



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Churchstoke Little Explorers
c/o Churchstoke CP School
Churchstoke
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6AA**

Date of inspection: October 2018

by

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Context

Churchstoke Little Explorers is an English medium setting situated in the village of Churchstoke, near Montgomery in Powys local authority. It meets in a building in the grounds of Churchstoke Primary School. The setting is registered to take up to 19 children from two to four years of age. It offers early education sessions from Monday to Friday from 9.00am until 11.30am during school term time. There are currently very few children in receipt of funded early education.

At the time of the inspection no children were identified with additional learning needs. There are very few children from ethnic backgrounds and almost all children speak English as their home language.

There are three members of staff, including two who work closely as joint supervisors. They took up their posts in 2016.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspected the setting in May 2018 and Estyn last inspected it in November 2012.

Summary

The setting's current performance	Good
The setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- Practitioners plan interesting, flexible and stimulating activities that take account of children's stages of development and interests well
- The setting provides a wide range of opportunities for children to develop their communication and numeracy skills
- The setting makes very good use of the local area and visitors to enhance children's learning and understanding of the wider world
- Practitioners have a sound understanding of the philosophy of the foundation phase and how young children learn
- The warm and caring relationship between practitioners and children creates an ethos of co-operation and mutual respect

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- Leaders and the management committee meet children's needs effectively and organise the setting well
- They have a clear vision that focuses successfully on ensuring children are happy and learn through play within a caring and supportive environment
- There is very good communication between the leaders and the management committee
- There is a positive culture of self-evaluation that leads to regular improvements in provision and outcomes for children
- The setting uses partnerships to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children consistently well
- The management committee ensures practitioners attend training that has a beneficial effect on their practices.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve provision for developing children's Welsh language skills
- R2 Ensure that planning and assessment focuses effectively on developing children's skills across all areas of learning systematically
- R3 Plan regular activities for children to be physically active
- R4 Formalise arrangements for the management committee to monitor practices and provision

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

n/a

Standards: n/a

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Wellbeing: n/a

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Practitioners plan interesting and flexible activities that take account of children's stages of development and interests well. Activities reflect the foundation phase ethos successfully and provide worthwhile opportunities for children to make effective choices and learn through their independent play. Practitioners consult children about the topics they will explore and provide practical and creative tasks that capture their interest well.

Practitioners focus on developing children's literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills (ICT) across areas of learning successfully. The setting provides a wide range of opportunities for children to develop their communication skills. Practitioners share books, stories and rhymes with children effectively and model how to handle books with care. They provide different types of books for children to explore in different areas in the setting, such as cookery books in the role play kitchen. There are many interesting opportunities for mark making, which children take part in with enthusiasm. These include finding their names on pebbles and copying them, using clipboards to draw pictures in the space station, and making large chalk marks on the ground outside.

There is worthwhile provision to develop children's numeracy skills. Practitioners provide them with regular opportunities to count, sort, match and recognise shapes and colours around them. For example, children enjoy using and identifying coins in the role play till, finding shapes in a tray of rice and counting cubes picked up using tweezers.

There are worthwhile opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills. These include opportunities to use a tablet computer such as to find songs that they can listen to and to programme a toy to move pictures of planets.

Provision to develop children's Welsh language skills is developing appropriately. Practitioners use Welsh effectively during whole group sessions, such as to encourage children to place photos of themselves on a chart to show how they feel during registration time. This is successful in encouraging children to begin to use the language, but practitioners do not build on this successfully by using Welsh throughout the sessions.

Opportunities for children to develop an awareness of Welsh culture and traditions, as well as those of other nations is appropriate.

Learning experiences promote independence and creativity well and children choose tools and materials with confidence, such as when filling water containers from a water butt. Practitioners use the outdoor area imaginatively to develop children's respect and understanding of the natural environment, such as when they observe spiders on webs with magnifying lenses.

The setting makes very good use of the local area and visitors to enhance children's learning and understanding of the wider world. Experiences include playing games with elderly residents in the nearby care home, holding a re-enactment of a royal wedding in the church and visiting shops to buy fruit and vegetables. Visitors to the setting have included the emergency services, a vet and baby farm animals.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of the foundation phase and how young children learn. They use a suitable range of teaching strategies to encourage and motivate children to develop new skills and knowledge. They understand the purpose of activities and engage children's interests successfully. They combine focused tasks with children's free play well. As a result, almost all children sustain interest in activities and enjoy periods of uninterrupted learning, such as when playing in their homemade space rocket.

Practitioners make good use of resources to engage children in their learning and provide appropriate support to encourage children to be curious, explore their environments and become independent learners. They respond spontaneously and confidently to the environment and activities around them to benefit children's learning. For example, they provide mops for children to clean windows after seeing a window cleaner at work.

The warm and caring relationship between practitioners and children creates an ethos of co-operation and mutual respect. Practitioners are sensitive to children's needs and encourage them to persevere and to try their best, such as when preparing fruit and toast at snack time. They manage children's behaviour positively and sensibly.

Practitioners are good language role models. They use purposeful questioning to challenge children to clarify ideas, extend their thinking and solve problems well. This is evident when children select materials to make enclosures for animals and match numbers on cups and saucers in the role play area.

The setting has a worthwhile range of procedures for assessing and monitoring children's progress. Practitioners observe children and identify what they can do during their first few weeks at the setting. They use this information effectively to plan their next steps in learning. At regular intervals, practitioners monitor children's progress thoroughly in developing their literacy, numeracy, physical, and personal and social skills. However, practitioners do not always monitor children's progress across other areas of learning well enough, including creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Parents are kept well informed about their children's achievements through informal discussions, recordings in daily note books and a useful end of year report.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

Practitioners provide worthwhile opportunities to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. They create a warm and caring environment, so that children enjoy attending the setting and take part in activities readily. This ensures that children are happy and secure in the company of adults and ask for help when needed, such as when they make enclosures for farm animals. Practitioners encourage children to take turns and be thoughtful towards others. This is evident when children wait patiently to choose a snack and pour a drink. There are beneficial opportunities to develop children's sense of awe and wonder, such as when they observe the properties of water outdoors. Practitioners develop values such as honesty, fairness and respect effectively through daily activities and routines.

There are satisfactory arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing. Children enjoy a suitable selection of healthy food and drink at snack time and wash their hands before eating and after toileting. There are a few opportunities for children to ride bikes and move to music. However, the range and frequency of planned activities does not provide sufficient opportunities for children to be physically active regularly enough.

The setting has suitable procedures for identifying children's early learning needs and practitioners follow these appropriately. There are useful arrangements in place to support children with already identified additional learning needs.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is bright and inviting and practitioners are friendly and approachable. It is an inclusive community where children feel valued and safe. They have equal access to all areas of learning and equipment and are encouraged to do their best. Practitioners promote tolerant attitudes well and encourage children to treat one another with respect and kindness. Practitioners place a suitable emphasis on recognising and celebrating diversity. They plan worthwhile opportunities for children to learn about different cultures and festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Diwali. Practitioners encourage children to play with dolls and dressing up clothes reflecting different ethnic backgrounds.

The indoor accommodation is clean, attractive and well maintained with displays that support current learning. The setting has free access to the outdoor area on the school site and practitioners have developed a range of meaningful activities to support children's learning appropriately. For example, practitioners promote children's literacy and numeracy skills well and include signs in the role play areas and number baskets to be filled with objects on a wall.

The setting has an appropriate supply of resources to provide children with beneficial opportunities to investigate and learn for themselves. For example, the space station, kitchen and builders' yard enable children to develop a range of skills through purposeful role play.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

Leaders and the management committee meet children's needs effectively and organise the setting well. They have a clear vision for the setting that focuses on ensuring children are happy and learn through play within a caring and supportive environment. This vision is shared with practitioners and parents successfully.

Practitioners have up to date job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. As a result, practitioners work well together. Leaders ensure practitioners have opportunities to work to their strengths and address training needs consistently. There is very good communication between the leaders and the management committee. Leaders attend all committee meetings to report on the work of the setting and they work together to plan and implement improvements consistently. For example, they have a strong sense of purpose in developing the setting's provision.

The setting supports practitioners' welfare and wellbeing effectively by providing regular supervision. The management committee carries out formal appraisals annually. As a result, they deploy practitioners effectively to make the most of their expertise in the setting and identify training needs successfully. However, the

setting's appraisal processes are at an early stage of development. The setting does not use its appraisal procedures well enough yet to support practitioners to improve their practice and the quality of provision, such as by setting clear targets and monitoring progress against these.

The setting focuses well on local and national priorities such as developing literacy and numeracy provision, outdoor learning and implementing the foundation phase profile effectively.

The setting has a range of relevant and useful policies which are implemented effectively. There has been good progress against the recommendations from the last inspection.

Improving quality: Good

There is a positive culture of self-evaluation in the setting. The management committee and leaders are open to new ideas and have a useful understanding of the benefits of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The setting uses the local authority's audit toolkit and its own processes to identify areas for improvement successfully. Leaders use this information consistently well to make improvements in the setting. They consult an appropriate range of partners to support this process. For example, the setting consults parents through regular questionnaires and leaders recently acted on their suggestions to put waterproof trousers in the outdoor area to improve children's wellbeing.

The setting includes children's views appropriately in evaluating the quality of the provision. Practitioners encourage children to use stickers to show which areas they particularly enjoy. Leaders analyse the results and make appropriate changes in response to these. The setting welcomes advice and guidance from the local authority advisory teacher and practitioners act on her advice regularly, such as improving the choice of construction toys available and making them more accessible to children.

Partnership working: Good

The setting makes good use of partnerships to support improvements in the quality of provision and outcomes for children.

Practitioners provide parents with a good range of information through daily informal chats and regular updates on social media. The setting provides parents with worthwhile information about the activities, snacks they have provided, and the progress children make each day. These arrangements help parents to feel well informed and comfortable to approach practitioners about any concerns.

The setting has very productive links with the local school. There are beneficial arrangements for children to familiarise themselves with school through regular visits. For example, children attend school concerts and other events throughout the year, such as the Harvest Festival. There are effective systems to transfer children's personal information and assessments to the school

The setting has beneficial links with the local authority. Practitioners receive regular advice and support from the advisory teacher and attend valuable training and cluster meetings. They have visited other settings to see good practice. This has led to regular improvements in provision, such as the creation of a water wall and a role play builders' yard in the outdoors. This contributes to the development of children's creativity and imagination effectively.

The setting makes very effective use of the local community to enhance and enrich children's learning and to help them develop an understanding of the wider world. For example, children go to the nearby care home to visit residents, attend notable events at the church and go on walks to collect natural materials.

Resource management: Good

The setting employs sufficient practitioners with appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children. The setting deploys them effectively, to make good use of their time and expertise. The management committee ensures practitioners attend training that has a beneficial effect on their practices. This ensures they adopt new initiatives well and develop their professional knowledge consistently. For example, practitioners have benefited from training on the foundation phase profile and using Welsh during whole group sessions.

The management committee has a sound understanding of the setting's budget and prioritises spending in line with planned actions for improvement. They make wise decisions about expenditure, and consider what will have the greatest impact on outcomes for children's learning and wellbeing.

In view of the quality of the provision and the effect of leadership in improving quality and care, the setting provides good value for money.

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.
Foundation Phase	The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education