supporting children to dress themselves before playing, if they choose.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have a clear vision for the setting based on the wellbeing of all the children. This is outlined clearly in the statement of purpose and shared effectively with parents and practitioners who reflect this strongly in their daily practice. Leaders have a strong commitment to teamwork and shared responsibilities across the setting. This leads to a positive working environment and a happy setting for children and practitioners.

Leaders have effective processes to evaluate and clearly identify the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. For example, leaders identified the need to improve the outdoor learning environment. They applied successfully for a grant and used this to purchase a reading and role play learning shed to develop children's language and communication skills and a climbing wall to support and develop physical skills. Leaders are now completing a project to show the impact of these resources on children's learning.

Leaders manage practitioners very well. They ensure that all the required pre-employment checks are undertaken to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Leaders have numerous procedures in place to support practitioners through their employment. They carry out a thorough annual appraisal, giving practitioners an opportunity to reflect on their practice and performance. Practitioners feel supported by leaders and get regular opportunities to discuss their practice and any other matters. However, these meetings are informal, which makes it difficult to monitor and review these discussions regularly. Practitioners attend regular team meetings where they discuss safeguarding, children's individual needs, plan activities and share any other relevant information.

Leaders and practitioners respond well to guidance from the Local Authority's Early Education advisors. As a result, the setting is introducing a new system to record and assess observations and to plan next steps for children's development and acquisition of skills. Leaders also work closely with the Local authority ALN Advisors, seeking advice and support for the diverse needs of children in their setting. There are strong partnerships between leaders and relevant staff from the local school who visits the setting and supports the transition of children with ALN from the setting to school education. Leaders and practitioners are fully committed to ensure this transition is as supportive as possible. For example, leaders and practitioners go with the children to visit their new schools, and they also invite the teachers to visit the setting.

Leaders have established good communication links with parents and carers and work closely with them to identify the needs and preferences of their child before they begin at the setting. Practitioners converse regularly with parents during drop-off and pick-up times, which has fostered positive relationships between the setting and home. Parents greatly value this communication and appreciate the practitioner's willingness to speak to them and the level of care and attention they show towards their 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

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.

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