



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Mes Bach
Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon
Trefeglwys
Caersws
Powys
SY17 5PH**

Date of inspection: October 2017

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

Cylch Meithrin Mes Bach is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in a classroom at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon, Trefeglwys in Powys local authority. The setting changed to being a Welsh-medium setting in September 2016 following a period as the English-medium 'Little Acorns' setting. The setting is open five mornings a week, between 9.15am and 11.45am.

The setting is registered to admit up to 14 children at any given time, and the setting provides education for three and four-year-old children. All children at the setting are funded to receive early years education.

Nearly all children are from a white British background and very few come from Welsh-speaking homes. There are currently no children with additional learning needs.

The setting employs three members of staff. One leader took up the post in September 2016 and the other in September 2017.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in January 2015, when the provision was under the name 'Little Acorns'. English was the main language of the setting when Estyn inspected 'Little Acorns' in June 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is adequate because:

- Most children make sound progress in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- Most children acquire initial Welsh communication skills appropriately and soon after attending the setting
- Nearly all children develop their physical and creative skills successfully
- Nearly all children are well behaved and are very polite
- Practitioners listen to children's ideas sensibly, which adds positively to their daily enthusiasm
- Practitioners create an interesting and reflective environment by providing positive opportunities for children to think, discuss feelings and say thank you

However:

- Planning does not ensure regular opportunities to challenge children and target the next steps in their learning effectively
- The setting does not make beneficial use of visits and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences
- Teaching does not challenge individuals and specific groups of children purposefully
- Not all practitioners record daily assessments regularly and consistently
- There are not robust opportunities for children to learn about the world's other cultures

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- Leaders have begun to use relevant and up-to-date information about the setting to improve provision
- The school's recent support has begun to set a purposeful direction for the setting's practices
- The leaders' honest and thoughtful decisions target relevant training
- Members of the governing body and the new registered person are beginning to evaluate provision and staff's responsibilities better
- Effective use of the setting's funding is improving the quality of provision
- There is a range of useful strategic partnerships that work purposefully to improve provision and children's outcomes

However:

- There has been inconsistency with leadership since the setting changed to being Welsh-medium
- The governors' role of monitoring, challenging and supporting the setting has not been developed appropriately
- Self-evaluation procedures are new and have not yet become embedded
- Leaders have not had enough time to embed self-evaluation practices fully in the life of the setting
- There are no performance management systems in place

Recommendations

- R1 Improve planning to ensure continuity and progression in activities and learning experiences, including opportunities for children to learn about the community and the wider world
- R2 Challenge individual children in line with their ability
- R3 Ensure that assessments lead directly to purposeful planning and the next steps in children's learning
- R4 Ensure that governors' monitoring and evaluation practices are rigorous and robust
- R5 Strengthen self-evaluation procedures to ensure that they have a positive effect on the setting's strategic direction

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

In general, and across the areas of learning, most children's starting points are close to or higher than that expected for their age. Most children make sound progress from their starting points. They work with each other and adults to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively.

Very few children have Welsh communication skills that correspond to the standard that is expected for their age on entry to the setting. However, during their time at the setting, most make purposeful progress and acquire initial Welsh communication skills appropriately and quickly.

Many children begin to use specific words, simple language patterns and phrases usefully when playing informally and during focus tasks, without much prompting by adults. They respond intelligently to questioning by practitioners during plenary sessions as they discuss the weather. As a result, many children develop their daily use of the Welsh language effectively. They listen attentively and respond naturally and confidently to instructions in Welsh while dancing in the hall and cooking diligently in the mud kitchen. Many respond enthusiastically to Welsh nursery rhymes and songs.

Many children show an interest in books and discuss and explain the pictures intelligently. They respond to the purpose of the writing sensibly; for example, they discuss the characteristics of familiar animals and discuss how many arms and legs they have skilfully. As a result, most children handle books in the reading area as early and confident readers. They link actions with emotions correctly, such as considering the feelings of animals when they meet a monster in the forest.

Most children make marks successfully when experimenting with different media. They persevere with their early writing experiences with motivation; for example, they use a variety of implements such as chalk, coloured pens and paint effectively to make a rainbow. Many explain the purpose of writing in the correct context, such as using crayons to record the details of a patient in the surgery and to take patients' names after phone calls. Many children recognise their own names regularly when sitting for a snack, and a few are beginning to recognise other children's names correctly.

Most children count numbers to 10 confidently with the support of an adult. A few children are beginning to recognise and name numbers to five successfully with encouragement from practitioners. They use mathematical language purposefully; for example, they discuss and compare three-dimensional shapes in the construction area when building towers, and match pictures of different objects during a bingo game.

Most children use numbers purposefully in practical activities. They collect different types of fish in nets from the water tub and group them correctly. They also line up

on a shape with a specific number effectively before entering the hall. In addition, they count the number of pirates on a ship and the animals in the sea around the ship successfully. Most children understand that there are differences in volume when weighing water in buckets on scales and when filling buckets with sand. They explain whether objects are 'big' or 'small', 'heavy' or 'light', and 'first' or 'last' effectively.

Most children use their ICT skills effectively. They use electronic tablets and Welsh apps confidently. They control a compact disc player to listen to music thoughtfully and share electronic toys and a laptop in focus tasks and when role-playing. As a result, their use of educational software and hardware develops their thinking skills successfully.

Nearly all children enjoy listening attentively to music and perform enthusiastically when moving to different rhythms. They develop their physical skills well when riding bicycles and vehicles energetically, and dancing and doing actions in the school hall. Nearly all children choose equipment and materials effectively to solve practical problems; for example, they use glue to work creatively to create a fox's face and a hedgehog's body out of leaves, following an autumn hunt on the school grounds.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children relate comfortably to adults and visitors when they arrive at and leave the setting. They show a purposeful interest in various indoor and outdoor activities and focus enthusiastically on their learning.

Nearly all children enjoy tasks in all areas of learning, and share and work sensibly with other children. As a result, they show positive attitudes towards new experiences, such as experimenting with a sieve in the soil and flowing water through a series of troughs and pipes.

Nearly all children are well-behaved and are very polite. They show respect when responding responsibly to adults and each other. Nearly all children listen attentively to adults, for example when they put on their coats to play outdoors and when sitting to listen to each other's news about the stormy weather the previous night. After using the toilet, messy play and outdoor activities, nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly without too much prompting from practitioners. They understand clearly that hygiene is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Most children are beginning to express an opinion and their personal preferences sensibly. This is evident when they continue with specific tasks, such as discussing characters on a pirate ship or starting a new activity of their own choice in the role-play surgery. They are confident learners and work independently and effectively during play activities. This is evident when most discuss thoughtfully which learning areas include their favourite activities. They are confident when identifying which practical tasks are of most interest to them and the few tasks that are difficult to complete and remember, such as a Welsh nursery rhyme.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

Leaders and practitioners plan appropriate learning experiences, which, in general, meet children's needs and interests efficiently. They motivate children to learn effectively by providing them with new and practical experiences both indoors and outdoors. As a result, the curriculum reflects the ethos of the foundation phase suitably.

Practitioners provide appropriate opportunities for children to voice their personal ideas to develop activities further. Listening to children's ideas adds positively to their daily enthusiasm. An example of this is the opportunities for them to role-play in the surgery and search for particular features of the different seasons, such as collecting leaves on the school grounds.

Although practitioners have new roles, the team work together successfully to improve the quality of activities, and they motivate children to develop as independent learners; for example, they encourage children to choose books to discuss in the reading corner and use saucepans as musical instruments outdoors. However, planning does not ensure regular opportunities to challenge children and target the next steps in their learning effectively. As a result, practitioners miss opportunities for meet the needs of individuals and specific groups of pupils and extend their knowledge and information further.

On the whole, the setting plans to develop children's thinking, literacy and numeracy skills appropriately. Literacy and numeracy activities are available in all areas of learning and meet individuals' needs suitably. Practical examples of this are the beneficial opportunities for children to create shapes and make marks with chalk and to scribble on doctors' paper with a pencil independently. They work together to empty buckets of sand and to fill kitchen equipment with soil confidently in the outdoor area.

Provision to develop ICT skills is purposeful. Practitioners plan good opportunities for children to use a range of equipment, such as cameras, a compact disc players, tablets and electronic toys. All practitioners challenge children effectively and use Welsh educational software to develop their early ICT skills.

Practitioners provide effective opportunities to develop children's physical skills. Regular opportunities for them to ride bicycles and vehicles energetically outdoors and to dance enthusiastically in the school hall have a positive effect on most children's physical skills.

The setting joins in with some of the school's activities, on occasion. However, it does not make enough use of visits and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences, nor to teach them effectively about their local area.

The setting's provision to develop the Welsh language is beneficial to children. As a result, most children's understanding of the language is developing well. The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions, celebrations and culture successfully. These activities include celebrating St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day, baking traditional cakes and cooking soup.

Teaching: Adequate

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and they have a sound understanding of the requirements of the foundation phase. They work together effectively and plan stimulating activities that meet the needs of nearly all children suitably. Practitioners manage children's behaviour positively and safely. This encourages children's participation and enjoyment in all activities successfully.

In general, practitioners have appropriate expectations for all children. They know when to intervene in children's experiences and play in order to motivate them to succeed. As a result, practitioners ensure that children's interest is consistent with their desire to succeed purposefully in tasks. This can be seen as children persevere to build a tower from three-dimensional shapes and discuss the features of sea creatures in the small world area. However, they do not always challenge groups of children and individuals in line with their ability effectively enough.

Practitioners make consistent use of the Welsh language. This has a good effect on children's use and accuracy as they master vocabulary and simple phrases.

Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are beginning to become embedded in the setting's day-to-day work. Initial assessments correspond correctly to the outcomes of the foundation phase profile and they are useful, on the whole. However, not all practitioners record the daily assessments regularly and consistently. Although they discuss sensibly with children what they need to do to improve their work, they are not completely sure of the next steps in children's learning. As a result, assessments are not used to target the next steps in individual children's learning effectively enough.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements. The daily dialogue between practitioners and parents and carers reinforces this effectively. At the end of children's time at the setting, an appropriate report is available to parents and carers, which reflects the progress in children's skills in the areas of learning clearly.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides valuable opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral and social development. Practitioners use plenary sessions, such as snack time, to foster these values effectively. This ensures that nearly all children consider their peers' feelings intelligently, work together fairly and respect others. However, there are no robust opportunities for children to learn about the other cultures of the world.

Practitioners create a reflective environment while providing positive opportunities for children to think, discuss feeling and say thank you. As a result, children take turns politely as they wash their hands, pour drinks from jugs and set the table as the helper of the day. This provides valuable opportunities for all children to shoulder responsibility during snack time.

There are efficient opportunities to support children's health and wellbeing, and the setting operates effective systems to promote eating and drinking healthily; for example, practitioners are very gentle when dealing with anxious children in the school hall during dance sessions.

Practitioners ensure that all children understand that fruit, vegetables and physical exercise contribute to a sensible lifestyle. They provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, card and plastic goods. This develops children's understanding of sustainability successfully.

The setting uses positive behaviour strategies, and this eliminates any kind of disruption and misbehaviour. The setting is a safe environment and follows the school's safety guidelines thoroughly. Practitioners are vigilant when children arrive and when they are collected. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The setting records children's learning needs appropriately on entry to the setting, and during their time there. Practitioners review children's progress regularly and target children with additional learning needs effectively, when necessary. Practitioners discuss these children with support agencies, when the need arises, to target their needs.

Learning environment: Good

Practitioners have a suitable awareness of children's needs. They ensure that the setting is a fully inclusive community. As a result, all children are given an equal opportunity to learn in the different areas. Practitioners support children daily in a positive and caring way.

Practitioners promote a positive ethos through their daily activities and their enthusiastic attitudes. They emphasise that everyone is different and that it is important to respect others.

The setting uses resources purposefully to meet the requirements of the foundation phase and children's needs. A range of interesting resources is used effectively in continuous activities, focus tasks and to enrich learning. Resources are kept at a practical level so that all children are able to reach them. This enables children to fetch them and put them away, and promotes their sense of responsibility purposefully. The setting has enough ICT resources to develop children's skills successfully.

The building is of suitable quality, is maintained appropriately and is safe. The outdoor area includes areas to grow and plant, equipment for energetic play and quiet areas to sit and reflect. The setting uses these areas creatively to investigate in the grass and build a brick wall. The school hall is used sensibly to deliver active indoor activities. Practitioners also use the school grounds purposefully, by taking children on hunts that are linked to the seasons.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Adequate

There has been some inconsistency in terms of leadership since the setting changed to being a Welsh-medium setting around a year ago. Leaders now share the responsibility of running the setting between them during the week. With the willing and recent support of the school, they have begun to set a purposeful direction for

the setting's practices. This includes refining the setting's procedures, such as the link with governors, and promoting and maintaining improvements effectively. Their vision is beginning to improve management, planning, teaching and assessment appropriately.

The setting's objectives, improvement plans and policies focus on improving provision thoroughly. On the whole, this meets children's care and wellbeing needs well and promotes their achievements successfully. Leaders work conscientiously with a committed colleague, who is new to the role, and they have high expectations in terms of their day-to-day work. They succeed in motivating children to improve consistently in sensible and supportive ways from sound starting points.

Leaders have recently begun to use relevant and up-to-date information about the setting, through the local authority's quantitative systems, to improve provision. This includes better use of the foundation phase profile to identify children's starting points accurately, in addition to refining planning to consider children's interests. Their honest and thoughtful decisions about their own roles are correct and identify areas for improvement and their training needs rigorously.

Leaders focus on providing purposeful activities for children. They have made beneficial changes to the learning areas, both indoors and outdoors, to motivate children to work diligently. They also focus on national priorities suitably, such as developing literacy, numeracy and ICT procedures to improve children's skills before they start school.

The leadership includes the school's governors. The governors' role of monitoring, challenging and supporting the setting has not developed appropriately over a number of years. Members of the governing body and the new registered person have recently begun to evaluate children's outcomes, provision and staff responsibilities better. As a result, the beneficial monitoring and discussions that now exist ensure that everyone works effectively as a team.

Recently, governors and the registered person have focused rigorously on the targets that derive from the self-evaluation processes. Through regular meetings, they have recently received relevant information about the setting's practices from the leaders. As a result, the new leadership team is dedicated and is making clear improvements to provision and management processes.

Improving quality: Adequate

Leaders have an appropriate understanding of the setting's strengths and most of the areas for improvement. With the recent support of the governors and the registered person, they have established new and valuable arrangements to monitor children's standards and provision daily. Effective co-operation and information that is gathered regularly, in addition to the new practice of staff meetings, contribute to these practices purposefully.

Leaders use relevant and regular information about the setting to ensure improvements to provision, for example by improving the use of assessment procedures. The self-evaluation process considers the views of parents, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin appropriately. However, self-evaluation procedures

are new and have not yet become embedded. As a result, leaders have not had enough time to incorporate the self-evaluation practices fully in the setting's day-to-day life. Therefore, they do not have an effect on improving provision.

The self-evaluation report provides a clear picture of the setting's strengths and most areas for improvement. The report is accurate and targets the setting's needs effectively. There is honesty in its detail and it includes enough details about how and why the appropriate areas require further improvement.

Leaders set appropriate targets against suitable timescales and prioritise them sensibly. With the agreement of the governors, they allocate funding suitably to meet targets. Targets in the improvement plan derive directly from the setting's self-evaluation, which is a positive feature.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of useful strategic partnerships. It works purposefully with these partners to improve provision and children's outcomes.

The setting meets on the school grounds and, recently, the link with the school has been positive. Members of the school's staff visit the setting regularly, and children share the foundation phase's resources on a daily basis. This supports children's transition arrangements effectively and arrangements for transferring personal information and children's assessments are efficient.

Practitioners take active steps to include parents and carers in the setting's life, which include open evenings. Practitioners keep them informed regularly, through newsletters and social media, about all aspects of the setting's work. They are encouraged to provide their views on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions. This has improved communication with parents and the use of social media to convey information about the setting. In addition, the setting supports local and national charities regularly. This fosters kindness and care towards others among the children.

The setting works purposefully with external agencies, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. These organisations support the practitioners' documentation and training effectively. In addition, practitioners work and liaise with a range of other partners who make important contributions to improving provision. These include agencies that provide training in first aid training, food hygiene courses and safeguarding children.

Resource management: Adequate

Leaders, governors and the registered person have recently committed to focusing directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work. This is done by using expertise intelligently and allocating resources purposefully. They ensure that the setting has enough qualified practitioners who have received, or are receiving, relevant training to meet children's needs better.

Leadership practices have improved significantly in a short period of time, which now enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge successfully. As a result, a lively learning community has been established, which is beginning to embed the culture of efficient co-operation between practitioners and the setting's partners, such as the school.

Performance management systems are not yet in place. As a result, although improvements have taken place recently, there are still important areas for improvement in relation to learning experiences and teaching and assessment.

The setting manages resources to support learning sensibly and shares resources creatively with the school. This includes changing the layout of the room and the outdoor area occasionally to inspire children as they apply themselves to different themes, such as the surgery and the construction area.

Leaders use the budget and grants purposefully with the support of the school and the local authority. They prioritise expenditure against targets in the improvement plan suitably and make frequent improvements by discussing and prioritising specific funding for the setting's needs. An example of this is using the new ICT equipment regularly and effectively.

Although a number of significant changes and improvements have been made recently at the setting, it provides adequate value for money because of the areas for improvement in provision and leadership procedures.

Appendix 1

The reporting inspector

Nicholas Jones	Reporting Inspector
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Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings.</p> <p>(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
CSSIW	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>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.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>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.</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>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</p>

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