A report on

Highway Playdays Nursery

Highway Methodist
Community Rooms
The Highway
Ewloe
CH5 3DN

Date of inspection: March 2026

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Highway Playdays Nursery

Name of setting	Highway Playdays Nursery
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Michelle Jones
Person in charge	Menna Watkins
Number of places	19
Age range of children	2-4
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	12
Number of children who receive funding for early education	5
Opening days / times	Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm
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 working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	05 December 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection	March 2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	10/03/2026
Additional information	

Summary

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

Non-compliance

We notified the provider that the setting was not compliant with the Regulations, a notice was not issued, but these are identified as areas for improvement, and the RI must address these.

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 To address the non-compliance identified at the inspection

R2 Embed a consistent supervision and appraisal system to support staff wellbeing and development

R3 Strengthen self-evaluation approach by involving all stakeholders and ensuring it reflects development across the entire service

What happens next

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

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Nearly all children are confident communicators. They enjoy introducing themselves and showing what they like to play with. Nearly all children approach practitioners with confidence when making requests as they know that their needs will be fully considered. For example, they ask for metal detectors so they may search for buried treasure in the sand pit. Nearly all children make choices around where they play with confidence. They move from the indoors to the outdoor play area independently and sustain interest for extended periods of time.

Most children cope well with separation from their parents and carers and are greeted warmly by practitioners. Nearly all children are familiar with the daily routines of the setting, such as hanging up their coat and bag and finding their photograph as part of self-registration. Younger children are at ease during nappy changing routines, responding comfortably as practitioners chat to them in a warm and reassuring manner.

Nearly all children express enthusiasm and enjoyment in the company of their friends and practitioners. They have a strong sense of belonging, forming positive relationships with others. For example, when having fun playing outdoors, dressing up and taking turns to climb the slide steps before whizzing down. Nearly all children enjoy the social occasion of snack time, they sit at the table maturely, practicing using good manners. Throughout their play and learning, nearly all children engage fully and show respect for their toys, resources and each other. Nearly all children make purposeful choices about what they want to do and show good awareness of rules that keep themselves and others safe. For example, tidying up sand spilled onto the floor independently.

Nearly all children have considerable freedom to explore their environment safely. They are self-motivated to choose their own play and guide their activities independently. For example, they take turns to operate a digital camera and develop their imagination as they create an aromatic mixture in the mud kitchen. Nearly all children develop their creativity well through a variety of craft activities on offer. For example, they enjoy quiet time in the 'creation station', taking time to explore a variety of resources to make cards for Mother's Day. A few children enjoy mark making with rakes in the sand pit and decorating their playdough creations with birthday candles.

During outdoor play experiences, children develop their physical skills and natural curiosity effectively. For example, they practise balancing as they walk across wooden planks. Nearly all children respond well to opportunities to develop their independent skills. For example, during snack time, they pour their own drinks of milk or water and use tongs to select their fruit. Nearly all children confidently use the step to reach the handwashing facilities and dry their hands with paper towels. Nearly all children manage tasks themselves successfully, which helps them develop their self-help skills and supports their creativity as they experiment and use their imagination.

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 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: Good

Practitioners know the children well, and their interactions are consistently positive, demonstrating warmth and kindness. They offer regular praise for children's efforts and celebrate their achievements.

Practitioners understand their role and responsibilities in keeping children safe and healthy, and complete mandatory training relevant to the age of children in their care. They implement policies and procedures appropriately to promote healthy lifestyles. For example, they provide regular opportunities for children to be active and play outdoors in the fresh air. They encourage children to wash their hands with soap and water, which supports the development of their personal hygiene skills effectively. Practitioners create sociable opportunities for children at mealtimes and encourage healthy eating, making sure fresh drinking water and milk is readily available. They complete accident and incident records accurately and share these with parents and carers to ensure they are kept informed. In addition, practitioners maintain accurate records of the daily hours of children's attendance in line with their own guidance. They carry out regular fire drills to make sure children know what to do if they must leave the premises in the event of an emergency. Nappy changing procedures are in line with current infection control guidance. The setting has appropriate recruitment procedures in place, however, leaders do not always ensure that these procedures are fully completed to include relevant safeguarding checks. As a result, safeguarding procedures do not meet requirements and are a cause for concern.

Practitioners have a good understanding of positive behaviour management strategies and encourage children to take turns, share and be kind to each other. They respond sensitively to children's, needs, and interests, taking good account of their individual development. Practitioners provide sensitive support to help for children settle and ensure that their play and learning experiences are positive. Practitioners develop children's confidence well. They organise interesting play and learning experiences, which are led by children's choices. They observe and assess children's development appropriately and use this information and observations to plan meaningful play and learning experiences. Practitioners plan appropriately for the next steps in children's development and review progress regularly.

Practitioners provide innovative and enriching experiences that inspire children's creativity well. For example, they support children to bring their ideas to life when creating a 'Jurassic Park' using sand, water and a range of dinosaur figures and props. Practitioners promote children's understanding of cultural celebrations and festivities successfully through a variety of dressing up, story time and craft activities. In addition, practitioners use basic Welsh vocabulary throughout the session to support children's understanding and use of the language appropriately.

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

Practitioners provide a rich, engaging and responsive learning environment. Their developing understanding of the principles of the Curriculum for Wales has a positive impact on children's wellbeing, independence and overall progress. Across the setting, practitioners demonstrate a secure understanding of child development. As a result, practitioners plan and deliver a well-structured and purposeful environment that nurtures children's curiosity, confidence and a strong disposition to learn.

Planning, observation and assessment processes are well established and purposeful. Practitioners have a good understanding of each child's background, interests, routines and emotional needs, and use this knowledge meaningfully to inform planning and create experiences that are relevant to children's individual needs. Practitioners observe children's play carefully and provide suitable support to extend learning. For example, when children begin to create a dinosaur habitat, practitioners model the use of the correct dinosaur names and discuss the types of environments they may need. Practitioners make good use of meaningful opportunities to extend children's play in the moment. They respond effectively to spontaneous learning opportunities. For example, when children discover a basket of eggs and begin an Easter egg hunt, practitioners encourage them to count whether all the eggs have been found, supporting their developing counting skills well.

Practitioners encourage children to take appropriate risks and think creatively during their play. For example, when outdoors, they encourage children to build obstacle courses, where they adjust planks and crates to create new pathways assessing risk with gentle practitioner guidance. This approach strengthens children's problem-solving, resilience and risk-assessment skills. Practitioners value children's creativity and avoid setting expectations of a fixed product. This supports children to freely explore materials, adapt their ideas and express themselves authentically.

Practitioners make effective use of teachable moments to support children's understanding of life cycles, animal care and the natural world. For example, when children show interest in a ladybird, practitioners respond to this meaningfully, encouraging children to investigate other insects and their habitats. They provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop a sense of awe and wonder of the natural world through activities such as growing potatoes.

Practitioners embed opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and digital competence naturally throughout children's play. They support children's early literacy development through rich language interactions, a stimulating environment and a range of mark-making opportunities across the areas of provision. Practitioners encourage children to use early numeracy skills during play, for example by counting eggs, sorting natural materials or comparing the lengths of their 'wiggly worm' families. They provide worthwhile opportunities for children to use digital tools, such as cameras and metal detectors, to support their play and explorations in meaningful and enjoyable ways. Practitioners are increasingly confident in their use of incidental Welsh. The language is woven naturally through routines and child-initiated play, helping children develop confidence, identity and belonging.

Practitioners promote children's curiosity of their own lives and the lives and beliefs of others suitably. A range of cultures and traditions are celebrated in relevant and respectful ways. Values such as honesty, fairness and respect are fostered effectively through everyday routines.

Practitioners know the children extremely well and use observations, assessments and their knowledge of child development to plan meaningful next steps in their learning. They provide a suitable range of experiences that offer appropriate challenge and enable children to revisit skills and deepen understanding over time. Play and learning opportunities build progressively on children's existing knowledge and skills as they move through the setting. Assessments are personalised and shared regularly with parents and during transitions to school or other settings.

Environment: Good

Leaders provide a safe, welcoming and clean environment where children play independently. The environment is well maintained both indoors and outdoors and meets children's needs well.

Leaders ensure risk assessments identify potential hazards and implement procedures to manage these risks appropriately. Practitioners follow good hygiene practices which help to minimise risks to children's health and safety. They understand their responsibilities in relation to the safety and welfare of children and supervise children carefully throughout their play and learning experiences. The indoor and outdoor play environment sparks children's interests and curiosity. There is a variety of recycled and natural resources to develop children's sensory, language, numeracy, and self-awareness skills. The layout of the play areas is organised to promote children's independent skills successfully, enabling children to access good quality toys and resources with ease. The attractive cosy corner provides children with beneficial opportunities to rest and have quiet time. There are ample toys, resources and furniture suitable for all ages. Practitioners promote children's awareness about the world around them and their wider society appropriately. For example, there are books, dolls and small world figurines showing people from a range of cultures and colourful wall displays celebrating Welsh heritage.

Leaders provide a designated area for children's personal items, creating a sense of belonging. They present children's artwork well showing children their efforts are valued. Books are displayed attractively, encouraging children to read and enjoy them.

The setting has an exciting outdoor play area, which gives children beneficial opportunities to play in the fresh air in all weathers. There are a good range of resources which develops children's natural curiosity and physical skills well. The outdoor kitchen area provides children with worthwhile opportunities to use authentic crockery, utensils and cooking resources, for example children enjoy, sprinkling scented spices into their soil concoctions during their play Practitioners ensure children have meaningful opportunities to learn about the natural world. For example, the planting areas encourage children to explore and discover insects using a variety of equipment, as well as grow their own vegetables.

Leadership and management: Adequate

Leaders and practitioners create a warm and friendly environment for children to play, learn and grow. They promote an inclusive environment where nearly all children settle quickly, feel valued and develop trusting relationships with others. Recent professional learning and guidance are beginning to enhance practitioners' understanding of effective early years practice. As a result, practitioners have adapted the way they support teaching and learning, leading to children showing greater engagement and practitioners noticing children demonstrating and developing a wider range of skills.

Practitioners have an appropriate understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work together to reflect the setting's values and expectations. Leader holds regular team meetings that provide purposeful opportunities to share information and discuss relevant matters. These meetings contribute well to the smooth day-to-day running of the provision.

Leaders ensure that most required recruitment checks are completed appropriately. However, they do not ensure that staff records and routine checks are followed correctly and are fully compliant. As a result, current recruitment processes do not meet regulatory requirements.

Leaders ensure that staff complete mandatory training and engage in a few professional learning opportunities to support their practice. As a result, practitioners are becoming more reflective and recent developments are beginning to enhance children's choice and independence. However, supervision and appraisal arrangements are not applied consistently. In addition, leaders do not focus closely enough on supporting staff well-being or professional development needs.

Leaders use professional advice and support from a few partners to support their self-evaluation processes and action plans suitably. They use this information appropriately to identify relevant strengths and areas for development. Leaders implement worthwhile actions that have led to positive changes in children's learning experiences. However, leaders do not consider well enough all aspects of the settings work in these activities. In addition, they do not consider all stakeholders' views effectively to support wider improvements across the whole setting.

Leaders and practitioners communicate regularly with parents, who speak positively about the care their children receive. The setting operates an open-door policy and shares information about children's general well-being and development regularly. The setting ensures that relevant information about children's learning and development is shared with the local school to support smooth and well-informed transitions.

Leaders use available grants and fundraising effectively to enhance the learning environment, ensuring that resources are appropriate for the ages and stages of the children.

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

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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.

The table(s) below show the area(s) for priority action and/or those for improvement we have identified.

Summary of Areas for Improvement	Date identified
Outcomes for children require improvement because the responsible individual's enhanced disclosure and barring service certificate (DBS) has expired.	10/03/26
Outcomes for children require improvement because the responsible individual has not ensured all of the required information has been included in the practitioner employment files to ascertain their suitability in caring for and safeguarding children.	10/03/26

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

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