

**A report on**

**Chirk Pre-School Playgroup**

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**Ysgol Y Waun**

**Chapel Lane, Chirk**

**Wrexham**

**LL14 5NF**

**Date of inspection: May 2025**

**by**

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)**

**and**

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

## About Chirk Pre-School Playgroup

Name of setting	Chirk Pre-School Playgroup
Category of care provided	Full Day care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Llinos Jones
Person in charge	Llinos Jones, Rosemary Whitworth, Claire Phillips
Number of places	30
Age range of children	2-4 years
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	23
Number of children who receive funding for early education	19
Opening days / times	08:30-15:00 Monday – Friday, term time only
Flying start service	No
Language of the setting	English
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service is not making a significant effort to promote the use of Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	6/3/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection	June 2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	13/05/2025
Additional information	

## Summary

Theme	Judgement
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Learning</b> (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care and development</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Teaching and assessment</b> (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Non-compliance**

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

## **Recommendations**

- R1. Develop opportunities for children to use Welsh language independently
- R2. Ensure that staff have safeguarding training in line with National Minimum Standards

## **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: Excellent**

Nearly all children are extremely happy and settled at the setting. They have excellent opportunities to make choices and decide how they spend their time. For example, children excitedly choose which familiar nursery rhyme to sing at the end of the day and which story book they would like to read as a group. Nearly all children are familiar with daily routines such as washing their hands before eating and collecting their belongings at the end of the day. This helps them to feel secure and develop a strong sense of belonging.

Nearly all children are extremely active, engaged learners who greatly enjoy the exciting opportunities they have to play and learn. They enjoy the freedom to move around the stimulating learning areas and confidently choose activities that interest them. Many children develop a love of art and craft and create a variety of pictures and cards before moving outside to use a junk modelling station. Most children express themselves confidently and make their needs known. Children who do not have verbal skills use clear gestures to signal their needs to extremely responsive staff who provide an immediate reply.

Nearly all children interact positively with their friends and those caring for them. They have numerous worthwhile opportunities to develop their social skills and play in friendship groups, which they engage in with real pleasure and enthusiasm. Nearly all children are beginning to learn to take turns and share. They happily share their music beaters so their friends can also join in playing the woodland instruments. Nearly all children enjoy participating in activities that encourage them to play collaboratively. For example, a small group of children spend a prolonged period playing in the forest school area together, filling the wheelbarrows with bricks and leaves and helping each other climb into a large tractor tyre.

Nearly all children form exceptionally positive relationships with practitioners who know them very well. They are keen to invite them into their play and share their experiences with them. Children and practitioners laugh and chat together about their families and everyday lives. Many children readily approach practitioners for support and comfort and are given regular praise for their efforts. For example, children who happily wait for their turn to use the tools receive praise from practitioners for being patient, to which they smile proudly. This has a tremendously positive effect on their well-being and self-esteem.

Most children are curious about the world around them and enthusiastically persevere to complete tasks and solve problems well. For example, when a child is keen to build a ramp for her teddy bear to use, she independently selects the wood she wants to use and experiments before finding the correct angle at which to place it. Most children concentrate for a suitable amount of time in line with their stage of development and many enjoy periods of extended play.

Nearly all children develop excellent self-care skills and are confident in making independent choices. For example, during snack times, children serve their own food and drinks and help tidy up once finished. Children develop resilience and a confidence in their own abilities to explore and learn from the world around them.

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

Nearly all children, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress from their individual starting points. Most children make good progress in developing their communication and independent skills during their time at the setting. They listen carefully to practitioners and other children, and many respond confidently when talking to visitors. Many enjoy stories and listen attentively for sustained periods of time. They know how to handle a book as a reader and understand that the words and pictures have meaning. A few children choose to look at books independently and talk about the pictures with their friends. Many children develop their vocabulary well with a few using specific terms to describe their activities during play. For example, when making cauliflower and broccoli stew, children talk about ingredients whilst they mix them together, discussing the oven temperature and how long the stew will need to cook. Children who are initially reluctant to speak when they arrive gain confidence quickly within the setting's nurturing environment:

Children have varied and numerous opportunities to develop their mark making skills. As a result, many use a wide range of equipment with confidence and dexterity and make good progress in this aspect of their learning. For example, many children enthusiastically make notes on chalkboards as reminders for a shopping list during their play in the mud kitchen.

Most children follow simple instructions given in Welsh and join in with a wide range of songs and rhymes enthusiastically. At snack time, they respond to questions about what they would like to eat and drink. However, very few children use Welsh independently in their play.

Most children make good progress in their mathematical development. They use mathematical language accurately during their play and are developing a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, when filling cups with water, soil or fruit, they describe them as full or empty. Many children count to ten confidently and a few count beyond this. For example, when using tweezers to put 'wiggly worms' into jars, a few children count to sixteen and compare the jars to identify which has more or fewer worms. Most children recognise a range of two-dimensional shapes, such as circles, squares, and triangles. Many join in singing a range of number songs and rhymes enthusiastically.

Many children develop their digital skills purposefully. They use devices confidently to take photographs of their work and use remote control cars with skill. Many children persevere well with tasks and consider how to solve problems. Nearly all develop strong creative skills. For example, they use clay and natural materials to produce detailed models of mini beasts and creatures from their imagination. Children express awe and wonder when engaging with nature, such as observing tadpoles, painting with mud and discovering snails.

Many children develop their physical skills well. They use a range of equipment skilfully. For example, they try to balance on a seesaw, ride bikes, negotiate obstacles and climb in and out of large tractor tyres. Nearly all children develop their fine motor skills successfully, for example when carefully using knives to cut up real vegetables in the mud kitchen.

### **Care and development: Excellent**

Practitioners have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. They have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding issues and follow the setting's safeguarding procedures diligently. A few practitioners do not have the most up-to-date safeguarding training. However, those we spoke to have a comprehensive understanding of child protection procedures and know their responsibilities well. Leaders ensure that there is an effective registration system in place, which allows practitioners to accurately record attendance. Nearly all practitioners are confident when recording, maintaining, and reviewing a range of records including, accident, incidents and medication logs. Practitioners ensure that allergies are dealt with in a safe and effective manner and all medical information is recorded in line with recommended guidelines. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Nearly all practitioners follow robust systems and procedures to ensure that children are safe and healthy. They employ high standards of hygiene practices, encouraging children to wash their hands before eating and ensuring that surfaces are wiped frequently. They follow intimate care routines thoroughly, ensuring the dignity and privacy of all children. Nearly all practitioners have appropriate first aid training to ensure they know what to do in the case of an accident and appropriate first aid resources are available at the setting.

Practitioners promote healthy lifestyles by providing children with a variety of nutritious snacks and options of milk and water to drink. Whilst children eat their snacks, nearly all practitioners make time to chat about their favourite type of fruit and vegetables, creating a relaxed, happy and safe atmosphere where children can take their time to finish their food. Practitioners ensure that children have access to regular, fun and enjoyable outdoor play experiences throughout the day.

Nearly all practitioners are highly responsive to children's attempts to communicate, and value each child's efforts. They manage children's behaviour exceptionally well. Practitioners give clear expectations as well as an abundance of praise and encouragement. For example, a practitioner cuddles an upset child, before giving them reassurance and plenty of time before gently explaining some simple behaviour expectations.

Practitioners have a warm, reassuring and comforting manner with children, whom they know incredibly well. They notice little things about children such as what they like and dislike and use this as an invitation to play and learn. For example, practitioners bring creatures such as snails into the setting after noticing a child enjoys looking for insects and wildlife. This becomes a talking point between practitioners and children for days and leads to many activities including finding more snails, discussing what they like to eat and making a home for them. Practitioners provide children with purposeful areas of learning, which are genuinely led by the interests of children.

Nearly all practitioners identify and support children with additional learning needs extremely well. They provide personalised provision to children who require additional support and work with parents, carers and outside agencies successfully. This promotes the best outcomes for children and provides opportunities for all children to thrive.



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

Most practitioners have a good understanding of child development and how children learn. They have high expectations of themselves and children and understand children's individual strengths and needs extremely well. They regularly observe children at play and provide a wide range of stimulating learning experiences to encourage their curiosity consistently. This develops children's independence and problem-solving skills across all areas of provision.

Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities to develop children's numeracy skills. For example, they encourage children to count natural objects in the outdoor garden and to recite numbers forwards and backwards to ten during snack. Through skilful discussions, practitioners introduce the concept of measurement effectively during construction and investigative play. They provide a good range of experiences for children to develop their digital skills by using digital devices and toys. As a result, children choose equipment independently and begin to understand the purpose of digital technology.

Nearly all practitioners use questioning effectively, to enhance children's problem-solving and thinking skills. They are also very skilful at understanding when to intervene and when to step back to give children time to work things out for themselves. Practitioners encourage children to think for themselves, asking open ended and probing questions to challenge further consideration.

Practitioners make effective use of the Welsh language with the children. They speak clearly and take opportunities to introduce new vocabulary purposefully, encouraging children to develop their understanding of simple words and phrases. They encourage children to join in singing a range of Welsh songs and rhymes and use incidental Welsh to give instructions and congratulate them when they have done well. However, children's independent use of Welsh is at an early stage of development.

Practitioners plan an engaging range of learning and play activities that enable children to develop a range of skills progressively in all areas. Practitioners ensure that many activities are child initiated and come from children's interests. For example, they provide exciting opportunities for the children to independently use magnifying glasses to see snails and stick insects more clearly.

Practitioners are excellent role models for developing children's communication skills. For example, they share books with children, model how to read a book correctly and discuss the story enthusiastically, developing children's enjoyment of reading. They encourage children to engage in mark making experiences such as writing shopping lists and using digital pads to develop their early writing skills.

Practitioners plan high quality experiences that enable children to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. They provide children with a range of multicultural books, toys and small world figures to begin to learn about diverse cultures and their traditions. Practitioners provide children with meaningful opportunities to learn about their Welsh identity and culture through celebrating St David's Day and tasting traditional Welsh foods. They also provide an informative display of local features and landmarks, helping children develop a sense of Cynefin. Practitioners make effective use of the local area to enrich children's learning and arrange visit to the local shops, library and park. This fosters a sense of belonging to the local community and enriches children's knowledge of the locality and its traditions.

Leaders ensure that the setting's procedures for monitoring children's progress are effective. Practitioners carry out regular observations of children's play and use the information well to identify next steps in learning. They provide parents and carers with regular summaries of their child's progress and well-being.

### **Environment: Excellent**

Leaders maintain an exceptionally safe and secure environment. The setting is based within a designated building, with its own secure access. Leaders ensure that a record of all visitors is accurately maintained. They have developed effective risk assessments for different areas and activities, which are shared with staff and reviewed regularly. Leaders ensure that practitioners follow robust systems to regularly check toys, equipment and resources to ensure that they are clean and in excellent condition.

Leaders ensure that children are supervised carefully at all times in a safe environment. They arrange for fire and security equipment to be checked regularly to ensure that they are safe and in working order. Leaders complete regular fire drills so that practitioners and children understand the procedures clearly in an emergency. They ensure that building maintenance records are thorough and up to date. Practitioners are pro-active in undertaking daily safety checks of the environment and specific activities to minimize any risks.

The indoor environment is cosy and welcoming and provides a highly effective environment for play and learning. Practitioners ensure that the environment celebrates children's creativity and successes by displaying children's work, family photos and pictures of local Welsh people and places. This celebrates children's achievements and their Welsh culture, creating a strong sense of belonging for all. Furniture is at a suitably low level, which allows children to access and use resources independently. Leaders thoughtfully arrange the playroom, providing multiple spaces to stimulate children's interest. For example, children can access a home corner with real life items, an inspiring block play area and a well-stocked art and craft section. There is also a relaxing space where children can rest quietly. Children have access to low-level toilets and sinks, which promote their physical development and independence skills successfully.

Leaders have developed a rich, stimulating outdoor environment that allows children to enjoy a variety of high-quality experiences. Nearly all children independently free flow from inside to a direct outdoor area where they can develop a variety of different skills. For example, some children sit in the quiet seated area to relax, listen to music, read books and quietly engage in mark making. Others enjoy physical activities such as digging in the sand pit, climbing and balancing on the balance beam, riding wheeled toys and using real tools to saw, screw and build. The way children use the free-flowing environment promotes excellent personal and social development as well as improving physical and independence skills.

Additionally, leaders have developed an impressive woodland area at the rear of the setting, which children attend regularly throughout the week in their forest school sessions. Leaders have reused materials to develop rich, stimulating areas that encourage play and exploration and support appropriate risk taking. For example, children confidently climb over large tyres and logs, make potions out of plants and flowers and enjoy using the tree swing with their friends. Children develop an abundance of confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences when regularly attending the forest school sessions.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, practitioners and children. They provide practitioners with strong leadership and have high aspirations for them, empowering them to lead and make decisions for the benefit of children. This clear vision and ethos leads to effective teamwork and successful collaboration among practitioners. Leaders have written a clear statement of purpose, which provides an accurate picture of the setting and relevant policies are regularly reviewed and shared with parents and practitioners. This creates a safe and homely environment in which children can thrive. As a result, children love attending the setting and make good progress.

Leaders have established good self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures that consider the views of a range of stakeholders. They consult with parents and carers to seek their views about the setting and what needs to be improved. Leaders use all this information purposefully to plan for improvement. They review and analyse procedures regularly and make amendments when necessary. They have established a positive culture of continuous evaluation, aiming for provision of the highest standard for children in their care. Leaders ensure that practitioners have most mandatory training. However, there are some members of staff who have not received the most up-to-date safeguarding training in line with National Minimum Standards.

Leaders use budgets and grants effectively and prioritise expenditure against targets purposefully. They enhance children's learning experiences by investing in valuable resources, such as new furniture, which allows children to access resources more easily and an outdoor canopy to allow a greater range of activities to be set up. For example, a range of 'texture boards' have been introduced to encourage and develop children's creative skills. This thoughtful arrangement encourages active participation and ensures that children are fully engaged in their play and learning.

Leaders follow effective arrangements to supervise and monitor practitioners' performance. Together, they reflect on their roles and responsibilities, identify sensible targets for improvement and organise valuable, good quality training as necessary. For example, the whole team were involved in purposeful training to develop the use of planning in the moment and Welsh, which has led to more enriched learning experiences for children and greater use of Welsh by practitioners.

Leaders encourage a range of effective partnerships that promote children's learning successfully. There are strong links with parents, outside agencies and the local education authority. They provide parents with regular information about their children's progress, and the range of activities that they enjoy while at the setting. They ensure regular opportunities for parents to discuss their child's experiences and celebrate their progress in different skills. Leaders are developing positive links with local schools and, as a result, there are suitable arrangements in place to ensure that children transition to the next stage of their education smoothly.

## 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
<b>Poor</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required