Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Mini Miners Centre

Bryn Seion Chapel, Lisburn Road Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7AS

01443520370

The inspection visit took place on 26/08/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Mini Miners Group LTD
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	40
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	Excellent

Summary:

Children are exceptionally settled and make excellent progress at the setting. They have fantastic fun playing with their friends and have a wealth of choice and opportunities to develop different skills and become independent. Children develop positive, healthy relationships with their friends and staff. They can speak freely and are encouraged to share their ideas with staff who show genuine interest in their views and opinions.

Staff have a thorough knowledge of how to keep children safe and healthy. They work especially well as a team and there is a lovely atmosphere at the setting. Staff have a wide range of policies, procedures and documentation in place which effectively support them when undertaking their roles. Staff pay very close attention to safety matters. They understand their responsibilities to report concerns and have a clear and sound knowledge of the safeguarding procedure.

The environment is safe and secure, with comprehensive systems that effectively promote

children's health, safety and well-being. It is thoughtfully organised in line with the Curiosity Approach, enabling children to explore, investigate, make choices and follow their interests through meaningful play. Children benefit from rich indoor and outdoor learning environments that successfully promote independence, confidence, creativity and development. Leaders provide an extensive range of high-quality resources, many of which are real-life and authentic. These inspire children's curiosity, creativity and imagination and support sustained engagement in play and learning.

Leaders have an excellent vision which is shared with staff. They have a strong sense of purpose which sustains improvement and promotes outstanding outcomes for children. The staff work very well as a team and managers are dedicated and highly motivated. Leaders value staff and provide effective and regular support. They have excellent partnerships with parents, carers and other professionals, ensuring they work collectively to support children's learning and development.

Findings:

Well-being — Excellent

Children are listened to and play an active role in shaping their experiences, making confident choices about how and where they play. They select activities that interest them, direct their own learning and confidently share their ideas with others. During play in the home corner, children led imaginative experiences by selecting recipes and deciding what they would make. Children's interests contribute significantly to the experiences provided. Their interest in planets and the solar eclipse influenced activities, resources and displays throughout the setting. Children confidently expressed their interests and preferences. One child told us the home corner was the area she enjoyed most, while another shared that playing with the cups outdoors was her favourite activity.

Children are happy, confident and enjoy their play and learning. They settle quickly into activities and remain highly engaged throughout the session. Children laugh together, share experiences and confidently interact with familiar adults and visitors. They approach new experiences with enthusiasm and demonstrate a willingness to try different activities. During a game of Jenga, children eagerly participated, encouraged one another and shared laughter as challenges were revealed. Children confidently communicate their thoughts and ideas during play. One child explained she had learned how to make milkshakes from a recipe book and proudly shared this knowledge with others. The atmosphere is positive and relaxed, allowing children to enjoy their time at the setting.

Children develop positive relationships with staff and their peers. They play cooperatively, share resources and support one another during self-chosen activities. We saw children collaborate during construction play, sharing ideas and working together to create ramps for toy cars. Children respond positively to praise and encouragement and demonstrate kindness towards one another. They seek out staff to share experiences, invite participation in play and celebrate achievements. These positive relationships help children feel secure and confident within the setting.

Children participate in meaningful experiences that support their development and reflect their interests. They investigate, experiment and use their imagination across a rich range of play opportunities. Children develop their communication skills confidently as they learn and use new words through conversations and play in both Welsh and English. They experience Welsh language and culture naturally throughout the day and enjoy using new words and phrases in meaningful situations. Children’s self-help skills are developing extremely well. For example, where appropriate, children access the toilet independently, are beginning to pour their own drinks and clear their plates into recycling at mealtimes. They wash their own hands, tidy up after play and put on their coats with some assistance from staff when needed.

Care & Development — Excellent

Staff promote children's safety and health to a consistently excellent standard. They provide healthy breakfast choices; ensure children have access to drinks throughout the session and establish routines that support healthy lifestyles. Hygiene routines, including regular handwashing are well established and understood by children. Staff supervise children well whilst encouraging independence and helping children understand how to keep themselves safe. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and explain confidently how they record, monitor and review accidents, incidents and existing injuries to identify any emerging concerns. Children's files contain detailed information regarding each children's individual needs. Attendance, visitor and signing-in systems are maintained accurately, providing leaders with effective oversight of children's welfare and the day-to-day operation of the setting.

Staff promote children's learning and development skilfully. They know the children well and use meaningful interactions to extend learning through play. Staff follow children's interests and use discussion, questioning and encouragement to develop curiosity, communication and problem-solving skills. They work alongside children, giving them opportunities to test ideas and find solutions independently. During construction play, staff encouraged children to think about how they could improve their ramps when cars fell from the tracks. They also use open-ended questions to extend thinking, asking children whether they think flying cars might exist in the future. Staff celebrate achievements and help build children's confidence. One practitioner praised a child's construction skills by saying, *"That's amazing, I love this. I think you are going to be an engineer."* These interactions encourage children to persevere, think creatively and take pride in their achievements.

Staff are warm, nurturing and responsive. They spend time alongside children, join in their play and respond positively to children's ideas and interests. Throughout the inspection, staff shared books, participated in imaginative play and created opportunities for enjoyable conversations. Children confidently approached adults for support and shared their experiences with them. Positive interactions help children feel respected, secure and valued. Staff regularly recognise achievements and encourage children's confidence.

Staff have a clear understanding of individual children's needs, abilities and backgrounds. They gather detailed information from families before children start attending and use this information to support transitions and tailor care. Flexible settling-in arrangements, effective key worker systems and strong partnerships with parents help children feel secure. Staff monitor progress carefully, identify concerns promptly and work closely with external professionals when additional support is needed. This enables staff to plan age-appropriate activities and individually tailored care that keeps each child interested and develops their skills. Staff promotes Welsh language and culture as a natural part of daily experiences and are working toward the Welsh active offer. Children hear Welsh throughout routines, songs, books and play activities and are developing familiarity with Welsh words and phrases.

Environment — Excellent

Leaders provide a safe, welcoming and highly stimulating environment where children thrive. They have established comprehensive systems to promote children's safety and well-being and ensure the premises are monitored and maintained to a high standard. Leaders complete regular risk assessments covering all areas of the provision, outings, staff and individual children. They review assessments when children's needs change or new equipment is introduced. Fire safety arrangements are robust and include monthly fire drills, weekly emergency lighting checks, serviced fire extinguishers and documented evacuation procedures. Leaders have invested in an upgraded fire alarm system following the development of the new upstairs area, demonstrating their commitment to maintaining a safe environment. Health and safety audits, infection control reviews and emergency procedures are monitored regularly. Current gas safety certification, electrical installation checks, PAT testing and a five-star food hygiene rating provide further assurance that children are cared for in a safe and well-managed environment.

Leaders ensure the environment is very well suited to children's needs. The playroom is organised into clearly defined areas that encourage children to make choices, follow their interests and engage in independent play. Children move confidently between spaces and access resources with ease. The environment promotes independence throughout the day. A quiet reading area, multicultural resources and displays reflecting Welsh culture help create an inclusive environment where children feel a sense of belonging. The environment reflects children's interests and provides opportunities for learning through exploration, creativity and imagination.

Leaders provide extensive opportunities for children to learn and develop both indoors and outdoors. The outdoor environment is a particular strength and offers rich opportunities for exploration, investigation and managed risk-taking. Children access climbing opportunities, planting areas, a mud kitchen, loose parts, bug hotels, water play and a music wall. Both the indoor and outdoor environment reflects the Curiosity Approach and encourages children to investigate the natural world, solve problems and develop physical skills. Staff supervise children well whilst allowing them opportunities to challenge themselves and build confidence.

Leaders provide an extensive range of high-quality resources that support children's learning and development. Resources are accessible, well maintained and reflect children's interests. Natural and authentic materials are used throughout the setting, including shells, driftwood, stones, real household objects and open-ended resources. Dedicated learning areas, including the Sea World area, construction provision, home corner, doctors' surgery, Welsh area and creative spaces, inspire children's curiosity and imagination. Resources promote diversity, Welsh culture and understanding of the wider world. As a result, children benefit from a rich environment that consistently supports meaningful play, independence and highly positive outcomes.

Leadership & Management — Excellent

Leaders provide clear direction for the setting and have created a strong child-centred culture where children's well-being, interests and voice are central to daily practice. Their commitment to learning through play and the Curiosity Approach is reflected consistently throughout the provision. Children influence experiences, resources and planning, and leaders ensure the environment supports curiosity, exploration and independence. Information shared with parents clearly explains the setting's philosophy and helps families understand how children learn through meaningful play.

Leaders have effective systems to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of the setting. They actively seek feedback from parents, carers and children to inform their quality-of-care review. Leaders are approachable and welcome any ideas or suggestions to improve their practice. The report is well written and highlights their strengths, as well as areas they would like to improve further. For instance, they are in the process of developing a new upstairs area and plan to increase registration numbers.

Leaders manage practitioners and resources effectively. They implement robust recruitment procedures that support the appointment of suitable staff. They maintain comprehensive staff files containing all information required by regulation, including references, proof of identity, employment histories, health declarations, qualifications and enhanced DBS information. Leaders provide staff with regular supervision, appraisal and professional development opportunities. They maintain training records that demonstrate staff keep their knowledge up to date in safeguarding, Prevent, paediatric first aid, food hygiene and allergen awareness. Leaders ensure staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and can confidently explain reporting and escalation procedures.

Leaders develop strong partnerships with parents, professionals and the wider community. Daily communication, Tapestry updates, information boards and parent events help families remain informed and involved in their children's experiences. Leaders work closely with speech and language services, safeguarding professionals and other agencies to support children's needs. Community links, including library visits, local outings and Wales in Bloom projects, enrich children's experiences. Leaders continue to promote Welsh language and culture and show a strong commitment to ongoing development. Overall, leadership and management make a significant contribution to the positive outcomes children achieve.

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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