Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Melin Childcare

Melin Primary School, Mile End Row, Neath, SA11 2ED

07542724239

The inspection visit took place on 09/09/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Melin Childcare Ltd
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	18
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	**Excellent**
Care & Development	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership & Management	**Good**

Summary:

Children have a variety of interesting opportunities to make choices and decisions. They are happy, settled and cope well when separating from their carers. Children clearly enjoy their time and interact exceptionally well, in line with their development, with each other and adults. Children are developing their independence skills remarkably well.

Staff implement policies and procedures to promote children's safety and well-being. Staff successfully listen and communicate, with some use of sign and visual cues to aid children's understanding. They are progressing their observations and practice around recording development and next steps. Staff and leaders are effective at supporting children with additional and emerging needs, which is a real strength at the setting.

Leaders ensure the environment is safe, secure, and generally well maintained. They have systems in place to act upon hazards and monitor them. The setting provides a range of opportunities for children, within the indoor and outdoor environments. The outdoor area is a real benefit to the children who access this daily.

Leaders are reflective of their practice. They mostly implement the national minimum standards and regulations effectively. Minor improvements are required to ensure consistency. Staff are supported and happy at the setting. Partnerships are another strength, with multi-agency involvement and engagement across all levels to provide high level support.

Findings:

Well-being — Excellent

Children have varied and interesting opportunities to make choices and decisions. They have an exceptionally strong voice and express themselves positively, verbally and non-verbally. Children have multiple options at snack time, as well as self-serving how much they would like from the platter available to them. We saw a child walk to another table, pour their own glass of milk, returning to her seat with efficiency. They ask for 'more' when singing songs at the end of the session, which is promptly actioned by staff. Children engage confidently with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) involving us in their play.

Children are happy and cope successfully when separating from their parents or carers. Even children who are new, settle exceptionally well. They are supported with cuddles and comforters if needed. Children have positive relationships with each other and staff, who know them very well. We saw children call their friends by their name, happily talking and engaging with one another. They know the routine well, with embedded practice such as washing their hands independently before meals.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the setting. They interact exceptionally well with each other and adults. We saw children cooperate when sharing resources, taking turns when engaging in the outdoor mud kitchen. Positively explore block play and engage in role play in the home corner, making cups of 'tea' for one another. They confidently call one another and staff by their names. Nearly all children are active, engaged and play together or alongside one another well. For example, Children interact and say *"My turn"* when playing on the outside play equipment. They sit together at the table successfully whilst having their meals and listen well to instructions.

Children are engaged and interested in their play and learning. They access a range of opportunities at the setting, both indoors and out. We saw children independently explore play dough, wooden animals and the vast outside equipment, with interest. They learn to use scooters effectively and follow staff who role model how to balance on the planks and beams.

Children are developing their independence skills exceptionally well. They wash their hands and access the portable sink within the room independently. Children freely access the bathroom and have support if needed. They serve and feed themselves competently. Children help themselves to water from the dispenser and freely ask for help as needed. They are learning to take responsibility for their belongings and support staff with tidying up. Children proficiently empty their food waste into a recycle bin and tidy their porcelain dishes away after snack. They have free flow between inside and out which is encouraged at all times of the day.

Care & Development — Good

Staff implement policies and procedures to promote safety for children. Staff spoken to as part of this inspection, have a suitable understanding of their role in protecting children and confidently answer safeguarding scenarios. Useful safeguarding prompts are readily available on each staff's lanyard to aid them, if needed. Nearly all staff have current mandatory training, including, safeguarding, first aid, and food hygiene. A varied healthy snack is provided by the setting, whilst parents provide a packed lunch for children who attend during this time. There are suitable systems in place to meet allergy and dietary needs. Cleaning and hygiene practices are good. Staff clean tables and support children in accessing the bathroom, washing hands prior to meals and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is worn when serving and preparing foods. Nappy changing practices are followed effectively.

Staff understand and implement the behaviour management policy effectively. They use positive reinforcement, encouraging children through praise. We heard staff say, *"Good girl", "good listening"* and *"that's amazing – well done"*. Staff recognise children's cues, allowing them to effectively support children in their interactions. They know the children extremely well and are responsive to their needs. Staff always promote good manners. They listen and communicate successfully, with one another and the children, sometimes using sign language and visual aids. Interactions demonstrate warmth, kindness, and patience. Staff give children cuddles and comfort, supporting them in their chosen play, engaging and interacting at children's levels. Staff effectively support children and are good role models. For example, when learning to use a frisbee, balance on the beams outside, and when sharing stories in the book area.

Staff provide a range of play and learning opportunities, which are mostly child led. Some adult led activities, such as song time at the end of the day is encouraged. They implement aspects of the Curriculum for Wales. Termly thematic planning is in place, which is introduced loosely, allowing for children's interests to be followed. Leaders and staff are developing their system in relation to planning, observations and next steps. Staff recognise if children have emerging or additional needs, with significant systems in place to support children and their families. They have embedded approaches in place to support children, signpost parents, and access help, advice and resources from several multi-agencies. Staff promote some Welsh on occasions. This could be further developed across all elements of sessions. Leaders have recognised this is an area they are developing and plan to continue to improve their use of Welsh language and culture at the setting.

Environment — Good

Leaders ensure the environment is safe, secure, and generally well maintained. The main entrance is closed, when needed and the gated entrance is secure. All visitors sign in. There are a range of risk assessments which undergo regular review. Alongside this, a caretaker's book is in place to monitor and review any health and safety issues which may arise. Staff complete and record daily health, safety, and cleaning checks. Regular fire drills are complete at different times of day. Appropriate electrical, fire and safety checks remain current.

Leaders ensure the service provides a varied range of opportunities for children. The indoor play areas provide children with space to freely move, with zoned areas of play. There are suitable toilet facilities and a nappy changing area within a disabled toilet. The environment is bright, light, and airy. Some of the children's artwork and photographs are hung on display, promoting a sense of self-worth. Information boards are available in the cloakroom area for parents and carers. A range of bilingual posters and prompts are dispersed around the setting to aid the use of Welsh. The outdoor play space has varying and engaging resources, across different areas. The wooded area allows for play with a mud kitchen, water play, allotment area, books and climbing apparatus. Alongside this, a hard surfaced area allows children to engage in bike, trikes and scooter play.

Leaders provide some quality, developmentally appropriate play and learning resources. Much of the equipment is readily available to children, so they can choose their interests independently. Some of the resources reflect a natural feel with some 'real-life' authentic resources included. They provide resources for all ages and stages of development, which contribute to the children's all-round development. 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 — Good

Leaders have a sound knowledge and understanding of the regulations and national minimum standards. Regulatory records are in place. Registers for children and staff are clear. They reflect when staff are caring for children, and when on their lunch breaks. Medication, accident, and incident records are mostly always signed by parents. Following our inspection visit, a new system is being implemented to ensure monthly reviews by leaders are in place. Leaders ensure there are accurate contracts, and consent forms in place for children attending the provision. Policies, procedures, and documents are due to undergo review, with plans in place to include review dates as a matter of course on the documents, as well as the cover sheet. They have appropriate public liability insurances. Leaders engage positively with CIW. However, they do not always notify CIW of significant events within the required 14-day timescales, particularly in relation to staff changes.

Leaders have strong self-evaluation systems in place. They seek the views of children and parents, within the review they reflect on what they do well, and how they can improve. Leaders have a vision for the setting, which is shared with others, and they are keen to drive improvement.

Leaders mostly follow effective recruitment processes to safeguard children. The recruitment procedures and suitability checks are mostly all in place, with regulatory information included. However, not all staff members have all appropriate references in place prior to starting employment. Staff have current and up to date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. Staff tell us they have support from the team and leaders, with regular supervision and appraisals complete. Formal and informal meetings, both individually and as a team take place. There are systems in place for staff to undertake training. Continual professional development is encouraged and supported by leaders.

Leaders have exceptionally strong partnerships. Professionals and multi-agency working is embedded culture at the setting. They work hard, with strong practices in place to support the children and families, enhancing the provision and outcomes for children and parents. Parents are kept informed of their children's development and progress through daily reports, newsletters and updates. Verbal discussions take place regularly at the start and end of the sessions.

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)
Standard 5 - Records	Consistently maintain completed accident forms and reviews in a timely manner.
Standard 13 (Day Care) - Suitable Person	Ensure all staff references are received prior to employment starts.
Standard 21 - Notifications of significant events	Consistently notify CIW of significant events, including staff changes at the setting.

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 with the development of Welsh language and heritage at the setting.

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