Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Estyn
Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Little Explorers

Adult Education Centre Site
Maryport St
Usk
Monmouthshire
NP15 1AB

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Explorers

Name of setting	Little Explorers
Category of care provided	Full day care – provides full day, sessional and lunch club
Registered person(s)	Kathryn O'NeilGaynor Rea
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Kathryn O'NeilGaynor Rea
Person in charge	Kathryn O'NeilGaynor Rea
Number of places	19
Age range of children	2-4 year olds
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	8
Number of children who receive funding for early education	8
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday between 8.30 – 3pm during school term times
Flying start service	Yes
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	Not applicable
Date of previous Estyn inspection	Not applicable
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	28/11/2023
The setting has re-registered as an unincorporated association.	

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	**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 Ensure practitioners take full advantage of opportunities to develop children's vocabulary and understanding

R2 Ensure that appropriatee risk assessments are in place for all activities and visits

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 well-being and developing a culture of belonging for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

All children have an excellent voice with numerous opportunities to express themselves and share their ideas and views. They show great skill in using hand signs and gestures and use their Welsh language skills frequently throughout the day. Most children continually make choices and decisions about all aspects of their play and learning. They show great maturity when following their interests and developing their ideas for play. Children show exceptional enthusiasm to participate at circle times for example when using their voting cards to select which rhyme is removed or added each week. They discuss as a group which rhyme has the highest number of votes to confirm the winner. Children actively contribute to the annual review, answering questions and sharing their thoughts and ideas with a high degree of maturity.

All children are very confident and settle immediately on arrival. They are extremely eager to start playing and to interact with their friends. All children show an excellent, caring attitude and great maturity with their emotions. In the morning, they show a high level of independence as they find their name card and select a happy or sad magnet to highlight how they are feeling. Children express genuine concern about their friends and how they are feeling. They feel special and a valued member of the

group, greeting one another by name during their welcome song to ensure everyone is included. They respond well to opportunities to develop independence such as placing their coats and bags on a named coat peg and drawer, and displaying their pictures on their own dedicated board.

Children interact very well and are extremely familiar with daily routines. For example, they respond confidently when asked about their preferred snack, and walk calmly to wash their hands. Children build excellent relationships and frequently praise each other's achievements. They show a high level of self-control and maturity when sharing toys with their friends and including other children in their play.

Children are highly motivated, have great fun and thoroughly enjoy attending. They persevere and sustain interest in their play extremely well. Many younger children explore items on the loose parts table, curious and interested to see how things work. Children express their enjoyment frequently throughout the day. They jump up and down with sheer excitement and anticipation when preparing to roll their vehicle down the tube and see it come out at the other end.

The children thrive at the setting and respond very well to the numerous opportunities to develop independence. They serve themselves at snack time, peel and cut their fruit, pour their own milk and take their plates to the sink. Older children find their name cards to write their name on their pictures and all children learn to put on their waterproofs and boots before outside play. Younger children show excellent problem-solving skills for example when working out how to stop the long, cardboard tube from slipping off the chair.

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

Nearly all children make strong progress from their starting points with their different skills. They are proficient at making themselves understood. They express themselves with growing confidence including through using gestures, mime and song. This supports their wellbeing successfully.

Most children enjoy speaking about their experiences, such as their frosty early morning starts to get to nursery. Nearly all children engage in language play confidently and their vocabulary is developing well. They recall prior learning with confidence, explaining with great enthusiasm how they built the hedgehog house. Early reading skills are developing well. Many children enjoy choosing a book in different areas of the provision. They discuss books skilfully and follow the story, matching animals to follow the narrative. Most children develop effective early writing skills through a range of activities, such as recording attendance, and making marks on a whiteboard. Nearly all children select equipment and skilfully make marks in response to the artwork they have been discussing. A minority of older children write their names independently. Nearly all children show a good understanding of simple Welsh words and phrases and carry out instructions during group activities. A few are confident to count in Welsh as they play and during tidy up times.

Many children's numeracy skills are developing well. They count together to see how many children are present during registration. They explore the concepts of full and empty in the water area and build towers of different height made with blocks as part of their small world play. Most children have well developed physical skills. They show good co-ordination when pedalling on large bikes and balancing across a range of different obstacles. Nearly all children demonstrate strong fine motor skills when involved in activities such as breaking up the clay, chopping their fruit and pouring milk at snack time.

Many children show good creativity and make informed decisions about the materials they need for a particular purpose. They engage enthusiastically with a range of different songs and show good awareness of tempo and rhythm.

Nearly all children's digital skills are developing well. They shine torches in the dark area and use the digital till confidently when counting in the shop. Nearly all children use a range of digital technology confidently. For example, they understand how to ask a voice activated virtual assistant to discover what kind of foods hedgehogs eat.

Nearly all children are lively and enthusiastic in their learning and explore the environment independently. Their personal and social skills are strong. They work together successfully to move bigger items when building ramps for the cars. Children develop independence through activities such as putting on their outdoor learning clothes and wellies.

Nearly all children are developing the ability to solve problems and persevere confidently when exploring ways to fit the cars into the tube. They have a good awareness of taking care of living things. For example, they chat about what the different animals which visit the garden need to survive.

Care and development: Good

The setting has strong safeguarding procedures which promote children's health and keep them safe. Practitioners demonstrate thorough knowledge of child protection and implement the setting's detailed policies and procedures robustly. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Practitioners provide the appropriate level of supervision during play and daily routines to keep children safe, whilst also encouraging children's independence and respecting their privacy. Practitioners have good awareness of children's individual health and dietary needs and complete accident, medication and infection control procedures appropriately.

Practitioners are excellent role models with their calm, positive approach to managing interactions. The behaviour management policy is informative and gives parents good insight into how the setting manages children's behaviour. Practitioners use soft, calm voices and make excellent use of songs to alert children to changes in routine, such as circle time and tidy up time. Familiar songs based around routines engage children successfully, for example when it's time to put away the toys. Practitioners use frequent praise and encouragement to recognise children's achievements, kindness and good behaviour. They praise children for helping and

explain to each child what they did to receive their reward sticker. The children show immense pride in their stickers and eagerly tell their parents about their achievements. Practitioners empower children by helping them express themselves, for example when explaining that the loud noise was making them feel sad.

Practitioners promote children's development and meet their individual needs effectively. They have up to date knowledge of child development and link closely with parents and other professionals to support children with additional needs. Practitioners know all the children well and have good understanding of children's interests and individual development needs. This enables them to tailor their support and provide a wide range of stimulating activities and play experiences. Practitioners play alongside the children and support through using rich vocabulary to develop the children's confidence when expressing themselves.

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

Practitioners work together effectively to plan a rich environment. They ensure that a good range of resources to encourage reading and mark making are readily available across the setting. They plan diligently to ensure a stimulating range of learning experiences which meet the needs of the children well. Practitioners gently encourage children to progress from one activity to another, using a range of effective strategies such as singing songs and rhymes. They make time to respond to children's needs and interests, and as a result the children transition well between activities and remain engaged for extended periods. This a particular strength at the setting.

Practitioners provide effective resources to support children's numeracy skills. Many children count different numbers of objects with increasing confidence, and talk about toys of different sizes during their activities. Practitioners use incidental Welsh regularly during the children's play. Welsh songs and rhymes are used well to support routines, such as daily discussions about the weather. Practitioners use a range of engaging objects during group sessions to spark the children's interest and use Welsh phrases to promote the children's understanding. Practitioners have a strong working relationship with the children. They encourage children to try things for themselves before intervening, for example when expecting children to put on their coats to play outdoors.

Practitioners provide an effective range of visits and visitors, which enrich the children's learning successfully. For example, they receive visits from a local drummer who provides opportunities for the children to develop their creativity and a sense of rhythm. Practitioners develop the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills well through learning about celebrations such as Diwali and Rosh Hashana.

Practitioners ensure a diverse range of books and magazines are available to the children. They praise children throughout the sessions, which supports the children's confidence and develops their independence successfully.

Practitioners have a good understanding of child development and have developed valuable opportunities to observe the children to identify their strengths and next steps in their learning. They observe the children's learning daily, and use the information to plan further opportunities to extend the children's skills.

Practitioners benefit from valuable opportunities for professional learning and personal research. This enhances their understanding of the way children develop and is effective in ensuring support for children who may have an additional learning need. Practitioners use effective questioning techniques to engage the children. However, they do not always take full advantage of opportunities to extend the children's vocabulary in order to deepen their understanding of different concepts.

Environment: Good

Leaders provide a safe, secure environment for children. They monitor the entrances robustly at drop off and collection times and ensure these are locked and safety gates are secure. Leaders are very proactive in addressing any safety issues, moving cleaning products and attaching security catches where needed. All necessary safety records, including a few basic risk assessments for the premises, and insurance certificates are in place. There are limited risk assessments for outings, but specific ones are in place for individual children and high-risk activities, such as woodwork. However, there is insufficient detail in a few risk assessments, for example during outings and outdoor activities such as visits to the allotment.

The leaders provide an outstanding environment that is fully accessible for all children. The inviting and welcoming playrooms and wonderful outside areas enrich children's play and learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum. The playrooms are spacious and well laid out to provide children with familiar spaces where they can use their own first-hand experiences. The highly engaging home corner has a spacious living room, an inviting kitchen and dining area and a dressing room for children's imagination to flourish. Photographs of all the children and their families hang above the fireplace and displays of children's work help them feel safe and valued. Children spend long periods exploring and experimenting in the large, covered sand and water area. They show great interest in the wildlife area and eagerly talk about their hedgehog house.

Leaders provide an extensive range of good quality equipment, toys and resources that encourage authentic play experiences. In the role play areas, furniture from home, including sofas, tables and chairs, crockery and real food help bring children's imaginative play to life. There is an abundance of natural and sensory materials for children to explore and numerous resources to extend children's creativity, mark making, numeracy and physical skills. Various recycling containers help children begin to learn to care for the environment. For example, after mealtimes children recycle their plastics and paper and know which food waste goes in the food bin and what goes outside for the birds.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders share a clear vision for the setting based on ensuring high quality experiences for children. The statement of purpose provides an accurate picture of the setting and there is a useful and detailed range of policies and procedures in place. The setting has a well-established process for ensuring safe recruitment. Leaders place a great emphasis on supporting the children's wellbeing and building their confidence as individuals. They instil a real passion amongst practitioners and lead by example. Leaders build on individual team members' strengths and encourage staff to reflect on their practice, and feel confident to suggest ideas for improving the provision. Leaders respond promptly to implement improvements. They make good use of the Early Years Development Grant.

The leadership team draw on first-hand evidence of the quality of provision and reflect on how effectively it impacts on children's learning and well-being. They monitor the quality of teaching and assessment and evaluate planning practices. They identify priority areas and improvement plans include appropriate actions which focus on developing aspects of the provision Staff responsibilities are set out clearly, and suitable success criteria are included to measure progress over time. Leaders also include an appropriate range of training and professional learning for practitioners.

The setting has appropriate supervision and appraisal procedures that give practitioners the opportunity to reflect on their work, pursue their interests and develop expertise. Practitioners show strong evidence of continuous self-evaluation practises. They have clear evidence of change in practise following training courses and cluster meetings.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the work of the setting and leaders respond well to feedback. The setting shares information with parents through the use of regular updates through social media and face to face meetings. They also provide parents with useful advice about how to support their child's learning at home.

The setting has an effective partnership with external stakeholders and works effectively with the improvement partner, participating in learning walks and collecting and sharing evidence of good practise. Leaders share good practise with early years professionals and there is a strong relationship with the local authority advisory team. Leaders make good use of support from the local authority additional learning needs team to access advice about the referral process.

There is a close relationship with the local primary school. The setting ensures that children take part in activities such as the Easter Parade and Christmas Concerts. Members of staff visit the provision and the setting takes the children to the school, ensuring a smooth transition. The setting has well established links with the local community. Practitioners arrange visits to the local post office for the children to learn about their work, and the local Mayor visits the setting to meet 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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Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	**What each means**
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

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