Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Blossom at Ysgol Afon Wen

Ysgol Afon Wen, School Lane, Pontypridd, CF37 5AL

07983505037

The inspection visit took place on 03/11/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Blossom Early Years
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	24
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	**Excellent**
Environment	**Excellent**
Leadership & Management	**Excellent**

Summary:

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at Blossom Early Years because they have a strong voice, and their well-being is a high priority. They are curious learners and frequently engage in purposeful play-based activities. Children develop exceptionally strong bonds of affection with staff, and they have a wealth of opportunities to develop their independence skills.

Staff are professional and passionate about their roles and successfully implement policies and procedures to keep children safe and healthy. They are enthusiastic and plan an extensive range of exciting activities led by children's interests, which supports their needs effectively. They maintain highly valuable records of children's progress and share these efficiently with parents and carers.

Leaders ensure the environment is secure, warm and welcoming. They offer a rich environment for play and learning through a range of outstanding play spaces. Leaders provide an abundance of resources and equipment which meet the individual needs of children effectively.

Leaders go above and beyond to ensure children and their families receive a high-quality service. They have an innovative vision which supports their improvement plan and enables them to develop positive partnerships with parents and carers and promote positive outcomes for children.

Findings:

Well-being — Excellent

Children are extremely confident communicators and have a very strong voice because they know staff will listen to them. For example, we saw staff respecting children's wishes when they asked to sing their favourite songs or read a story. Children have wonderful opportunities to make choices and decisions about what affects them. For instance, some children choose to play in the sand, some take part in a painting activity, and some children play in the role pay area indoors.

Children feel safe, secure and are immensely happy and relaxed. They arrive eagerly at the setting and settle quickly into their play. Children chat and interact constantly with staff and each other. They have very strong bonds with staff which has a highly beneficial impact on their well-being. We saw children smiling delightfully as they tell staff about their day. Children receive lots of praise and reassurance which means they have positive self-esteem and show great delight in their play.

Children are building exceptional friendships and behave exceedingly well. They work cooperatively on tasks and show a strong willingness to share resources and take turns in their play. For example, when a group of children were playing together outside, we heard a child say to another child, *"Can I have a turn after you?"* They are extremely kind and considerate towards one another saying, *"Yes of course, stay here by me so you don't miss a go."*

Children are curious learners who gain great pleasure in the opportunities available to them. They fully immerse themselves in their chosen experiences for extended periods of time. For example, children showed sustained interest whilst exploring painting onto different materials and textures outdoor. Indoors, children were engrossed in opening tea bags and using water to carefully make their own drink. Throughout the session, children have significant freedom to safely explore the indoor and outdoor environments. They enjoy the wide range of real-life experiences and confidently choose activities that interest them.

Children are developing their independence superbly. They readily wash their hands before eating, and carefully select their own crockery, pour their own drinks and clear away after themselves by placing any remaining food or drink into waste bins. Children also wash their own dishes and take responsibility for their belongings. For example, children put on and take off their shoes and coats. They access their items from their personal pegs as they make the various transitions within the setting. Children confidently ask for help and support when they need it, but they also receive lots of reassurance and encouragement from staff to problem solve, and work things out for themselves. This is a real strength of the setting as children enjoy taking responsibility and proudly tell everyone, *"I am independent!"* Children have a strong sense of achievement in the setting.

Care & Development — Excellent

Staff are conscientious and work very effectively to keep children safe and healthy. They fully understand and consistently implement a range of purposeful policies and procedures to a very high standard. Staff understand their responsibilities to protect children and have completed the relevant training. They ensure safeguarding is a high priority and confidently follow rigorous procedures. For example, they accurately record attendance for staff, children and visitors to the setting. Staff maintain thorough records relating to administering medication, accidents, incidents, and pre-existing injuries. They ensure these records are signed by parents and formally evaluate them to identify any emerging patterns. Staff hold food safety training and follow robust procedures to manage children's individual dietary requirements. In addition, staff consistently follow thorough hygiene and cleaning practices as part of the infection control process to help keep children healthy and safe. For example, they consistently remind children about the importance of washing their hands frequently.

Staff are excellent role models, interacting beautifully with the children and fostering strong relationships. They are kind, caring and patient, and genuinely show interest in the children. Staff encourage children to express their feelings and emotions and are extremely responsive and nurturing, meaning children approach them with great ease. Staff skilfully implement their guiding behaviour policy and fully accept and recognise that a child's behaviour is communicating something to them. This means they respond in ways that ensure children feel heard. For example, they support children to name their feelings, remain calm alongside them, and then help them respond safely to situations and find appropriate solutions. Staff make the most of every opportunity to find 'glimmers'. This means they actively look for the positive in every situation and consistently provide children with meaningful praise and reassurance. This is clearly a strength of the setting, as it means children feel safe and have a very strong sense of *cynefin*. As a result, behaviour is exemplary. Staff sit alongside and engage with children during their play to highlight these glimmers, for example, when they are building a house for the dinosaur, experimenting with sand and water, or playing on the balancing beams and outdoor equipment. We heard staff use an abundance of positive phrases such as, *"That is so kind of you!", "Well done, you did that all by yourself!"* and *"You did that—that's amazing!"*

Staff clearly recognise how best to support children through providing a wide range of opportunities for them to explore and experiment independently within the environment. As a result, children are at the centre of their own learning and development and confidently follow their own interests and curiosity. Staff maintain exemplary records and journals which reflect children's progress and achievements. They clearly know the children well and are aware of children's individual needs and abilities. Staff create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the setting where children can choose to engage in quiet or energetic activities. Staff frequently use Welsh with the children and promote the Welsh language and culture through a variety of displays, songs, resources and activities.

Environment — Excellent

Leaders have highly effective measures in place to ensure everyone fully understands their responsibilities in relation to the safety and welfare of children. They implement the relevant policies and successfully embed clear systems within the setting. Leaders ensure the environment is safe, secure and extremely well maintained indoors and outdoors. There is plenty of room for children to play and learn and staff ensure free flow is available between the indoor and outdoor spaces. They are vigilant and ensure staff supervise children well. Staff recognise and understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable risk for the ages and abilities of the children. Leaders follow an extensive range of comprehensive risk assessments including daily safety checks of the indoor and outdoor areas to highlight any risks. They regularly review their risk assessments and take appropriate action if needed. Leaders ensure all maintenance checks for the building and appliances are up to date. They practice regular fire drills and maintain the relevant records to ensure all staff and children can evacuate the building in an emergency.

Leaders provide a very stimulating, spacious and accessible environment for children to enjoy their play by ensuring the premises are warm and welcoming. The indoor and outdoor play areas offer a high-quality environment where children can play, learn and explore. The outdoor space is a natural extension of the indoor environment. It is safe and secure, and leaders ensure children benefit from the time they spend there. Children clearly enjoy moving between the indoor and outdoor areas, accessing a wide range of engaging activities and resources. During the inspection visit, we observed children moving freely and confidently between these two spaces, relishing in the activities and resources on offer. Displays throughout the setting are extremely meaningful and reflect children's time in the setting. For example, there are photographs of children, their families and their artwork is also on the walls, which promotes their self-esteem and fosters a strong sense of belonging. Leaders use neutral colours and many natural resources throughout the environment. This provides a sense of calmness, supports children's individual needs and enhances their curiosity and interests.

Leaders create rich play and learning experiences for the children through a wide variety of high-quality resources that stimulate children's interests and supports all areas of their learning and development. For example, there are dedicated spaces for role-play, messy play, construction play as well as a cosy reading area. The thoughtful layout of the environment, combined with low-level furniture and resources, promotes children's independence. For example, children confidently access low level storage with open shelves and baskets finding what they want with ease. Leaders provide quality furniture. Child-sized tables and chairs enable children to comfortably participate in table-top activities and enjoy meals and snacks, whilst child-sized toilets respect their privacy and dignity. Outside resources, including water play, the mud kitchen and larger play equipment, encourage and extend children's play and learning experiences further.

Leadership & Management — Excellent

Leadership and management of the setting is outstanding. Leaders have an innovative and bold vision for the service that they communicate successfully to staff, parents, carers and visitors. This creates a very positive ethos. They ensure the setting achieves exceptional standards and delivers high-quality care, providing development opportunities for children and staff. Leaders maintain and share an accurate statement of purpose that provides parents and carers with a clear picture of how the setting runs. They implement a comprehensive range of policies and procedures which they regularly review and embed successfully within the setting. Leaders record children's preferences in detail, and they have the appropriate parental permissions in place.

Leaders are approachable and welcome ideas or suggestions to enhance their practice. They are committed to improving outcomes for children and their families through continuous self-evaluation. Leaders have well-established systems to ensure regular feedback from parents, carers, children, staff, and a range of outside professionals, enhances their practice. As a result, tangible improvements are made which have a positive impact on outcomes for children. They recognise and highlight their strengths, as well as areas they would like to improve further.

Leaders have high expectations and are motivated to lead staff well. They support staff in understanding their roles and responsibilities through regular appraisals and supervisions that are integral to their practice. This ensures staff are energetic and confident in their roles as they feel supported and valued by the leaders. Leaders follow excellent recruitment procedures to safeguard children and ensure staff have the necessary qualifications and experience to effectively care for children. Staff files are of excellent quality and there is a thorough induction process. Leaders have exceptionally high expectations of staff, always challenging and supporting them to do their best. There is a strong ethos of teamwork amongst staff, and they work collaboratively ensuring the best experiences and outcomes for children. They are very well organised, and this allows them to remain calm whilst delivering outstanding care.

Leaders develop exceptionally positive relationships with parents and carers by ensuring all communication is valuable. For example, parents receive frequent, detailed updates in relation to their children via the online platform, *"Fy Nyth".* Parents said they are thrilled with the setting and comment how staff go above and beyond in all they do. They also feel staff support and care about them as well as their children. One parent said, *"I cannot praise this setting enough. They are incredible*." Leaders have positive links with a wide range of professionals, the community and other stakeholders. They ensure when there are concerns about children's progress or development that there are clear and effective procedures in place for sharing information. Leaders also ensure the setting works with the school to support successful transitions and promote positive outcomes for children.

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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