Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Melin Flying Start

Melin Infant School, Herbert Road, Neath, SA11 2DD

07504130596

The inspection visit took place on 29/06/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Melin Childcare Ltd
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	20
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 makes an effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture or is working towards a bilingual service.

Ratings:

Well-being	Good
Care & Development	Good
Environment	Adequate
Leadership & Management	Adequate

Summary:

Children have opportunities to make choices, decisions and have their voice heard. Nearly all children are settled and happy. They have mostly positive relationships with each other and staff and know one another well. Children express enthusiasm and enjoyment and are developing independence skills very well.

Staff are confident in their role to safeguard children. They mostly implement policies and procedures effectively. Staff are calm, kind and caring. They use positive language regularly, encouraging and engaging with children through praise. Staff are supportive, create a child led learning environment and they work together very well as a team.

Leaders ensure the indoor environment is suitably safe and secure. Overall, the setting is well maintained. They are continuing to develop the outside area, which started prior to inspection. However, the outdoor environment requires further improving. Leaders provide a suitable range of developmentally appropriate play and learning resources. Much of the equipment is freely available to children, allowing them to choose their interests independently.

Leaders show a suitable awareness and understanding of the regulations and National Minimum Standards (NMS). They have acted promptly to respond to actions and recommendations following our visit. However, consistency is required to embed and sustain improvements at the setting. We have issued an area for improvement in relation to staff supervision and appraisals.

Findings:

Well-being — Good

Children have opportunities to make choices, decisions and have their voice heard. They decide activities and resources they want to play with. For example, choosing to play inside or outside, and actively explore play opportunities on offer. Children express themselves verbally and non-verbally with their communication valued. They confidently say, *"My bike goes fast!"* and ask for help if needed, such as when washing hands. Children take part in rolling snack, allowing them freedom of choice when eating and competently help themselves to water from the dispenser.

Nearly all children are settled and happy. They have mostly positive relationships with each other and staff and know one another well. Children seek comfort from staff if they need it which is promptly provided. They know routines well. For example, at toothbrushing, snack and home time. Children arrive and eagerly start to engage in activities with their friends. We saw children smiling and cheerful. Some children call one another and staff by their names. Children receive reassurance when milk is spilt, supporting their feeling of security and safety.

Children express enthusiasm and enjoyment. They successfully interact with each other and adults in line with their age and stage of development. Children confidently engage with, us, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) involving us in their play. They play alongside one another, taking part in sand play, whilst others learn to effectively cooperate. For example, engaging in a game of hide and seek. Children excitedly engage in songs, such as 'sleeping bunnies' and complete the actions with enthusiasm.

Children are interested in their play and learning. They confidently access resources and equipment of interest to them. Children engage in activities such as sensory exploration, singing, story time and mark making. Some children share and take turns, developing fine motor skills when pouring and tipping water down the water board. They follow their own interest and engage in child led play, with some adult led 'quite time' activities. Children show care when playing in the home corner, pretending to use a phone and call daddy. They name animals such as elephant, lion and tiger and are supported to learn the colours of the animals.

Children are developing independence skills well. Children access the bathroom and wash their hands, with support from staff, if needed. They are beginning to competently brush their own teeth. Children help to serve themselves during rolling snack, access their own drink and empty their plates when they are finished. They help to tidy up when transitioning to the next activity.

Care & Development — Good

Staff understand and mostly implement policies and procedures to promote the safety and well-being of children. The staff spoken to at the time of inspection have a sound understanding of their role in protecting children. They confidently answered child protection scenarios and actions they would take, if required. Many staff have completed mandatory training, including, the appropriate level safeguarding course. Following our inspection visit, all staff have now completed safeguarding training. Nearly all staff hold paediatric first aid and food hygiene training. Accident, existing injures and medication records are complete and signed by parents. Following our inspection visit, incident forms are being introduced. The setting provides snacks, catering for allergy or dietary needs, as required. Plans are in place for children with intolerances, allergies and medical conditions. The setting promotes healthy snacks and serves milk or water as drinks. Staff mostly promote hygiene practices effectively, such as wearing Personal Protective Equipment when handling and serving food, sanitising tables prior to meals and washing hands before snacks. However, the nappy changing routine is not completed in line with the policy, and the nappy changing mat had a split within it. Following our visit, a new nappy changing mat is now in place.

Staff understand the behaviour management policy and implement strategies well. They are calm, kind and caring. Staff use positive language regularly, encouraging and engaging with children through praise. They reinforce good manners, encouraging children to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. Staff promote and support children to share, using distraction techniques well. They remind children to ‘use walking feet’, then provide praise for doing this. Staff deal with any disagreements well, talking calmly to children. They offer reassurance and encouragement to children whilst undertaking activities. For example, whilst engaging in sand play, children move items from the home corner to continue their play, with staff encouragement. They support children to learn about opposites when sharing a book together. Staff are aware of children’s likes and dislikes which are supported well. They provide a balanced approach, playing alongside children, allowing children to take the lead as well as adult led activities and group times. Staff are positive role models. For example, sitting at the table for snack, engaging in conversations and modelling how to sing on a play microphone.

Staff provide a suitable range of play and learning opportunities, implementing aspects of the Curriculum for Wales alongside other approaches. Staff tell us they ‘plan in the moment’. However, there is no record of any on-going themes or links from observations to next steps. This is being developed and plans are in place to improve this within the setting. They monitor and record children’s progress, completing regular observations, alongside a six-week first assessment and exit letter. Staff integrate celebrations and events into planned creative activities. They recognise if children have emerging needs, with systems in place to support them. There are established mechanisms for children with identified needs, with regular reviews and support in place for them and their families. Staff know the children well children and have strong relationships with them. They promote some aspects of the Welsh language, introducing basic words, songs and phrases.

Environment — Adequate

Leaders ensure the environment and outside area is suitably safe, secure, and overall, well maintained. The main entrance into the grounds is secure, alongside an internal high door lock on the main entrance. Visitors sign in appropriately. Risk assessments are in place, as well daily risk assessment check lists being completed. However, they do not always reflect on-going risks identified at the setting. Risks are not always rectified promptly to reduce the risk of harm to children. Following our inspection, a caretaker's book has been implemented to record when health and safety concerns are highlighted, as well as a risk assessment for interim measures whilst the building is awaiting repairs. In the past, regular fire drills have been completed, at different times of day to ensure all children have an opportunity to practice the procedure. However, due to an error with the fire alarm, one has not been completed recently. Fire drill records have been updated to provide more detailed information, with plans in place to complete a fire drill as soon practicable. Appropriate gas, fire and boiler safety checks remain current.

Leaders provide a variety of opportunities for children. The playroom is designated for the age group attending, with direct access into the secure garden. There are designated areas within the room promoting opportunities and invitations to play. There is space for children to store their belongings as well as information boards on the walls. The outdoor area allows for differing play opportunities with an area under cover. Providing space for sensory play, slides, and low-level table and chairs. However, some elements of the outdoor area require attention to reduce risks to children and promote a more suitable enviornement. Some displays promote bilingualism of the Welsh language, providing prompts to support children and staff in their Welsh development. Photographs of the children on walks and visits within the local community are on display, promoting a sense of belonging.

Leaders provide a suitable range of developmentally appropriate play and learning resources. Much of the equipment is freely available to children, allowing them to choose their interests independently. Leaders are developing resources to be more authentic and reflective of the natural world. They provide a range of learning opportunities. For example, through role play, construction play, sensory and creative activities. There are some resources and learning opportunities which promote children's curiosity about the wider society, celebrating equality and cultural awareness.

Leadership & Management — Adequate

Leaders show a suitable awareness and understanding of the regulations and NMS, although some improvement is required to maintain these consistently. Leaders engage positively with CIW and generally keep us up to date with any changes at the setting. Following our inspection visit, a reviewed staff training matrix has been provided. A current and up to date Statement of Purpose is in place at the setting. Leaders ensure regulatory records are in place and maintain the correct staff to child ratio, often exceeding this to provided additional support. They have contingency plans in place, if required, to ensure ratios are maintained. Leaders review policies regularly and make the necessary adjustments. They have appropriate public liability insurances and are registered with the Information Commissioners Office.

Leaders have suitable self-evaluation systems in place. They seek the views of parents and children and include this within the review. They reflect on feedback and implement some changes at the setting. They recognise aims to achieve in the future, such as developing ‘cynefin’ within the setting by visits to local areas of interest, alongside introducing more natural resources and prioritising staff training.

Leaders follow suitable recruitment processes to safeguard children with suitability checks in place. They are not always readily available onsite, as much is stored on an accessible drive for sharing across the providers settings. All staff have current and up to date Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Staff inform us they feel supported by leaders, and work in a close nit team. Outcomes for children and staff require improvement because leaders do not provide regular support, through supervisions and appraisals and we expect the provider to make improvements. Following our inspection, leaders have implemented a new policy, action plan and rota to undertake supervisions in the future. Team meetings take place, to share information and keep up to date. Leaders provide opportunities for staff to undertake training and continual professional development.

Leaders tell us they have effective partnerships. Linking with feeder schools, family information service, flying start and other professionals. Parents are kept up to date through verbal discussions and use of an online app. As part of the inspection process, we gained feedback from parents which was mostly positive.

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.

The table(s) below show the area(s) for priority action and/or those for improvement we have identified.

Summary of Areas for Improvement	Date identified
We found poor outcomes as children are not always safeguarded from potential risks as they may not be cared for by suitable adults who are in receipt of regular supervision meetings and annual appraisals in respect of their specific roles.	29/06/26

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)
Standard 10 - Healthcare	Promote consistent hygiene practices and follow nappy changing policy effectively.
Standard 20 - Safeguarding	Staff to complete accurate safeguarding training in line with their role.
Standard 22 - Environment	Review risks efficiently and promote an effective environment to reduce risks, with risk assessments reflective of practice.
Standard 24 - Safety	Complete regular fire drills and maintain checks on fire safety equipment in a timely manner.

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)
Continue to develop and embed planning to link with observations and children's next steps.

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