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 Stars Pre-School, Hay

Oxford Road
Hay-on-Wye
Hereford
Powys
HR3 5BT

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Little Stars Pre-School, Hay

Name of setting	Little Stars Pre-School
Category of care provided	Full Day Care
Registered person(s)	Rebecca Golesworthy, Letitia Jones
Responsible individual (if applicable)	N/A
Person in charge	Rebecca Golesworthy, Letitia Jones, Sarah Arrowsmith, Amy Davies, Natasha Grinham
Number of places	37
Age range of children	From 6 months to 4 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	20
Number of children who receive funding for early education	14
Opening days / times	Monday to Friday from 8am to 17.45pm
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	No
Welsh Language Active Offer	This is a service that does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of the children who use, or intend to use the service. We recommend that the service provider considers the Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care'.
Date of previous CIW inspection	15 May 2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection	29 June 2016
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	08/11/2022
Due to the issuing of a Priority Action Notice at this inspection under Regulation 22 in relation to safeguarding issues and the arrangements for the protection of children CIW will follow their securing improvement policy and procedure in relation to this setting and return within a six-month period to test non-compliance.	

Non-compliance

We identified serious non-compliance in relation to Leadership and Management and we have issued a priority action notice to the provider.

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 Ensure that all children make effective progress

R2 Use effective observations of children's play and exploration to plan for the next steps in their learning and development

R3 Develop effective systems to monitor and evaluate learning and teaching and address identified shortcomings robustly

R4 Ensure that all areas of non-compliance identified at this inspection are met

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:

Most children make purposeful choices and move freely around the setting confidently. For example, they enjoy using the role-play resources in the home corner and exploring the outdoor areas. Some children express themselves clearly using words and phrases. Other children communicate their needs and preferences using non-verbal clues such as pointing to what they want. At snack time, children choose their preferred drinks and foods. They express themselves confidently and feel they are listened to by practitioners. For example, they tell practitioners they want more water. Children who are not ready to sit in a group are able to move around freely and happily select alternative activities.

Most children arrive eagerly at the setting and cope well as they separate from their parents and carers. Settling in routines for new children are flexible to allow children to settle at their own pace so that, they feel safe and content. Most children form close bonds with practitioners. For example, they receive gentle comfort and reassurance from practitioners to aid the children's settling in process. Children are aware that practitioners will respond effectively to their needs. When they are hurt or upset, they approach practitioners for y comfort. Children feel a sense of belonging and pride as they receive praise for showing kindness to a friend or being an excellent helper at tidy up time.

Most children are enthusiastic and enjoy opportunities to play and learn. They show a keen interest and engage well in most of the experiences available to them. Nearly all children show curiosity and explore a variety of play opportunities. For example, they show excitement when choosing wooden spoons with images or nursery rhymes and shriek with delight as they sing their favourite nursery rhyme. Most children concentrate for an appropriate amount of time and respond positively to encouragement from practitioners. They listen to instructions well, for example when they join in with music and movement songs such as "Tap, tap on the box". Many children feel a sense of achievement and pride when they succeed in activities, such as when they complete a link train track and run a car along it.

Overall, most children develop their independence skills effectively. They complete self-registration on arrival and happily take responsibility for storing their belongings. They hang up their coats and know where to place their lunch bags. Nearly all children complete self-care tasks independently. For example, they wash their hands at appropriate times and get tissues to wipe their nose. Children learn to help others successfully as they arrange place names, plates, and cups, serve themselves with tongs and pour milk at snack time. They also help to tidy toys away at the end of the session.

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

Many children begin their education at the setting with knowledge skills and understanding that are, at least, at the level expected for their age and stage of development. During their education sessions, a majority make beneficial progress,

however, a few are not challenged well enough and therefore do not make suitable enough progress.

Most children listen to adults and to each other well. They show a good understanding of detailed instructions and respond appropriately. For example, they listen and respond to instructions about washing hands and serving snacks. In their play and interactions with other children they use words and phrases confidently to react to others and to make themselves understood. This includes explaining how they do not want to be chased any more during a game. A few are beginning to use more well-developed language in their interactions with others.

Many children use mark-making tools with increasing control. They use bingo dabbers to make dots in the shape of letters and recognise a good range of letters and their associated sounds. A majority recognise that writing conveys meaning and make good attempts at 'writing' during their play. Many can write a few letters, and a few can write their first name legibly. A majority of children engage with different types of reading materials confidently. They pick up books, turn pages and describe what they can see in pictures in useful detail. They enjoy listening to stories and will ask practitioners to read stories to them.

A few children use a few simple words in Welsh, such as 'thank-you' and 'ready' in the correct context. They identify a few colours using Welsh word accurately. They repeat words in Welsh confidently when given the word by an adult. However, as practitioners do not use Welsh with children consistently enough, the children's Welsh language use is limited.

Many children are beginning to develop good physical skills, such as to maintain their balance well. They step from bean bag to bean bag, balancing well and use balance bikes confidently. Many demonstrate good hand to eye co-ordination and use their physical skills adeptly when throwing small bean bags accurately to practitioners. They build towers from small corks, using precise finger movements and hand control. A majority are beginning to use their physical skills and creative skills together in their play and manipulate heavier objects thoughtfully. For example, they stand wooden blocks and then roll large pumpkins into them with enthusiasm, making their own version of 10-pin-bowling.

Many children are beginning to develop their early mathematical skills well. They recognise patterns in their play and reproduce them accurately, for example repeating the pattern of lids from a set of coloured pens correctly. Many count items in their environment and their play independently and without prompting. For instance, after making a hedgehog from dough with corks for quills children count the ten corks accurately. Most children use mathematical language confidently in their play, for example describing items as longer or shorter. They identify and recognise shapes and colours in the environment confidently.

Many children are beginning to use simple electronic equipment in their play activities and are developing a useful understanding of simple information and communication technology (ICT). Many use the touch screen on the interactive whiteboard confidently and a majority of children are beginning to use tablet computers to take photographs of things that they have done.

Care and development:

Practitioners communicate with children in a friendly manner and create a calm and relaxed atmosphere. They are positive role models for children and interact purposefully with them throughout the session. For example, they sit with children during snack time, modelling good social and communication skills.

Practitioners share a positive approach to managing children's behaviour and follow the setting's policy effectively. They have developed a successful range of strategies to promote positive behaviour, for example, using distraction and communication. They praise children for being kind or sharing resources and this has a beneficial impact on children's behaviour and self-esteem.

The setting has worked hard to improve procedures to support children with additional learning needs (ALN) and this is having a positive impact. For example, practitioners are aware of children's individual preferences and have collected favourite toys so that children can access them readily. This supports children's well-being and engagement successfully.

Practitioners implement the setting's policies and procedures effectively overall. They practise effective hygiene procedures consistently. For example, they wash their hands regularly and deal with intimate care, such as toileting, appropriately. Nappy changing procedures are in line with current infection control guidance. Practitioners are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children healthy. For example, they support and encourage children to get fresh air and provide healthy snack choices. Practitioners are aware of the procedure to follow in an emergency. They practice regular fire drills with the children to make sure that children know what to do if they must leave the premises in the event of an emergency and they record the outcome. Appropriate incident and accident recording systems are in place and include sufficient detail and evidence of information sharing with the parents. First aid training is current and suitable for the ages of children cared for. However, the safeguarding policy does not fully meet requirements as it does not refer to categories of abuse, allegation against staff members or registered persons. Although many staff have recently completed online safeguarding training, practitioners do not have a sufficient understanding of the setting's safeguarding policy and procedures. Therefore, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children do not meet requirements and give cause for concern.

Practitioners are currently introducing and preparing to deliver The Curriculum for Wales. They focus well on the interests of the child, their individual needs and development. Practitioners provide suitable and sensitive support for children who may have additional learning needs. They collaborate well to build the children's confidence and resilience. Practitioners provide interesting opportunities, which are led by the child's choices and decisions. However, practitioners do not record observations of all children's learning and development effectively. As a result, planned learning experiences that build on children's next steps and support their progress are limited.

Practitioners provide children with varied and valuable opportunities to learn about the world around them. They go on nature walks and walks within the community, such as going to the local market to buy fruit for snack or to the local shops to buy

poppies for their display board. Children explore celebrations and festivals of a range of cultures successfully through using a range of resources, craft materials and stories.

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

The setting has begun to consider how to make changes to its curriculum to meet the requirements of Curriculum for Wales. Leaders understand well the need for learning to respond to children's ideas and provide a diverse range of engaging activities that children enjoy. Learning opportunities provide children with a broad range of opportunities to learn outside, to take risks and to engage with new experiences. For example, large, heavy pumpkins in the learning area give children opportunities experiment with rolling and lifting heavy objects, and of cutting and examining the seeds inside.

There is a good range of activities and resources in the setting that children can access to develop their communication, numeracy and ICT skills. For example, words written in chalk on trays and brushes to paint over them help children to develop their early writing skills well. Practitioners provide a stimulating environment both inside and outside, which encourages children's involvement, participation and enjoyment. For example, they set out craft materials with models of poppies for children to make, they place useful materials in the sand to help children develop their physical skills and mathematical development. However, at present learning is not co-ordinated well enough to ensure that all children make enough progress. Practitioners set out activities, but do not consider well enough what skills they want children to develop, or whether activities challenge children at the right level.

The setting promotes children's awareness of the traditions and the culture of Wales and the wider world appropriately. Practitioners give children opportunities to learn about and celebrate contemporary events, such as the Welsh football team's successes. They celebrate St David's Day thoughtfully. There are strong opportunities for pupils to learn about their local area and its history. Children visit the local shops regularly and pay for their own items. They visit the local Hay Castle to learn about its past. Practitioners help children to develop a sense of curiosity about their own and other people's lives and beliefs. For example, they learn about other cultures when making Rangoli patterns to celebrate Diwali and share other cultural celebrations, such as Chinese New Year and St Patrick's Day.

A majority of practitioners have high expectations of children's learning. They promote children's language development appropriately and hold extended conversations with them, such as using snack times to discuss the tastes of different foods and different restaurants children may have visited. However, they do not do this consistently well. A minority of practitioners help children during activities, but do not engage with them skilfully enough to take forward their learning.

A minority of practitioners use the Welsh language well with children. For example, when completing farm animal jigsaws, they help children to learn a few animals' names in Welsh. When going for walks they thank passers-by with 'diolch' and encourage children to do the same. However, a majority of practitioners do not

develop children's Welsh language well enough. As a result, children's Welsh language development is inconsistent.

Practitioners undertake detailed evaluations of children's knowledge, skills and understanding at the start of their funded education. As children learn, practitioners continue to make useful observation of what children can do to help identify their progress. They focus well on identifying how well children are developing in their social and emotional skills. Assessments generally detail well what it is that children can do. For example, they identify whether children can count accurately and to what number, whether there are letters or words they recognise, and note specific examples of children's physical development. Practitioners share this information with parents and carers helpfully. However, they do not use this information well enough to plan learning opportunities that will challenge children and take forward their learning progressively.

Environment:

Leaders ensure that the indoor and outdoor environments are safe and secure. Effective risk assessments are in place, including daily checks of the environment as well as routine health and safety checks. However, the daily risk assessments are completed on wipe clean laminated sheets and this does not provide a permanent record of the daily checks completed.

Visitors cannot access the setting unless admitted by a staff member and all visitors sign in upon arrival and out on departure. All required safety checks are completed within the required timescales, including fire and electrical tests. The premises are clean, and all practitioners practise effective hygiene procedures. They wipe down tables before serving food and wear appropriate protective clothing. The toilet and nappy changing facilities are appropriate, and practitioners follow guidelines to promote children's privacy and dignity.

The premises are warm and welcoming and provide an effective environment for children to play and learn. The indoor and outdoor environments are used well to promote learning and development. The outdoor area is stimulating and easily accessible, allowing free flow from the indoor environment. Leaders have arranged for children to have use of the school's yard area. This enhances provision to support children's physical development well.

Leaders provide an extensive range of developmentally appropriate toys and resources that engage children well. All resources are clean and well-maintained. The setting incorporates natural and sustainable materials in children's play effectively. Leaders encourage active learning successfully, such as messy play, that encourages children to experiment and be imaginative. For example, children use playdough, corks, and wooden pegs. A selection of resources stored at low level so that children can access them and make choices independently. There are sufficient play materials to promote cultural awareness and diversity effectively. This ensures that children gain an appropriate understanding of the world they live in. Furniture and equipment are suitable and of good quality.

Leadership and management:

The setting's leaders have high expectations of themselves and ensure that they share these suitably with practitioners. They lead by example, and their care and support of children is of high-quality. They supervise and support and other practitioners at the setting well, for example through regular meetings to discuss their needs. As a result, practitioners are generally aware of their responsibilities and work together successfully as a team to provide a caring and supportive environment in which children's well-being flourishes. Leaders set clear aims and objectives for the setting that are focused well on meeting children's needs. They focus thoughtfully on national initiatives, such as additional learning needs and curriculum reform. They work thoughtfully to try out and implement new practices, such as different ways to evaluate children's progress.

Leaders prioritise the areas of the setting they wish to improve usefully. They take good account of national initiatives and recognise when they need support and training, such as with the development of their curriculum. Leaders ensure that all practitioners are involved in the evaluation of the setting. They consider the views of parents well. This allows them to identify appropriately many of the setting's strengths. However, there are other processes they do not consider such as first-hand evidence to identify the setting's areas for improvement. As a result, leaders do not identify sharply enough where practitioners need improvements in areas, such as teaching skills. Their appraisals of staff are too informal and do not focus well enough on identifying strengths, targets and training needs.

The setting has robust recruitment processes. Leaders ensure that staff have appropriate qualifications and that enough practitioners have appropriate first aid qualifications. They ensure that most policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis. This helps the setting to run smoothly. However, the statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the setting as it currently runs, and the safeguarding policy does not meet requirements fully.

Leaders make good use of the grant funding the setting receives to support and improve children's learning and well-being. This includes a good range of outdoor play equipment to develop children's physical skills and explorative play, such as a wood-work bench. Funding supports helpfully those pupils with additional needs, for instance providing sensory whiteboards to help children develop early mark-making skills.

Leaders have developed strong partnerships with parent and carers, and with local services. Parents receive a good range of up-to-date information through an online app and have detailed written reports on their child's progress. They consider that their children make strong progress and that practitioners care for their children's well-being highly effectively. A strong link with the local primary school helps children have a smooth transition to the next phase of their education. As soon as pupils begin their funded education, they visit the school for lunch and begin joining in with events at the school, such as concerts. Effective links with local community, such as local businesses and Hay Castle, help ensure that children develop a beneficial range of authentic learning opportunities, such as of shopping in the local town.

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)

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