A report on

Overton Playcentre

School Lane
Overton
Wrexham
LL13 0ES

Date of inspection: May 2026

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Overton Playcentre

Name of setting	Overton Playcentre
Category of care provided	Full Day care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Sarah Carpenter and Rachel Harris
Person in charge	Sarah Carpenter, Rachel Harris, Sharon Marriot and Nicole Langley
Number of places	30
Age range of children	Under 12
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	16
Number of children who receive funding for early education	5
Opening days / times	7.30 to 18.00
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service makes 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	10/09/24
Date of previous Estyn inspection	22/01/2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	20/05/2026
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)**	
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 Further develop provision to maintain and strengthen the highly effective practices that support children's well-being, development and learning

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 - the way in which quality observations are used to plan next steps and facilitate child-initiated learning, resulting in high levels of engagement and involvement, for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Nearly all children settle exceptionally well and feel safe within a nurturing environment. They play confidently alongside their friends and show sustained enjoyment and enthusiasm in their activities. For example, together, they eagerly explore the variety of containers and enthusiastically discuss the properties that are needed to transport water successfully. Nearly all children show a strong sense of curiosity and engagement particularly in the outdoor environment, where they confidently explore and investigate the natural world. They show empathy towards living things as they find worms and place them safely among the mint plants. Children further enrich their understanding the world around them by using their senses to explore herbs they have grown and by caring for animals, including the setting's rabbits and visiting frogs. Nearly all children make informed decisions about where they would like to play, choosing whether to observe from a distance or actively engage in activities such as when exploring water play and joining in splashing games. Nearly all children express their needs successfully and communicate effectively, including making suitable gestures to ensure they are understood. They know practitioners respect their choices and listen to their ideas.

Nearly all children interact with each other exceptionally well and work together purposefully, showing a genuine interest in their play. For example, they work together to investigate how quickly iced shaving foam cakes melt in water and experiment to find different ways to hold and fill cake cases with bubbly water. Nearly all children are kind and thoughtful and offer support when friends need help. They show respect, and are very considerate, for example, when sharing and passing items to friends.

Nearly all children are active learners who engage enthusiastically in their play. They show curiosity about how things work and use different tools to experiment.

Nearly all children develop strong independent skills exceptionally well across all aspects of daily routines and make purposeful choices about their play and learning. They pour their own drinks carefully from china teapots into teacups, they use tongs with great dexterity to select snacks independently and make purposeful decisions about where to sit. Nearly all children confidently put on their waterproofs before playing, and a few ask for help when needed. They show high levels of perseverance as they proudly demonstrate how they can turn and control an outside tap with minimal support. They understand and follow simple routines and expectations, including putting on aprons independently before painting.

Nearly all children develop strong early language skills and use the Welsh language naturally in appropriate situations, such as asking for more milk or water.

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: Excellent

Practitioners place a strong emphasis on promoting children's health and safety. They implement robust hygiene procedures consistently, helping to minimise the risk of cross-infection. Practitioners ensure water is available for children and offer gentle reminders to drink during the day. They ensure that they complete detailed records such as information on individual children, including comprehensive health care needs. This allows practitioners to respond effectively to each child's personal needs and provide a high level of care. Practitioners accurately complete an electronic attendance register, and minor injuries are noted and brought to the attention of parents and carers effectively. They engage purposefully in professional learning to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, they follow current guidance and best practice effectively, ensuring that children benefit from high-quality care and support. They have a secure understanding of safeguarding procedures and know how to respond appropriately should concerns arise. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners are extremely reflective and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their practice. They use positive behaviour management strategies effectively to create a calm, nurturing environment where children feel valued, respected and secure. Practitioners communicate sensitively, using sign language effectively when needed to ensure all children are included and understood. They use praise purposefully to support children's confidence and language development.

A notable strength of the provision is practitioners' responsiveness to children's interests, ideas and emerging needs. They are flexible in their approach and place children's well-being and learning at the centre of their decision-making. They give children plenty of time to play and learn and skilfully recognise when to intervene and when to allow time and space for children to explore and investigate. As a result, they develop children's curiosity purposefully. Practitioners plan appropriate outdoor activities that develop children's balance, co-ordination and strength successfully. These experiences are progressive and managed well, enabling children to make informed choices and evaluate risk. They encourage children to develop an early understanding of boundaries and responsibility, such as reminding them of the importance of handling living creatures gently and respectfully.

Practitioners offer children with additional learning needs full access to all areas of learning. They know the children exceptionally well and adapt provision regularly to meet the children's changing individual needs and interests. They conduct regular reviews of

children's progress and include parents, carers and all relevant multi-agencies in their decision-making.

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

Practitioners' detailed planning and reflective practice motivate children to engage deeply in their learning. Their secure understanding of child development and commitment to child-led enquiry ensure that provision builds systematically on children's prior knowledge. Planning is detailed, collaborative and highly focused, and this coherence results in excellent progress in children's skills. Practitioners are confident in their roles and contribute daily to planning walls and records, which outline adult interactions, the learning environment and activities effectively. As a result, there is a strong link between practitioners' observations, the authentic contexts provided and children's sustained involvement.

Practitioners plan learning activities that stem directly from children's interests and first-hand experiences. For example, following children's fascination with mini beasts in the forest area, practitioners provide meaningful opportunities to observe newts and slugs under paving slabs. This approach further enhances the wider provision where children explore the natural world through purposeful and creative activities, such as crushing berries with a pestle and mortar to make dyes and applying colour washes to fabric outdoors. These authentic contexts promote children's curiosity and problem-solving skills successfully and instil a sense of awe and wonder in children.

Practitioners ensure they provide an appropriate balance between child-initiated learning and carefully constructed adult-led activities. They interact knowledgeably to extend children's learning and understanding during self-initiated play. For example, they promote the development of children's gross motor skills well through opportunities to dig and transport soil and develop an understanding of mathematical skills through sorting and classifying small objects. Children access woodworking with clear routines, independently collecting goggles and gloves before starting.

Practitioners support children's individual learning styles effectively and encourage them to persevere and become independent thinkers. They provide worthwhile opportunities to develop children's oracy, early writing, numeracy and digital skills across all areas of the setting. They use voice recorders on clipboards to enable children to capture stories and develop oracy skills in their play, while spirit levels and measuring tools in the workshop promote purposeful measurement. Practitioners model a purposeful vocabulary that children adopt effectively, such as describing a slug as squishy and shiny. They provide a rich language environment with a variety of mark-making opportunities. Welsh language development is planned thoughtfully throughout daily routines and play. Nearly all children join in Welsh songs and rhymes, count peers in Welsh and respond to simple questions about the weather. Practitioners plan sensitively and celebrate a diverse range of cultures including exploring items from other countries such as African drums and listening to stories

from the Mabinogion. These strengthen children's understanding of other cultures and improve their sense of identity and belonging effectively.

Practitioners assess children regularly and use this information effectively to inform planning and support children's development. They observe children carefully during daily activities, and findings are used purposefully to identify next steps and adapt provision. A recently introduced tracking system enables practitioners to monitor children's progress systematically and evaluate the impact of their provision purposefully. Reflective half-termly summaries capture achievements and development well, and all practitioners contribute knowledgeably to these reviews. As a result, all children make excellent progress at the setting.

Partnership with parents is integral to the planning process. Practitioners use an online platform to share detailed observations, photographs and well-annotated videos. As a result, parents gain valuable insight into their children's experiences at the setting. Termly meetings with parents and daily dialogues ensure that practitioners gather valuable information about children's interests beyond the setting, which further supports their planning.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders ensure the environment is safe for children. They carry out robust risk assessments to identify and address potential hazards and ensure that practitioners adhere to agreed procedures to keep children safe. These are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure they continue to be effective. Comprehensive fire risk assessments and drills are carried out to ensure children and practitioners know what to do in an emergency. A cleaning schedule and exceptional attention to infection control means leaders successfully ensure an effective level of hygiene. For example, animals play a big part in the life of the children and rabbit hutches are clean and well-maintained.

The premises and outdoor areas are exceptionally welcoming and provide a rich and vibrant learning environment. Leaders have established a calm atmosphere, using neutral colours and materials that meet the needs of all children well. The play space offers suitably challenging opportunities that develop children's curiosity and motivation highly successfully. The attractive displays of children's work and photographs promote a sense of belonging effectively. Leaders and practitioners organise the environment to promote children's independence, providing easy access to well-resourced areas that support children to explore their individual interests successfully. This enables children to choose when to play alongside others or to enjoy becoming quietly absorbed in their own activity. Leaders ensure resources are stored well to ensure they are exceptionally clean and well maintained.

Leaders provide a range of high-quality resources and activities that encourage exploration, and the development of a wide range of skills. For example, practitioners offer resources such as recycled materials that encourage children to problem-solve effectively. These provide purposeful support for children's learning and enable them to develop their social and numeracy skills successfully. Practitioners provide excellent opportunities for children to learn about the world around them through their senses, for example, using herbs, growing

fruit and vegetables and offering the produce as healthy snacks. A wild area is well-utilised for open-ended play and exploration. For example, by lifting stones, they discover beetle eggs. A variety of natural habitats allows children to observe living creatures first hand such as frogs and a range of minibeasts.

Practitioners enhance the environment using natural and sustainable materials that promote interest, curiosity and foster children's imagination and open-ended creativity successfully. For example, they use ordinary daily household items in a highly imaginative way such as dishwashing brushes for painting and whisks to mix colours. Open spaces are available for messy play, large-scale creative art projects, paint mixing and modelling. Practitioners regularly adapt the outdoor environment to ensure it meets the changing interests and developmental needs of children. For example, they have created an inviting hideaway where children use binoculars to observe, identify and talk about the birds that live in and visit near-by trees and forest area.

Leaders enrich children's learning by providing a broad range of interesting artefacts and resources that develop their understanding of different cultures, equality and diversity, including the heritage and culture of Wales. They make effective use of the local community and visitors to the setting to broaden children's experiences, inspire curiosity and nurture their sense of awe and wonder.

Leadership and management: Excellent

Leaders and practitioners create a highly positive and supportive ethos underpinned by clear expectations and a shared commitment to continuous improvement. They communicate a clear vision that is reflected consistently in practice. As a result, there is a strong sense of purpose and practitioners fulfil their roles effectively. Leaders have a strong focus on ensuring they support children and practitioners' well-being considerately, which fosters a reflective and inclusive culture where all feel valued and work collaboratively to provide high-quality experiences for all children.

Leaders ensure that robust policies and procedures are in place, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and anti-bullying. Practitioners demonstrate a secure understanding of these procedures and apply them consistently in their day-to-day practice. This strong culture ensures children feel secure and well cared for. Recruitment processes are thorough and meet all regulatory requirements. Newly appointed practitioners benefit from effective induction arrangements and feel confident and well supported. Most practitioners hold relevant childcare qualifications, and those who do not are actively working towards them. Regular supervision and appraisal meetings are effective and support practitioners to reflect on their practice and identify areas for development.

Leaders have established effective systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning. These are comprehensive and draw on a wide range of evidence, including observations, practitioner views and local authority feedback. As a result, leaders have an accurate understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development. Improvement plans are clear and focused, with appropriate priorities such as developing mathematics and numeracy and enhancing cultural development. Leaders respond positively to external

advice and maintain strong relationships with advisory teachers to support continued improvement.

Leaders foster a culture of professional learning that informs high-quality planning. They provide professional development sessions to support and strengthen the quality and consistency of adult interactions. All practitioners access relevant training, including forest school, speech and language and neurodiversity, and apply this confidently and skilfully to adapt play and learning experiences, and respond to the diverse needs of individual children.

Leaders make effective use of funding and resources to enhance provision. They access a range of grants and use these strategically to support improvements. For example, funding for artists in residence, including a woodworker and sculptor, which has developed practitioners' understanding and enriched children's creative experiences.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on developing the Welsh language and ensure that practitioners have access to a range of training opportunities, which supports their confidence in Welsh well. As a result, Welsh is used increasingly naturally across the setting with a few children extending their language skills further by responding to simple questions in Welsh. Partnerships are a notable strength. The setting works closely with the local authority, advisory teachers and the wider community to enhance learning opportunities. Children benefit from visits within the community, such as trips to local shops and meeting community members, which help them develop an understanding of their local area. Strong transition arrangements with the local school ensure children move confidently to the next stage of their education.

Relationships with parents are strong and value the regular communication about their child's progress. Practitioners demonstrate sensitivity and care in their interactions and, provide effective support for those experiencing challenging circumstances.

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.

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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