A report on

St Winefride's Preschool

St Winefrides Catholic School
Whitford Street
Holywell
CH8 7NJ

Date of inspection: May 2026

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About St Winefride's Preschool

Name of setting	St. Winefride's Preschool
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Louise Williams
Person in charge	Veronica Ecob and Louise Williams
Number of places	19
Age range of children	2 – 4 years old
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	25
Number of children who receive funding for early education	11
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday 8.15am to 3.15pm
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service is making a significant effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture or is working towards being a bilingual service.
Date of previous CIW inspection	23/01/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection	22/06/2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	12/05/2026
Additional information	

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)**	**Good**
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)**	**Good**
Environment	**Excellent**
Leadership and management	**Excellent**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendation

R1 Improve practitioners use of Welsh during play and daily routines to develop children's Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

CIW and Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the strong transition links for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Children are safe and happy and have excellent opportunities to make choices and decisions throughout their time at the pre-school. They choose where and to play and whether to join in with group activities. Nearly all children feel valued and they know that the practitioners will listen to their ideas and opinions. As a result, children engage regularly in high-quality and purposeful interactions. Nearly all children are familiar with daily routines, such as washing their hands before eating and brushing their teeth. This helps them to feel secure and develop a strong sense of belonging. Nearly all children express themselves confidently and make their needs known. Children who have pre-verbal skills use clear gestures to signal their needs and receive an immediate support from the extremely responsive staff.

Nearly all children are exceptionally happy and settled. They cope extremely well with being separated from their parents and carers and move confidently between and activities. They are confident to approach practitioners and express themselves, for example, readily telling staff about events in their home lives whilst playing or during lunch.

Nearly all children interact positively with their friends and those caring for them. They have numerous worthwhile opportunities to develop their social skills and play in friendship groups, which they engage in with real pleasure and enthusiasm. Some children are starting to show empathy for others. For example, checking on their friends when they fall over to ensure they are not hurt. Most children readily approach practitioners for support and comfort and are given regular praise for their efforts. For example, children who happily wait for their turn to play at the water tray receive praise from practitioners for being patient.

Nearly all children are highly engaged learners who greatly enjoy the rich and exciting opportunities they have to play and learn. They enjoy the freedom to move around the stimulating learning areas and confidently choose activities that interest them. Nearly all children sustain concentration well and demonstrate strong problem- solving skills during their play. For example, when a pair of scissors did not work when cutting their picture effectively, a few children went to the basket of scissors independently to find ones which did. After successfully completing the task, they displayed a strong sense of pride in their achievement.

Most children develop increasing independence and self-help skills. Most independently put on and take off their shoes and clothing, as well as managing their own personal care. They independently access the toilet facilities and wash their hands, with encouragement from staff where needed. Nearly all younger children feed themselves and use cutlery independently, accessing their drinks throughout the day.

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

Many children make good progress from their individual starting points during their time at the setting. Many children express themselves clearly using simple sentences. For example, they talk about their families and describe what they enjoy eating at home. Most children are developing a love of reading. They show enjoyment when listening to stories read by practitioners and actively share books with friends, talking enthusiastically about the pictures. A few children accurately predict key words in 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and confidently explain the ending of the story to an adult. Many children are developing purposeful mark making skills. They experiment with different media such as pencils, paint and chalks to draw pictures of themselves and a few children are beginning to form letters in their name.

Most children develop their mathematical skills well. They explore the concept of capacity as they fill and empty containers with water and sand. Many children are beginning to understand the concept of time and sequence, through familiar daily routines, such as knowing that lunchtime follows handwashing. The majority of children explore two-dimensional shapes and are beginning to name them correctly.

Most children develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. They sing Welsh songs at whole group time suitably and respond positively to simple phrases throughout the day.

Nearly all children develop their physical skills successfully. They use a variety of tools skilfully, such as scissors to snip paper and playdough, demonstrating good fine motor control. Nearly all children are active in their play and develop their gross motor skills well. For example, they climb, swing and balance confidently outdoors. Most children develop their imagination well and engage enthusiastically in imaginative role-play, such as pretending to cook meals in the home corner. Most children enjoy creating two- and three-dimensional artwork, for example by, making models of their houses and gardens. Most children demonstrate effective digital skills and use devices independently to take photographs of things that interest them. Nearly all children develop their personal skills well. They put on aprons before water play and wash their hands before mealtimes. Many children develop effective social and emotional skills and co-operate successfully with others. For example, they share resources and take turns during activities. Many children show perseverance and resilience in their play, when faced with challenges. For example, they practice balancing on an outdoor obstacle course until they succeed. They manage their own risks skilfully in their play, such as when climbing up a grass bank independently and deciding how to descend safely.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners are highly motivated, skilled and passionate in providing excellent care and supporting children to reach their full potential. They adhere diligently to the setting's policies and procedures in relation to hygiene, health and safety. They encourage regular hand washing and are attentive when children play with water, mopping up spills to prevent slips and falls. Practitioners attend a range of different courses to update their knowledge

and skills, and they are implementing this learning to a high standard. They follow best practice guidance in relation to safeguarding children. Key information is displayed on the reverse of their lanyards, ensuring they have constant and immediate access to safeguarding procedures to help keep children safe. They have a clear knowledge of safeguarding issues and follow the setting's safeguarding procedures diligently. Practitioners record accident, incidents and ensure existing injuries are recorded accurately. All records are shared with parents and carers, and practitioners monitor records to identify any patterns or trends. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners manage children's interactions exceptionally well. They implement the behaviour policy consistently, fairly and calmly, creating a positive ethos throughout the setting. Practitioners promote positive behaviour effectively through praise and encouragement. They implement the behaviour policy in a consistent, fair, and extremely calm manner, creating a positive ethos throughout the setting. Practitioners implement strategies that support children's behaviour well. They work sensitively with children to find solutions to any issues, and they act promptly to prevent disagreements from escalating.

Practitioners provide highly effective support for children. They are flexible and place the children's ideas and needs at the centre of their practice. They respond consistently to children's ideas, listen carefully and respect their views. As a result, interactions are extremely positive and demonstrate genuine e warmth and kindness.

Practitioners are highly nurturing, sensitive and alert to the needs of children in their care. A strong key worker system is in place, and practitioners know children exceptionally well, enabling them to respond to children's needs swiftly. Practitioners identify and support any children who may have emerging additional learning needs well. They provide activities that are appropriate for individual ages and stages of development and needs. Practitioners have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities to support children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). They provide personalised support and work closely with parents, carers and outside agencies to meet children's needs successfully.

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

Practitioners support children's literacy and numeracy skills effectively through their interactions and the experiences they provide. For example, they encourage children to talk about their families and food they like to eat when playing in the home corner Practitioners respond to children's interest and extend their learning during play well. For example, they offer new resources such as a water pump and hand whisk to support children's exploration of how bubbles are created. They ensure that books are readily accessible throughout all areas of the indoor environment, promoting children's enjoyment of stories and books well. Practitioners provide a broad range of interesting and engaging experiences, such as making stick stew and flower tea in the mud kitchen, which enable children opportunities to experiment with tools and develop their creativity effectively. Practitioners work consistently well as a team and know the children in their care well. They model activities successfully, playing alongside the children in the different areas of provision. This supports nearly all children to sustain interest in their play for significant periods of time. Practitioners

have a good understanding of how children learn through play and implement the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales successfully. They identify and respond to children's interests and fascinations, adapting learning experiences appropriately to meet their individual needs. Practitioners model a suitable range of Welsh phrases and songs in for example when greeting children on arrival. However, they do not always make the most of opportunities to develop children's Welsh language skills during play and during daily routines. Practitioners provide suitable opportunities for children to learn about their Welsh heritage. For example, they celebrate St David's Day by dressing up and tasting Welsh cakes. In addition, practitioners display photographs of Welsh castles and local landmarks, which help children to gain an understanding about their local area and of Wales.

Practitioners make worthwhile use of a wide range of visits to enhance children's learning experiences. For example, children enjoy visits to local shops, the library, church, park and museum where they experience toys from the past. This impacts positively on their sense of belonging, understanding of the places in their community and of objects from the past. Practitioners plan appropriate learning experiences that promote children's moral, spiritual and cultural development well. They provide beneficial opportunities for children to learn about the natural world around them. For example, they grow flowers and talk about birds that they spot and minibeasts that they find. They provide resources that reflect a wide range of cultures and give children opportunities to learn about different traditions. For example, they celebrate and learn about the festivals that are important to their families such as Diwali, Easter and Christmas.

The setting has a range of valuable assessment procedures. Practitioners observe and identify what children can already do during their first few weeks at the setting. They record observations regularly to monitor children's progress and share this information with parents during face-to-face meetings and via an online app. Practitioners use assessment information effectively to inform future experiences and identify appropriate next steps in learning.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders maintain an exceptionally safe and secure environment. Leaders ensure that a record of all visitors is accurately maintained. They have developed clear risk assessments for different areas and activities, which are shared with staff and reviewed regularly. Leaders ensure that practitioners follow robust systems to regularly check toys, equipment and resources to keep them in clean and excellent condition. Leaders deploy practitioners to supervise children carefully at all times and understand the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. They arrange regular reviews of safety measures, in conjunction with the practitioners and the local school, where they are based. Records of safety checks are available and shared with the setting.

Practitioners create an engaging learning environment. They ensure that children are cared for and educated in a thoughtfully designed and well-organised space that promotes independence and supports their learning. Practitioners are committed to providing a range of play and learning activities and opportunities. For example, they encourage children's

creativity by placing real world resources in their role-play home corner. Practitioners arrange the indoor and outdoor areas purposefully to provide a wide range of stimulating experiences which encourage the children to move freely from one activity to the next independently throughout the day. Leaders and practitioners provide an abundant outdoor play area with a wide range of purposeful and exciting activities and opportunities for children to develop their curiosity and physical skills, as they move around freely and easily.

The environment is full of high quality and multi-purpose resources and furniture. Nearly all resources are at a low level, which enables children to access them successfully and to be independent in their play. Displays show children's photographs, work and achievements attractively. This supports a sense of belonging and promotes their self-esteem well. Leaders use a variety of play and learning materials effectively to promote children's cultural awareness, including Welsh heritage and diversity. This promotes children's understanding of the world well. Leaders ensure that the resources, toys and books are plentiful, suitable, clean and in good condition, enabling practitioners to prepare activities confidently.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders share a clear vision for the setting and communicate this effectively with families and practitioners. They successfully implement their vision to provide a safe, secure, nurturing, inclusive, fun learning environment, where children learn and play successfully. As a result, all children are highly engaged in the wide range of play areas which ensure children develop their skills successfully. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, practitioners and children.

Leaders demonstrate have a strong commitment to ensuring that practitioners benefit from continuous professional learning. Recent training has improved practitioners' understanding of the Curriculum for Wales and the importance of effective learning environments. As a result, practitioners respond purposefully to children's interests and fascinations and use observations of children's play effectively to inform future learning experiences.

Leaders maintain and share an accurate statement of purpose that reflects the service provided. They regularly review and update their individualised polices and ensure these are fully implemented in practice. Leaders regularly engage with Care Inspectorate Wales, ensuring that notifications are completed in a timely manner. Leaders and managers have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities and the work of the setting. All practitioners feel valued and work together positively and support each other successfully. As a result, there is a very strong commitment to teamwork throughout the setting.

Leaders follow timely and robust recruitment processes to safeguard children. They ensure that all pre-employment checks are completed and extensive systems in place to update suitability checks as required for recruitment and safeguarding. Leaders implement highly effective induction procedures for all practitioners, which supports them in their roles.

Leaders implement a highly effective performance management process that encourages practitioners to engage in a wide range of professional learning and to apply their learning to practice. They support practitioners to identify strengths and provide, provide valuable opportunities to reflect on the impact on their work. Leaders carry out regular and

meaningful supervision and appraisal activities to a high standard. These provide practitioners with valuable opportunities to reflect on their practice, discuss any concerns and identify appropriate targets for plan for professional development.

Leaders implement robust self-evaluation and improvement planning processes. They gather the views of parents, children and practitioners effectively and use this information alongside first-hand evidence to identify strengths and priorities for improvement. Leaders reflect regularly on what works well, what could be improved and take purposeful actions to implement any necessary changes. As a result, they bring about improvements that enhance children's learning experiences and well-being.

Leaders make highly effective use of grant funding. For example, the improvements to the outdoor environment have provided children with access to the outdoors throughout the year. As a result, children benefit from rich opportunities to explore, investigate and be physically active, which has a positive impact on their wellbeing and physical development.

Leaders build worthwhile links with parents and share information with them regularly. For example, they provide termly stay and play sessions to model play and share information with families via an online app. Consequently, families feel well supported and receive useful information about their child's development and progress.

Leaders have established highly effective transition arrangements with the local school that support children's well-being and readiness for the next stage of learning exceptionally well. They work closely with school staff throughout the year, sharing detailed information about children's learning, development and well-being. Children benefit from regular opportunities to participate in a wide range of purposeful events and activities at the school, such as concerts, animal visits, eisteddfodau and sports day. These experiences are highly effective in supporting children to become familiar with the school environment, routines and staff before they transfer to their next stage in their 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 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.

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