

A report on
Sunbeams playgroup + Gwernaffield

**The Community Centre
Ysgol Y Waun
Gwernaffield
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 5DP**

Date of inspection: March 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Sunbeams playgroup + Gwernaffield

Name of setting	Sunbeams playgroup plus Gwernaffield
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	N/A
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Louise Ankers
Person in charge	Corey Williams
Number of places	30
Age range of children	
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	12
Number of children who receive funding for early education	0
Opening days / times	9.00-17.30
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	No
Date of previous CIW inspection	04/06/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection	22/05/2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	11/03/2025
<p>Sunbeams playgroup plus Gwernaffield operates from the Community Room at Ysgol Y Waun, Mold. The setting is open Monday to Friday, but offers education from 9.00 to 11.30, Monday to Thursday only.</p> <p>During this inspection, there were no children at the setting funded for education.</p>	

Summary

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

Non-compliance

We have identified non-compliance in relation to Themes 3, 5 and 6 and we have issued a priority action notice to the provider. The provider must take immediate steps to address these and make improvements.

Information on all non-compliance is included in the Action and Improvement Summary report, which will be sent separate to the report by CIW.

Recommendations

- R1. Address the areas of non-compliance identified during the inspection
- R2. Develop more effective processes for observing children and ensure that learning activities develop their skills, knowledge and understanding systematically and progressively
- R3. Improve processes for evaluating and improving the work of the setting

What happens next

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Estyn and the Chief Inspector of Care Inspectorate Wales are of the opinion that joint follow up is required in relation to this setting. The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn and CIW will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Well-being: Adequate

Most children have suitable opportunities to make choices and decisions about what they want to do at the setting. For example, they choose what they want to play with, which friends to play alongside and how much they want to eat and drink. They know that practitioners respond to most of their requests appropriately, which results in many expressing their opinions confidently.

Most children are happy and settle well when they arrive at the setting. However, a few children sometimes struggle to settle and remain upset for prolonged periods of time. Most children develop positive relationships with practitioners they know well. They are familiar with many of the setting's routines and know what is expected of them, such as washing their hands before mealtimes and going to the toilet before walking to the garden area.

Most children interact with others appropriately. They smile when greeting their friends and enjoy showing each other their paintings. With support, they are beginning to co-operate and share resources, such as the small world farm items. A few older children are starting to show patience and empathy towards younger children, for instance helping them to pick up herbs from a bowl they have accidentally tipped over. Most children engage positively with practitioners and are happy to show and talk about what they are doing.

Most children engage in a range of play activities purposefully. For example, they enjoy digging in the garden area to harvest vegetables. Most enjoy sharing stories with practitioners, holding books themselves so that they can look at the pictures. They enjoy playing outdoors, climbing on large apparatus and making meals in the role play mud kitchen. Many children pour their own drinks and serve themselves at snack time. However, at times, practitioners support children too much in their play and in their learning activities. This limits children's opportunities to learn through exploration and their ability to explore and problem-solve. As a result, children do not develop their independence as strongly as they could.

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

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: Adequate

A majority of practitioners follow policies and procedures which encourage healthy lifestyles and promote children's health and wellbeing appropriately. For example, they encourage children to play outdoors frequently and offer well balanced food and healthy drinks. They monitor and record children's attendance accurately. Practitioners generally follow cleaning and hygiene routines suitably. However, they do not always ensure that nappy changing facilities provide all children with adequate privacy, and do not consistently complete these processes in a fully hygienic manner.

Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding procedures. For example, they understand well their responsibility to report concerns and the procedures for doing this. They complete accident and incident records competently and share these with parents appropriately. However, the setting does not consistently follow processes that promote safe practice, for instance when recruiting practitioners to work at the setting. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children do not meet requirements and give cause for concern.

A majority of practitioners implement positive behaviour strategies effectively. For example, they engage with children in a caring, calm manner and ensure they are treated with respect. They keep instructions short and simple and motivate children well by celebrating their efforts. For example, they praise children positively when pouring their own drinks or when having a go at speaking Welsh.

Practitioners are good role models and are sensitive to the needs and experiences of children. They provide support to children when appropriate, such as helping them put on their coats and offering reassurance if children are upset. However, they do not support new children well enough and as a result, these children can find it difficult to settle.

The setting has appropriate processes to support children with additional learning needs. They put steps in place so that children can successfully access their play and learning. They seek beneficial advice and support from the attached school and know how to make use of external agencies to ensure children make suitable progress.

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

A majority of practitioners understand well the importance of providing opportunities for children to learn through play and active involvement in authentic contexts. They provide children with an engaging range of child-led activities that spark their curiosity and are beginning to meet children's individual needs flexibly. For example, children dig for vegetables in the outdoors, compare their findings thoughtfully and discuss what they can make with the potatoes they find.

Many activities reflect real-life experiences and help children to develop independence, for instance washing China cups and saucers carefully in the water tray. However, when planning and delivering learning experiences, practitioners do not consider carefully enough the knowledge and skills that they wish children to develop. They do not have effective systems in place to coordinate the development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding systematically over time.

A majority of practitioners have high expectations of children and challenge them considerably. For example, practitioners challenge children to predict and explain what they think will happen next in a story. This helps to develop children's thinking skills thoughtfully. When children are playing, a majority of practitioners intervene appropriately when required.

The setting provides children with suitable opportunities to learn about their locality and Wales. A majority of practitioners are beginning to use the Welsh language more regularly to help children recognise and understand a few words and phrases. However, this is still at the early stages of development.

Practitioners make a few observations of children during their play. This helps them to identify suitably what children can do when at the setting. However, there are not strong enough processes in place to observe and analyse children's learning and progress, or to respond with future activities that meet children's developmental and learning needs.

A majority of practitioners support children's language acquisition appropriately, for instance through engaging discussions and careful questioning. They provide children with appropriate opportunities to listening to stories and join in with familiar songs. This helps to support the development of children's vocabulary well. There are appropriate opportunities for children to develop early number skills through their play. For example, children practice counting eggs, and compare lengths of carrots, identifying longer and shorter.

The setting arranges a few useful trips and visits to help supplement the curriculum and provide children with an understanding of their local area and the world outside of the setting. For example, children visit the local supermarket for snacks and go to the local community coffee morning to develop their social skills and meet adults from the locality. This helps children to develop independence and confidence when interacting with others.

Practitioners support children's cultural and social development suitably. For example, they help children to develop an understanding of how to contribute to society and care for the world in which they live through celebrations, such as Earth Day, and by encouraging recycling and taking part in litter picks.

While practitioners engage with parents helpfully and positively on a daily basis, there are not effective enough systems to keep parents and carers informed of their children's progress and what they can do to promote their development.

Environment: Adequate

In general, practitioners and leaders follow appropriate processes to ensure that the environment is safe. For example, there are secure procedure to manage access to the setting through the school gates and main entrance. Practitioners promote managed risk suitably, such as supporting children to balance at height and to successfully cross the stepping stones in the garden. Practitioners ensure that they check that learning areas are ready for children to use each day. They take basic first-aid kits outdoors to help them deal with any minor issues. However, leaders do not complete risk assessments for the setting. As a result, they are not sufficiently prepared to manage potential risks to children.

Leaders ensure there are suitable procedures in place for emergency evacuation of the premises. They carry out fire drills regularly and record these appropriately. However, they do not conduct drills widely enough, such as with the children who attend the after-school club, to help them understand processes to keep them safe.

Leaders have worked diligently to make positive changes to the learning environment. They consider thoughtfully the resources they provide for children, for example real life items to stimulate children's curiosity. Most resources are within children's reach, enabling them to access toys and resources independently, such as small tools when making models out of dough.

Practitioners ensure that the environment has sufficient indoor play space for children to move freely and that there are areas available for children to relax, play quietly or rest.

Practitioners ensure that the environment is warm, welcoming and accessible to all. For example, areas are filled with plenty of light and decorated in a natural style which creates a gentle, calm atmosphere. They display children's work suitably, which encourages children to feel a sense of pride and belonging. Practitioners ensure that areas are clean and appropriately maintained. They provide children with good quality, furniture, toys and resources that are well maintained. Practitioners use toys and resources appropriately to teach children about different people around the world. However, overall, there are limited culturally diverse resources, such as picture books in the reading area. As a result, children have few opportunities to develop their awareness of a broad range of cultures.

The setting has suitable outdoor play spaces, including a garden area which includes a good range of age-appropriate resources, which supports children's interests and promotes their development well.

Leadership and management: Poor

The setting's new leader has been in place for only a few days. In this short time, she has rightly focused on understanding the strengths and shortcomings in the setting and developing relationships with the setting's responsible individual. The leader is enthusiastic and motivated. She is developing her vision for the setting and has already begun to make changes that improve provision for children, such as improving the organisation of the learning environment. However, leaders, including the responsible individual, have not been aware enough of important guidance, such as the national minimum standards for regulated childcare to ensure that the setting operates as well or as safely as it should. As a result, there are significant shortcomings in important areas, such as in the safer recruitment of staff and in appropriate hygiene control. These have resulted in a priority action notice that requires immediate attention.

Leaders and practitioners work positively as a team and are committed to the care of children. They undertake suitable professional learning, for example on the development of engaging learning experiences. As a result, they have made effective changes to the learning environment to ensure that it engages children's interests well. The setting's statement of purpose is clear and reflects the setting well. It helps to inform parents and carers about the setting's work suitably.

Leaders reflect the settings strengths and areas for development appropriately to create plans for future developments. However, they base their understanding on too little first-hand information. For example, there are too few observations of children's play and learning to inform them on the progress that children make during their time at the setting. While leaders identify a few priorities beneficially, such as the need to provide more opportunities for children to hear and use the Welsh language, they do not evaluate the quality of teaching and of children's learning well enough. Leaders also do not collect the views of parents, children and staff when undertaking reviews, such as those assessing the quality of care.

Leaders implement strategies to improve a few aspects of the setting's work suitably. For instance, their work to improve the outdoor learning environment has led to a stimulating provision that engages children effectively. However, leaders do not always focus on important areas that need improvement, such as strategies to ensure that children's learning builds in a structured and coherent way. They do not always consider how they will bring about improvement carefully enough. Leaders do not respond swiftly enough to recommendations from previous inspections.

Leaders manage resources, including grant funding effectively. They use this well to improve provision for children. However, they do not always manage staff effectively enough. Practitioners job descriptions do not consistently match with their roles and leaders do not ensure that the setting has the correct ratio of qualified practitioners to children. They do not undertake appropriate supervision and appraisal processes. As a result, leaders do not identify well enough practitioners' strengths and their professional learning needs.

Leaders build good relationships with parents and carers. They listen to parents considerately and share information about children's day-to-day activities with parents at the end of sessions. They have developed an informative newsletter and are beginning to share information with parents more proactively, such as about the main events that happen at the setting each month. Leaders make beneficial use of their discussions with parents. However, to date they have not always acted well enough on helpful advice and guidance from partners, such as the local authority's advisory teacher. This has meant that needed improvements have not been introduced rapidly enough.

The setting has useful links with local schools and have useful arrangements in place to share information on children and help them move on to the next step in their education beneficially.

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