A report on

Little Stars (Deeside) Ltd

Unit 69 Third Avenue
Zone 2
Deeside Ind Park
Flintshire
CH5 2LA

Date of inspection: July 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Stars (Deeside) Ltd

Name of setting	Little Stars (Deeside) Ltd
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Ellen Lynn Lloyd-Wilson
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Ellen Lynn Lloyd-Wilson
Person in charge	Rebecca Medenica
Number of places	75
Age range of children	3 months – 8 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	25
Number of children who receive funding for early education	16
Opening days / times	7:30am – 6pm (Monday – Friday)
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	Yes
Date of previous CIW inspection	November 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection	February 2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	01 - 02/07/2025

Summary

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

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1. Continue to build on progress by embedding improvements and maintaining a clear focus on key priorities

What happens next

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

CIW and Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how leaders plan for continuous improvement, for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Children have a strong voice that influences their daily experiences at the setting and allows them to demonstrate their independence and decision-making skills effectively. Nearly all children make confident choices, such as selecting their snack or deciding whether to play indoors or outside. Nearly all children actively explore their environment, showing interest and curiosity. They express themselves exceptionally well, both verbally and non-verbally. They feel valued and know that practitioners and their peers listen to them. As a result, children are regularly engaged in high quality and purposeful interactions.

Nearly all children are happy, settled and cope exceptionally well with separation from their parents and carers. They develop warm, close relationships with each other and practitioners. Nearly all children play alongside or with each other confidently, engaging in meaningful and purposeful interactions. For example, they enjoy looking at photographs of their families and pointing out familiar family members, developing a strong sense of belonging and self-identity. Nearly all children listen and follow instructions well. They know the routine and structures of the day and follow them confidently. They demonstrate good manners and behave exceptionally well. Nearly all children make purposeful choices and move confidently between activities and the environment. Younger children play alongside each other as is appropriate for their age or stage of development. Older children share resources effectively and show respect to one another when role playing at 'selling' ice creams and whilst engaging in parachute play.

Nearly all children are busy and happy in their play. They join in with a variety of indoor and outdoor activities with curiosity and enthusiasm. They enjoy sensory experiences, such as exploring textures and smells with playdough, and take pride in creative tasks such as mixing paint to decorate a boat they built from recycled materials. Younger children maintain focus during messy play outdoors and explore, different materials confidently as they play.

Nearly all children become increasingly independent in managing their self-care. They help to tidy up, wipe their noses, and feed themselves independently at mealtimes. Nearly all children wash their hands and brush their teeth with confidence. Younger children receive appropriate support when needed to help wash their hands prior to meals. Many children take care of their belongings, tidy away their plates when they finish their meals and push their chairs under the table capably.

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

Nearly all children make very strong progress in their skills as they progress through the setting. They form strong relationships with adults who they trust and feel safe around. This supports them to feel secure to express their needs and share their emotions. These strong relationships support children to manage their emotions appropriately and build secure social connections.

Nearly all children develop their language skills exceptionally well and communicate highly effectively using a wide and extensive vocabulary. Nearly all children listen attentively and respond to practitioners and their peers appropriately during play demonstrating strong interaction skills. They are confident communicators who ask and respond to questions naturally within their play. Many children use signing confidently when singing songs and rhymes. Nearly all children show a clear understanding of daily routines and respond promptly to familiar cues. For example, when the bell rings to indicate that it is time to tidy up, they bring their play to a close and work together to put away their play items. This helps them to develop a strong sense of responsibility and how they make a positive contribution to the life of the setting. Nearly all children join in with singing familiar Welsh songs and many show a suitable understanding and respond appropriately to Welsh phrases that they hear frequently.

Many children choose books independently and show clear enjoyment when reading alone or with an adult. They often select familiar stories, such as those about dinosaurs, and engage actively by pointing to pictures and listening attentively. When sharing stories, children show genuine interest and enjoyment, commenting thoughtfully on illustrations, for example noticing the owls' big eyes. Most children demonstrate a growing confidence in the development of their early writing skills. They engage in mark-making purposefully, often writing for real-life reasons within their play, such as writing a note to a parent.

Most children use extensive mathematical vocabulary naturally throughout their play, for example when filling and emptying containers to create a magic potion in the mud kitchen. They show strong problem-solving skills when working together to achieve a chosen shared goal, such as sorting lollipop sticks by colour in a tray. Most children support one another, show persistence and enjoyment, and encourage others to join in. This fosters a collaborative and inclusive environment where children feel confident to take risks.

Nearly all children demonstrate strong physical and creative skills as they engage in a wide range of activities that promote control, co-ordination, and imaginative thinking. They take reasonable risks in the outdoors, for example climbing obstacles and walking across the balance beam. They happily seek support from their peers when unsure about the risk, then attempt again. They use tools with good precision when manipulating dough, for example to create birthday cakes, where they confidently roll, press, and insert sticks into the dough to represent candles. Many children develop their fine motor skills well, for example by using tweezers in a pincer grip to handle small objects. They show outstanding creativity when arranging objects to make skeleton collages.

Nearly all children play co-operatively and purposefully. For example, when exploring how toy figures move down ramps, they observe carefully how different surfaces affect the way the figures fall. They share ideas and make joint decisions successfully as they work together to build a long track for cars to travel down. As a result, they make strong progress in developing their problem-solving and collaboration skills.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners are dedicated, professional and passionate in their roles. They interact with children in an extremely caring, warm and gentle manner, creating a positive, calm, and

happy atmosphere. Practitioners show mutual respect, modelling positive behaviours effectively. They know the children well and engage purposefully to support their development. Practitioners follow the settings behaviour management policy consistently. This ensures that practitioners interact with children positively and offer meaningful praise to reinforce good behaviour. They use gentle reminders, such as asking children to use 'kind hands' and apply distraction techniques skilfully when needed. As a result, most children behave exceptionally well.

Practitioners follow policies and procedures to keep children safe and healthy consistently well. They ensure that there is correct staffing in place to supervise children safely. The setting has clear and effective records to record accidents, incidents and medications. Practitioners ensure that these records are kept up to date. Practitioners know what to do in an emergency as they practise and record regular fire evacuation drills. Leaders provide a vast range of healthy meals and snacks for children including milk or water to drink. They follow effective procedures to support children with allergies and dietary needs and develop individual menus, which are followed successfully. The setting promotes the importance of healthy eating and drinking and encourages good dental hygiene amongst all children. Practitioners have a thorough understanding of how to protect children and know what to do if they have any concerns. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners are highly successful in meeting the needs of children, including those with additional learning needs. They recognise if children may have an additional or emerging need and have well-established systems in place to support them. They use one-page profiles and have individual information sheets, which provide practitioners with detailed information about a child's interests, likes and dislikes. They prioritise developmental readiness over age. This ensures that practitioners nurture children's emotional well-being exceptionally well. This highly effective system empowers them to support and nurture each child successfully. A well-structured and effective transition process is in place for children moving rooms within the setting. This includes room visits and information sharing with parents. This helps to ensure smooth and successful transitions within the setting.

Practitioners are highly responsive in supporting children in their play. They extend children's thinking through encouraging exploration, introducing new vocabulary, and asking purposeful questions. They use songs during transition times as children move from one activity or area to the next, helping to create a calm, familiar routine that supports children's confidence and co-operation. They successfully implement circle time and include many bilingual elements that support children's engagement and language development well. Practitioners are motivated and engage with children exceptionally well to promote their all-round development, knowing when to step back or offer support if needed.

Practitioners plan activities from a child led perspective. They review their observations of children's play to adapt the provision to reflect their needs and development. Many activities make imaginative use of a wide range of resources within the indoor and outdoor areas. For example, practitioners include recycled materials, loose parts and messy play to encourage sensory exploration and provide a range of valuable creative and mark making activities. These experiences ignite children's curiosity and develop their creative thinking exceptionally well.

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

Practitioners demonstrate a sound understanding of child development, which underpins their highly effective teaching and assessment practices. Practitioners balance adult-led and child-initiated learning effectively. Their planning is robust and reflective, informed by high-quality observations of children's play. Practitioners use their knowledge of children's current interests skilfully to adapt the learning experiences on offer. As a result, nearly all children are engaged, motivated, and able to make meaningful connections in their learning.

Practitioners are excellent role models who foster respectful, co-operative relationships, creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for children to play and learn. They ensure that children receive a continuity of care and emotional security. This has a beneficial effect on children's well-being and social development, as they feel safe, valued, and ready to explore and learn within a consistent and caring environment.

Practitioners promote the Welsh language and culture effectively. They use bilingual signage and Welsh storybooks to support early recognition, while daily routines incorporate Welsh naturally, which help to reinforce language through repetition and routine. Leaders promote the use of Welsh at home well by including a Welsh word of the month in the newsletter, along with phonetic guidance to support parents.

Practitioners develop children's communication skills highly effectively. They provide purposeful opportunities to use sign language, which supports the development of children's early communication skills well. Practitioners foster children's early writing skills through thoughtfully structured activities. For example, they purposefully leave marking tools and paper on clipboards in the building area to encourage children to make marks during play. Books are readily available across the provision to support language and literacy skills, including themed storybooks in different areas such as building-themed books in the construction area, hospital-themed books in the doctor's surgery and cookbooks in the home area. They share stories during child-led moments and lead engaging group sessions to deepen learning.

Practitioners are beginning to introduce valuable opportunities for children to develop their digital skills, such as incorporating scales in the mud kitchen and providing toy phones for role play. Practitioners skilfully enhance children's mathematical language through a range of rich and purposeful experiences, where they model specific mathematical language as children play. They provide a wide range of engaging resources to develop children's mathematical skills effectively throughout the setting.

Practitioners effectively develop children's language, observation, and sensory skills through authentic outdoor experiences that inspire awe and wonder. For example, a bug hotel with magnifying glasses, pots, and books encourages children to explore, ask questions, and use new vocabulary.

Leaders and practitioners use information gathered from their observations and assessments effectively to inform planning and support children's progress. They make regular observations, which are useful and comprehensive and make thoughtful adaptions to the provision in response. For example, when practitioners notice that children

confidently use terms such as ‘big’ and ‘small’ to describe containers, they enhance the provision with a wider range of containers to extend the children’s vocabulary to include terms like ‘full’ and ‘empty’. Leaders and practitioners set clear, realistic targets for children and monitor their progress closely through ongoing observations and detailed developmental records. Practitioners share important information about children’s progress with parents and carers. This helps parents and carers understand their child’s progress, strengths, and areas for development. It also supports them in reinforcing learning at home and staying involved in their child’s development.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders ensure that the indoor and outdoor environments are exceptionally safe and secure. They have comprehensive and effective procedures in place to ensure that all staff know their responsibilities. They implement highly effective and comprehensive risk assessments and review them regularly. Leaders take prompt action to address any issues that may arise because of safety checks. They follow robust procedures in relation to visitors accessing the setting. Leaders undertake regular fire drills with children, so that everyone knows what to do in an emergency. The premises are exceptionally clean and maintained to a very high standard. Practitioners follow effective hygiene procedures, such as cleaning tables and regular handwashing. These robust procedures ensure that risks are minimised.

The setting offers a highly effective, rich learning environment, which is light, bright, airy and spacious for all ages. Internal windows between rooms promote the sense of openness and support the engagement within the setting. There is an emphasis on neutral furnishings and high-quality resources with soothing music being played at low level throughout the nursery. This supports a calm atmosphere for children to learn and play. Leaders and practitioners thoughtfully consider the quality of the resources and the impact this has on prompting children’s curiosity and exploration. These include resources that reflect the natural environment and contain ‘real life’ items in the home corner and outside mud kitchen areas. These resources help spark children’s curiosity and encourage them to investigate further. This highly enabling environment provides children with a variety of play and learning opportunities throughout the nursery, which support children’s skills development exceptionally well.

Leaders provide children with appropriately sized furniture and equipment for their age and stage of development and all resources are displayed at low level, which allows children to be independent in their play. Toileting facilities are accessible, allowing children to increase their independence, and nappy changing provision allows for effective and efficient practices to be completed.

Leaders provide designated areas for children to store their personal belongings and display children's artwork and experiences attractively across the setting. Leaders use a variety of play materials to promote children’s cultural awareness, Welsh heritage and knowledge of diversity well. For example, leaders provide a range of resources such as traditional jewellery and instruments associated with Africa, alongside dressing up, books and puzzles that reflect different cultures. This effectively promotes children’s understanding of the world.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leadership at the setting is highly effective. Leaders articulate a clear vision for continuous improvement and foster a strong ethos of respect, collaboration, and high expectations. They are knowledgeable and diligent, and demonstrate a secure understanding of the setting's priorities. This is underpinned by robust systems that ensure the setting operates smoothly and safely daily. The statement of purpose is clear and provides an accurate picture of the setting, helping parents make informed decisions about its suitability for their child.

Leaders provide clear direction and structure. They ensure that staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which are communicated effectively. Leaders ensure a consistent approach to planning, observations of children's play, and health and safety procedures are in place throughout the setting. As a result, practitioners work confidently and cohesively. This contributes to a calm and purposeful environment where practitioners feel well supported in their roles.

Leaders ensure that safe recruitment procedures are in place, and new staff are well supported through induction and training. Leaders embed appraisal and supervision into the setting's culture, with annual reviews and additional support where appropriate. They arrange regular staff meetings, which provide valuable opportunities for reflection and shared decision-making. This inclusive approach ensures that all staff contribute meaningfully to improvement planning.

Leaders have developed a well-established system that ensures clarity, consistency, and a shared understanding of expectations, routines, and approaches to supporting children's learning among all practitioners. Leaders ensure worthwhile opportunities for practitioners to develop in their roles through beneficial professional learning opportunities. Experienced staff model high-quality practice to their colleagues, which effectively supports the development of newer team members. Leaders work closely with advisory teachers to ensure that children's individual needs are met effectively. This collaborative culture promotes consistency and contributes to the high quality of provision across the setting.

Leaders have established a highly effective reflective self-evaluation system, that draws on a wide range of evidence. This includes local authority reports, stakeholder feedback, and observations and learning from other high-performing settings. This ensures that leaders use varied evidence to identify strengths and areas for improvement, guiding effective planning and ongoing progress. They make highly effective use of available funding, including grants and community donations, to enhance the learning environment. For example, following visits to other settings, and observing to plan a mud kitchen using authentic items such as herbs, vegetables, a microwave, and a kettle, they set up a similar area to support children's imaginative play. Leaders use a range of evaluative approaches to inform planning and decision-making. They involve staff and stakeholders in the process, fostering a strong sense of shared ownership. Leaders regularly review and adjust plans to ensure that improvement priorities and planning remain relevant and responsive. The setting's partnerships with parents and carers are strong. Leaders invite parents to progress meetings and important events such as sports day, graduation, and curriculum information sessions. These

meaningful opportunities ensure that families are well informed and actively involved in their children's learning.

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

This document has been translated by Trosol/Prysg (English to Welsh).

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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.

Mae’r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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