A report on

Churchstoke Little Explorers and After School Club

c/o Churchstoke CP School
Churchstoke
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6AA

Date of inspection: September 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Churchstoke Little Explorers and After School Club

Name of setting	Churchstoke Little Explorers and After School Club
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Churchstoke Little Explorers
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Rachel Jones
Person in charge	Laura Yapp
Number of places	19
Age range of children	0 to 12 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	13
Number of children who receive funding for early education	12
Opening days / times	Monday 8.00 – 4.30, Tuesday 8.00 – 5.30, Wednesday 8:00 – 3.00, Thursday 8.00 – 5.30 and Friday 8.00 – 4.30 Term time. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.30 – 5.30 During school holidays
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	The service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	16 March 2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection	October 2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	16/09/2025
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)**	**Good**
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	**Good**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1. Whenever possible, ensure that practitioners encourage and support children to sit when eating

R2. Ensure that practitioners model the Welsh language effectively and consistently to improve children's Welsh oracy skills

R3. Ensure that practitioners are fully aware of and consistently implement risk assessments related to risky play activities to keep children free from potential hazards

R4. Ensure that priority areas for improvement contain suitable timescales to guarantee sustained progress is made towards meeting them

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

The well-being of children is at the heart of the setting and care provided. Nearly all children have worthwhile opportunities to make choices and decisions about how they spend their time at the setting. For example, they choose if they wish to play indoors or outdoors. Nearly all children express themselves and their needs confidently, as they know that their wants, needs and emotions will be listened to and understood, for example when saying what they would like from the snack choices or asking practitioners for items they wish to play with that are not readily available with certainty.

Nearly all children settle well and feel safe in their surroundings. They are extremely comfortable in their surroundings and familiar with the daily routines. Children happily join in with activities on arrival, such as when choosing to play outside once they had self-registered. Nearly all children develop friendships that are meaningful. They actively seek others to join in their play and enjoy sharing their experiences, such as following each other around on the climbing apparatus. Nearly all children develop a strong sense of belonging. They are greeted warmly by practitioners, who sensitively support them to separate from their parents, ensuring that they feel happy to begin their day at the setting.

Nearly all children interact well, learning to be respectful and polite towards others, such as, saying please and thank you when appropriate. Children learn to share during their play with only a little support from practitioners, for example, when asking if anyone else would like to have a go with the torch. Nearly all children understand and follow the routines happily, such as lining up to go to the dining room and sitting at the table for snack.

Nearly all children have effective opportunities to develop and learn. They engage and focus well on activities and can choose what they want to. Nearly all children are curious learners who value opportunities to explore the environment as they follow their interests. For example, they enjoy using the magnetic shapes to create rabbit holes as part of their game. Children show enjoyment smiling and laughing as they try to break open the butternut squash by throwing it on the floor, curious to see what is inside.

Nearly all children are developing a wide range of skills when engaging in various play activities. They benefit from a well thought out environment. This provides many opportunities for them to access a range of activities which supports them to be active, curious and inspiring learners. Children are given a range of opportunities and experiences that support them to naturally develop their independence. For example, they freely access their personal belongings so they can try and put their coats on when going outside and they are provided with appropriate resources allowing them to prepare their own snack and pour their drinks. Children enjoy developing a range of skills as they play, such as being creative when pretending to make food in the mud kitchen and developing their co-ordination skills when using the physical play equipment indoors.

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

Most children are keen to engage with new experiences and choose the activities they want to explore with enthusiasm. They are making good progress from their individual starting points, particularly in developing their communication and social skills. For example, they co-operate well with one another when sharing utensils to make cakes for a party.

Most children develop their communication and literacy skills well. They express themselves clearly and confidently and share their ideas and views successfully. They talk about activities happily, such as describing the sizes and colours of lights they make with torches. They ask questions to clarify their understanding and listen to responses carefully. They sing simple rhymes in small groups and a few sing spontaneously as they play. Many children enjoy looking at books and handle them appropriately. They listen to stories read to them by adults and discuss the illustrations with one another well. Many are interested in mark making and enjoy activities such as chalking on the ground outside and drawing pictures of their families. The majority of children are beginning to make meaningful marks when playing. For example, they take orders for pizza and record the order of activities they wish to experience.

Many children develop mathematical concepts effectively. They recognise heavy and light bowls of apples, and weigh pieces of playdough to make cakes. Many count when opportunities arise during their play and exploration. For example, they count pieces of fruit and vegetables at snack time, and the number of children who form a queue for lunch.

Most children are at the early stages in developing their Welsh language skills. They follow instructions to wash their hands and understand when snack time is announced. They recognise a few colours and respond by pointing when asked what they would like to drink in Welsh. They are beginning to enjoy hearing simple Welsh stories.

Many children naturally solve problems as they encounter them during their play. For example, they work out how to transport water to make a stream and how to move large cushions around the garden successfully.

Many use technology in their play competently. They operate walkie talkies to communicate with one another when in the garden and take photographs of things that interest them. They are adept at using an interactive white board to play simple games and a few children change programmes and background colours on the screen confidently.

Most children's physical skills are developing appropriately. They ride trikes safely, use climbing frames and soft play equipment, demonstrating agility and coordination. They use small tools confidently, such as scissors to cut string and jugs to pour their own drinks.

Many children enjoy experimenting with musical instruments and use their imagination and creativity well, such as when shaping playdough and painting on a large easel.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of how to keep children safe, following the setting's appropriate policies and procedures. They have up-to-date training, including paediatric first aid. Nearly all practitioners have a good understanding of safeguarding matters and are confident in the steps to take should they have concerns, therefore the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Records of any accidents or incidents are shared promptly with parents. Children are supervised well, ensuring they are safe. For example, practitioners are always available indoors and outdoors so children can move around freely and safely. Children are consistently encouraged to sit and eat at snack and lunchtimes. However, they are not always discouraged from playing whilst eating during other times, which could potentially pose a choking hazard.

Practitioners encourage a healthy lifestyle. They follow a menu ensuring they provide healthy and nutritious snack choices, such as fruits and pitta bread. They promote effective hygiene and cleaning practices consistently as part of their infection control processes, encouraging children to wash their hands and dealing with intimate care appropriately. Practitioners provide regular access to the outdoors, allowing children to be active and enjoy being outdoors in the fresh air.

Practitioners interact skilfully with children and as a result children approach them with great ease. They have a good understanding of child development and how this may impact on children's behaviour. As a result, they tailor their approach to ensure children are guided to the behaviour that is expected of them, for example when they might be a bit hesitant to wait for their turn during play, practitioners find similar items for them to play with and explain they will get a turn soon. Practitioners use every day experiences very well to enhance children's opportunities to develop their speech and language. For example, they create social experiences such as sitting and having lunch with the children, which results in a relaxed atmosphere where children feel confident to share their experiences.

Practitioners consistently and effectively consider the children's interests when planning activities and resources. They use open ended questions successfully to get the children to think about what they are doing, for example asking them what they could do when they notice the equipment outside is wet, encouraging their critical thinking. Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities supporting children to problem solve such as, when building a tent outside and thinking about how to use the poles. Practitioners observe children and use their findings to understand and develop children's abilities and needs appropriately. This allows them to identify next steps in their learning effectively. Practitioners provide inviting and inspiring resources which supports children's development through play. There are resources promoting physical activities indoors and out. Practitioners are successful in encouraging children to be independent. They ensure resources are stored at a child friendly height, providing suitable support and arrange utensils and crockery, allowing children to cut up fruits and pour drinks at snack time.

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 wide range of imaginative and stimulating activities that ignite children's curiosity well. They ensure that activities respond to children's interests and fascinations, which allows children to make effective choices and learn through their independent play and exploration. For example, children enjoy finding keys in a box of leaves, then use them to find hidden padlocks in the garden.

Practitioners work well together and understand when to intervene to support child's learning and when to step back to encourage children's independent exploration. For example, children pick apples and choose to chop them into small pieces to make pancakes. Practitioners make very effective use of questioning to promote children's thinking skills. For example, they ask children what ingredients they require to make cakes and how they can make a stream run down a hill.

Practitioners actively encourage children to respond to questions and express their views and opinions readily. There are beneficial opportunities for children to enjoy books and stories, and practitioners read to them regularly. There are valuable opportunities for children to explore mark making using pencils, paint, and chalk.

Practitioners encourage children to develop an understanding of mathematical language as they play. For example, they discuss light and heavy pieces of playdough on weighing scales and identify heavy and light blocks.

Practitioners promote children's understanding of the Welsh language through singing familiar songs, reading stories and using simple words and phrases throughout a session. However, they do not use the language consistently enough, in order for the children to develop confidence and build their oracy skills.

Practitioners plan activities that promote the cultural heritage of Wales and a sense of belonging effectively. For example, they celebrate St David's Day when children taste traditional Welsh food and provide resources such as flags, costumes, and photographs of local landmarks.

Practitioners provide suitable resources for children to develop their digital skills, such as pre-programmable toys, a camera, and an interactive white board for children to draw and play games.

There are valuable opportunities for children to be physically active. For example, there are trikes to ride and climbing apparatus outside and soft play equipment promoting agility and co-ordination. Practitioners encourage children to develop their fine manipulative skills by providing spoons to stir their muddy concoctions and pipe cleaners to thread through colanders.

Practitioners provide a range of learning experiences that promote children's moral, spiritual and cultural development well. For example, practitioners celebrate festivals such as Chinese New Year and provide resources such as maps, dolls and images that support children to learn about faiths that may be different to their own.

Assessment procedures and practices for recording children's achievements are effective. Practitioners observe, record, and celebrate the progress made by all children. This helps them to plan for children's next steps in learning successfully and to respond to their interests appropriately.

Practitioners provide parents and carers with useful summaries about children's progress and achievements.

Environment: Good

Leaders and practitioners ensure the environment is safe and secure. They implement procedures and routines effectively including controlling and recording any visitors and ensuring external gates are locked. Leaders liaise with the school to ensure required maintenance is completed in a timely manner including mandatory checks, such as fire and smoke alarm tests. Leaders create suitable risk assessments that are generally implemented and followed well by staff. These cover the physical environment, activities and places visited regularly. However, the risk assessment for a risky play area has been completed but is not always followed fully by practitioners. Regular daily checks are completed appropriately by leaders and practitioners to enable them to identify and eliminate any new hazards where possible.

Leaders create a welcoming environment by using neutral colours throughout the rooms, which contributes to providing a calm feeling. The well organised play areas are effective in meeting children's needs and creating an environment that is extremely child friendly. Attractive displays of children's work and photos of their families give children a sense of belonging. Leaders ensure children have the room to play and learn safely and have different areas to access freely. For example, children happily moved from indoors to outdoors, played games on the floor or chose to access one of the areas of learning or take part in a tabletop activity. All spaces are equipped with quality and suitably sized furniture so children are comfortable and can experience independence. Children access and use the available toilets and handwashing facilities with confidence. Nappy changing facilities are effectively placed and accessible for children and practitioners.

Leaders have developed an inviting and inspiring outdoor area that gives children space to play, learn and be in the fresh air. The area provides children with a range of interesting opportunities. Leaders and practitioners have worked hard to create innovative and inviting areas for the children to freely access. These include the very popular tunnel through the grass mound which children enjoy climbing and using as a slide for different resources including the sand and water. The sheltered area is utilised effectively when it rain and allows children to always access the outdoors.

Leaders provide a wide range of resources that are of good quality. There is a wide selection of stimulating authentic resources and toys which are well maintained. Real-life and natural items are used to enhance all areas of the environment, which stimulates children's senses and imagination, enhancing their play experiences. For example, children have access to a range of real tools such as hammers and nails in the tool station and a real China tea set in the home corner.

Children's creativity and curiosity are enhanced well through play experiences they can access freely. This includes a water butt where children collect water incorporating it into their play activities and eagerly cutting different coloured heathers and using them to pretend to cook. The environment offers a range of rich play opportunities and learning experiences for children to develop their physical skills. Practitioners have developed an area indoors where children can use the equipment to balance and climb and outdoors children have access to a climbing frame and bikes. In addition, the setting has access to an on onsite woodland area and large field, which children visit regularly.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have a clear vision for the setting based on encouraging children to learn through play to become happy, independent, and curious learners. They share this with parents, carers, and practitioners effectively. Leaders work with practitioners and members of the management committee purposefully to lead the setting and support the care and development of children. For example, leaders keep the management committee fully informed of their work, and members visit the setting and attend regular meetings. Leaders meet regularly with practitioners and provide clear communication and support which contributes to the smooth running of the setting. Regular team meetings and half-termly supervisions are valuable opportunities to discuss the provision and individual staff members development needs. Leaders ensure practitioners have access to a valuable range of training opportunities that promotes their professional development well. For example, recent training on schemas has supported practitioners to identify children's style of learning and respond with appropriate learning experiences.

There is a clear statement of purpose that provides an accurate picture of the setting and leaders ensure a relevant range of policies and procedures are in place. There are safe and robust recruitment processes and practitioners are appropriately qualified and experienced in working with young children. Leaders ensure that children have access to a wide range of interesting resources that promote their learning effectively, including an inviting outdoor area.

There are appropriate procedures for self-evaluation and improvement planning. Leaders consult a range of stakeholders to identify the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. They act on their suggestions where appropriate. For example, parents and carers requested more information on children's progress and leaders organised consultation sessions. Areas for improvement derive from the self-evaluation process and leaders prioritise those that will impact positively on provision and outcomes for children. However, targets in improvement plans lack timescales to ensure a suitable pace of progress is maintained.

The setting has beneficial partnerships with parents and carers and communicates with them regularly through social media. They share photographs of children playing and learning, daily updates, and news about the setting as well as information on children's progress. There are useful links with the host school and transition arrangements are comprehensive and ensure children move on to the next stage of their education smoothly.

Leaders make good use of advice and guidance from healthcare professionals to support children with emerging needs. There are effective links with the local authority's advisory teacher, which has resulted in positive change to provision.

The setting has beneficial links with the local community to enrich children's learning experiences. For example, visits from a local farmer with lambs and children visiting a nearby care home have contributed to the development of a sense of belonging to the local community.

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

© Crown Copyright 2025: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 18/11/2025

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.

Welsh Government © Crown copyright 2026.
You may use and re-use the information featured in this publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government License. You can view the Open Government License, on the National Archives website or you can write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk
You must reproduce our material accurately and not use it in a misleading context.