



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Aberdâr
Urdd Centre
Wind Street
Aberdare
CF44 7ES**

Date of inspection: April 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

Cylch Meithrin Aberdâr is a Welsh-medium setting. It meets in rooms on the ground floor of the Urdd Centre in the town of Aberdare, in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. The setting provides education and care for five mornings a week between 9.00am and 4.00pm during term time.

The setting is registered to admit up to 22 children at any given time and admits children between two and four years old. Most three-year-old children currently receive funded early years education.

Nearly all children come from white British backgrounds and no children speak Welsh as their first language. There are currently very few children with additional learning needs.

The setting employs seven qualified practitioners, including the leader. The leader began in post in April 2017.

The setting was last inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in January 2017 and by Estyn in January 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Many children make consistent progress in their literacy and numeracy skills
- Most children develop effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- Nearly all children show motivation and interest in their learning and behave responsibly
- Practitioners plan an interesting curriculum, which challenges children purposefully and improves their learning
- Practitioners work purposefully with each other daily to improve children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- Practitioners' high expectations and positive teaching ensure regular improvements in children's outcomes
- The practitioners' watchful care creates a purposeful learning environment and ethos
- Learning areas and readily-available resources engage children's interest successfully

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader and manager set a clear direction for the setting's daily and long term work
- There is effective co-operation between all adults
- The management committee supports the setting appropriately to improve provision and children's outcomes
- Suitable self-evaluation system lead to setting useful targets, which have a purposeful effect on provision and children's outcomes
- Practitioners are keen to benefit from relevant training
- There are purposeful partnerships with external agencies
- Leaders make effective use of funding to make improvements to provision and to maintain the building and outdoor area successfully

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all children respond regularly in Welsh
- R2 Ensure that the management committee's monitoring practices are rigorous and robust, and lead to regular improvements
- R3 Create a robust link between self-evaluation outcomes and the targets in the development plan
- R4 Create effective practices to liaise and communicate with parents and carers about their children's progress

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Many children make regular progress in their literacy and numeracy skills from starting points that are, on the whole, lower than the expected average. Nearly all children's initial skills are low in Welsh.

Many children communicate clearly and make sure that adults and other children understand them when responding to each other's ideas, by using English and a little Welsh. As a result, they hold enthusiastic conversations with adults and peers as they make bears from dough and binoculars from cylinders and string. Many listen to instructions from others and act well on them. This can be seen as they create paws while printing with potatoes and their fingers with paint and search for insects in the soil in the outdoor area. Many children also express their feelings and choices purposefully as they agree on what roles to play in the home area while preparing sandwiches for the visit to the forest.

Many children show an interest in books when sitting and discussing the contents with each other and adults in the indoor and outdoor book areas. They discuss characters and events sensibly with adults and peers and handle the books like intelligent readers. As a result, they respond with interest to the content of various stories, such as a hunt in the middle of the forest. A minority express their views meaningfully when playing spontaneously and under the guidance of an adult. This happens when they arrange the events of a story on paper to create a collage and as they make marks and follow zigzag lines with coloured pens. However, they do not yet use the Welsh language confidently enough while doing so, and English is the main language medium among the children.

Many children make marks purposefully with various media such as chalk, pencils and paint. They enjoy early writing experiences and a few form letters of the alphabet and numbers independently. A majority of children explain the purpose of writing clearly in the correct contexts, for example as they make marks on the interactive whiteboard and as they address letters to their homes.

Many children use mathematical language effectively and in relevant contexts. They count, recognise and name numbers up to five correctly. Most children discuss the properties of different shapes effectively and identify the differences between them intelligently. Many choose relevant equipment and materials to solve mathematical problems successfully. For example, they use tongs purposefully to pick up and number sea creatures, before sorting them by size. They compare two- and three-dimensional shapes confidently, such as a flat circle on paper and balls in the outdoor area. They also group different types of objects correctly by shape and colour against similar objects, such as different teddies and trains on a track.

Most children are beginning to use technology successfully by using electronic tablets and through tasks, which include electronic toys with batteries, a light box, a voice recorder or cameras. They also use educational software and apps on the tablets and interactive whiteboard to develop their ICT skills and fine motor skills effectively.

Many children develop keen thinking skills through interesting activities that have a positive effect on their learning and the standards that they achieve. They work enthusiastically with others while searching for creatures in the outdoor area and the small world area. They also compare volume and capacity confidently when discussing different boxes and whether they are 'full' or 'empty' after filling them with sand and emptying them.

Nearly all children's creative skills are developing well. They enjoy listening to music and respond enthusiastically to familiar Welsh nursery rhymes and songs. They create quiet and loud sounds with kitchen utensils in the outdoor area and explain the difference between them effectively. They also paint, print and sculpt with dough to reflect the features of the theme, such as a bear's face and a trip passed the lake. Most children use their physical skills successfully when riding energetically around the outdoor areas on bicycles and vehicles, and dancing enthusiastically to exciting music in the hall.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children take an interest in their learning and show motivation when undertaking activities, either inside or in the outdoor area. Most children work diligently during their tasks. They are enthusiastic when working together in groups and enjoy the tasks that are provided, such as setting the dishes in order in the role-play area and mixing shaving foam with glitter in the water.

Nearly all children relate well to adults and visitors when they arrive at the setting and when they leave. They behave responsibly and treat adults and each other with respect. They listen carefully to practitioners, for example as they discuss the order of a story and match the events in the story with numbers.

Most children share resources and work sensibly with other children. They show positive attitudes towards new experiences, such as when they count blocks to build a tower and pour water into troughs to create slow and fast flows.

Most children are intelligent learners. They are beginning to make effective choices during free play. They express an opinion and make personal decisions well, such as moving from one play area to another independently.

After using the toilet, creative free play and outdoor activities, nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly without much encouragement from adults. As a result, they develop their awareness of hygiene well and recognise its importance in maintaining healthy, infection-free lives.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is interesting and reflects the foundation phase ethos effectively. The leader and practitioners plan engaging learning experiences, which meet children's needs and interests purposefully. They meet weekly to plan stimulating activities and organise themes and activities based on this. Methodical planning motivates children purposefully to learn through hands-on experiences. As a result, children are given valuable opportunities to compare shadows and bright objects on the surface of the light box, and record their experiences on sound clipboards while on a bear hunt.

Practitioners work together successfully and focus enthusiastically on developing independent learners, both indoors and outdoors. Active examples of this are the numerous opportunities for children to choose books as individuals in the reading corners, and use relevant utensils and food to fill sandwiches before cutting them in half. They provide good opportunities for children to voice their personal ideas to develop activities further through useful questioning and records. They listen intelligently to children's ideas in order to add effectively to their daily enthusiasm. In line with planning, practitioners also display personal targets in the learning areas effectively to remind them of the purpose of the task that is provided. As a result, their clear focus on challenging individuals and groups builds positively on children's motivation, such as allowing them to plant potatoes and onions in the growing areas.

The setting plans effectively to develop children's literacy, numeracy, thinking and ICT skills. Literacy and numeracy activities are prominent in all areas of learning and challenge children to achieve their best consistently. Practical examples of this are the beneficial opportunities for children to make marks independently on blackboards with chalk, and printing with coloured pens to create various patterns.

Provision to develop ICT skills is sound. Practitioners provide effective opportunities for children to use a range of equipment, such as voice-recording clipboards, electronic tablets and toys and the interactive whiteboard. As a result, practitioners challenge children well by using Welsh language educational software and apps to develop their early ICT skills.

Practitioners focus purposefully on developing children's physical skills. There are regular opportunities for them to climb on adventure equipment, slide and play energetically in the outdoor area. These activities are planned effectively. For example, they co-operate with the children to move as a train to the tempo and timing of music while exercising in the hall. As a result, children apply themselves fully to the activity.

The setting's provision to develop the Welsh language is useful. Most practitioners are good language models. They support children who are beginning to learn the language sensibly by repeating familiar words and language patterns regularly. As a result, many children's understanding of the Welsh language is developing appropriately. The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions, celebrations and culture successfully. These activities include celebrating St David's Day, visiting the castle in the capital city, cooking 'cawl' and baking Welsh cakes.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. Experiences include visits to the town's shops, the museum, nearby forests and the library. Visitors such as members of an opera company, a dental hygienist, a mobile zoo and parents with pets teach children effectively about the roles of people in their community.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development. They have a sound understanding of the requirements of the curriculum and how to organise broad and balanced provision.

Practitioners share high expectations for the children and work together rigorously. They manage children's behaviour positively and there are safe procedures in relation to their work, both indoors and in the outdoor area. This supports children well and encourages their participation and enjoyment purposefully in all activities.

All practitioners challenge children regularly through focus and continuous tasks. Their use of the Welsh language is useful as they model simple language patterns and vocabulary. They know when to intervene intelligently in children's experiences and play in order to inspire and motivate them to succeed. As a result, practitioners ensure that children have a high level of eagerness and desire to work and that there are broad opportunities available to learn through play. This can be seen as children persevere to identify the features of animals after using magnifying glasses in the investigation areas.

Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are robust. Evidence corresponds accurately to individual children's outcomes by using the foundation phase profile as they develop at the setting. All practitioners record daily assessments regularly and consistently. They discuss children's needs and development well with others as key workers, in order to ensure that they have a comprehensive picture of each child. They also discuss sensibly with children what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, practitioners use the daily assessments regularly to target the next steps in individual children's learning in their planning.

The setting informs parents and carers appropriately about their children's achievements. There is daily dialogue between practitioners and parents and carers. The setting provides parents with a booklet of the children's work at the end of their time at the setting. However, there are not effective enough arrangements for them to know about their children's progress and achievement during their time at the setting.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides good opportunities to promote values that relate to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Practitioners use plenary sessions, such as circle time and snack time, to nurture these values purposefully in the children's day-to-day lives. This ensures that most children give their peers' feelings sensible consideration, treat each other politely and respect others, including practitioners.

The leader and practitioners have a firm focus on creating a reflective environment by providing positive opportunities for children think about the feelings of others and give thanks. They provide valuable opportunities for all children to shoulder responsibility during social activities. As a result, children take turns politely when washing and drying their hands, and pour drinks for each other from jugs responsibly.

There are efficient arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing, and the setting operates effective systems to promote eating and drinking healthily. As a result, children understand that fruit, vegetables and exercise contribute to a sensible lifestyle.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, card, plastic goods, water in a barrel and food. This develops children's understanding of sustainability successfully.

The setting uses positive behaviour strategies and this eliminates any disruption and poor behaviour. The setting is a safe environment and practitioners are vigilant as the 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 thoroughly on entry and during their time at the setting. Children's progress is reviewed regularly, and their starting points are identified thoroughly by following the foundation phase profile guidelines and the local authority's referral procedures. The additional learning needs co-ordinator is very familiar with the necessary procedures in order to support children, and uses them purposefully to support individuals with specialist support. As a result, the setting targets specific children effectively with additional support, when the need arises.

Learning environment: Good

Practitioners have a clear awareness of children's needs. This leads to creating an inclusive community in which children are given an equal opportunity to learn in the different areas, both inside and outside the building. Practitioners support children positively and cautiously every day.

The leader and practitioners place a daily emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. They promote a positive ethos through their enthusiastic and sensible attitudes. They teach children about the world's different festivals and cultures successfully. As a result, they plan good opportunities for children to celebrate Christian festivals, the Chinese New Year, Holi, Diwali and Hanukkah.

The setting uses resources well to meet the requirements of the foundation phase. Practitioners use a range of resources 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 without adult intervention when tidying up and during their activities. This has a purposeful effect on promoting a sense of responsibility among the children. The setting has enough purposeful ICT resources to develop children's skills successfully.

The accommodation is of suitable quality, maintained appropriately and is secure. The limited outdoor area is used well. It includes planting and growing areas, climbing equipment, challenging areas to solve problems with water and sand and investigation areas, such as searching for insects. Practitioners also use the hall in the building and local facilities effectively, by taking children to a variety of places that are part of their local area, such as the town's market.

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

Leadership: Good

The leader sets a purposeful direction for the setting's daily routines. She works very closely with the setting's manager, who also manages another nearby setting. The settings work well together in terms of staffing and sharing expertise. These practices promote and maintain improvements purposefully. As a result, the leader's incisive vision ensures that planning of learning experiences, teaching and care is effective.

The setting's objectives and policies focus efficiently on improving provision. This meets children's needs purposefully and promotes their achievements sensibly. The leader works conscientiously with the other practitioners and they have high expectations of themselves and the children. As a result, they motivate children to improve daily in supportive ways, particularly by providing daily activities to support their independence.

The leader uses relevant information about the setting to improve provision. Recently, this has included using the foundation phase profile to identify children's starting points correctly and weaving all aspects of planning into assessment to provide a purposeful curriculum.

Practitioners focus on providing interesting activities for children. They have succeeded in making beneficial changes to the learning areas, particularly outdoors, where there is an electronic canopy in place and creative use of the walls and planting areas. This has a positive effect on children's skills. The leader also focuses rigorously on national priorities, such as developing literacy, numeracy and ICT strategies to improve children's skills before they start school.

The leadership, which includes a supportive management committee, ensures that provision for children is sound, although it is the manager who tends to lead this process, in the main. The manager ensures that practitioners understand their roles fully through regular evaluations and discussions and, as a result, they work together diligently as a team. The dedicated management committee meets to organise activities to increase income and, under the manager's guidance, it monitors expenditure and the use of grants in detail.

The management committee uses established arrangements to receive information about the setting's practices regularly from the leader and manager. However, the management committee does not contribute thoroughly enough to the setting's strategic direction by monitoring provision and children's progress regularly.

Improving quality: Good

Self-assessment procedures are conducted every year and are a regular part of the setting's improvement practices. Practitioners monitor children's standards and the quality of provision regularly by using the local authority's quantitative system as a starting point.

The manager and leader have a fairly sound understanding of the setting's strengths and an awareness of the priorities for improvement. However, the procedure's findings focus too much on past changes to provision, rather than the effect on the current situation in the setting's work. As a result, targets in the development plan do not always derive directly from the self-evaluation procedures. The self-evaluation report does not include enough details about how and why a few areas need to be improved further.

Co-operation between practitioners, the management committee, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin is effective. The information that is gathered regularly, in addition to visits and evaluations by external agencies, contribute purposefully to this practice. As a result, the setting has made purposeful improvements over time. This includes implementing the foundation phase profile and striving rigorously to improve provision for the Welsh language by employing practitioners who speak the language fluently.

All practitioners are keen to embrace new ideas that are suggested by the local authority advisory teacher and officers from Mudiad Meithrin. They act in line with their advice regularly by developing documentation further and attending relevant training. This has led to sustained improvements, such as improving experiences in the indoor areas, re-structuring the room's layout and focusing on improving practitioners' Welsh language skills to teach and support children better.

Partnership working: Good

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

There is a positive link with the local schools, which provide education through the medium of English. This strengthens the children's transition arrangements effectively. For example, transferring personal information and children's assessments contributes to them settling in beneficially in their new schools. The relationship with the Welsh-medium schools in the area is beginning to develop appropriately. The setting also works highly successfully with a nearby setting. The two settings share practitioners purposefully and target specific needs by using practitioners' expertise wisely.

Practitioners take active steps to include parents and carers in the setting's life. They inform them regularly, through newsletters and social media, about all aspects of the setting's work. Sessions that are held to discuss children's progress have begun to raise parents' awareness of their children's achievement, and provide good opportunities to show and discuss improvements in their work. However, these are very recent developments and they have not yet had enough time to have an effect on children's outcomes.

The setting's links with the community support children's learning successfully. This includes community fundraising events and beneficial support when seeking sponsorship and relevant grants. The setting also supports local and national charities, and this nurtures the children's kindness and care towards others.

The setting works purposefully with external agencies, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. These organisations support the practitioners' documentation and training effectively. Practitioners also work and liaise with a wide range of other partners who make important contributions towards improving provision. These include agencies that provide first aid training, child protection training and food hygiene courses.

Resource management: Good

The leader and manager focus directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work. They use practitioners intelligently, allocate resources purposefully and work effectively with the nearby setting. As a result, they ensure that the setting has enough qualified practitioners with relevant training to meet children's needs successfully.

The leader's robust leadership practices enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge purposefully. The effect of these practices is a robust learning community, which has a culture of efficient co-operation between practitioners and partners who support the setting, such as the local authority.

Performance management procedures, which are undertaken by the manager, are thorough and ensure purposeful learning experiences and positive teaching practices. The setting manages resources effectively to support children's learning. This includes changing the indoor and outdoor learning areas occasionally to stimulate children further, as they respond to the challenges of the different themes, celebrations and seasons of the year.

The manager uses the budget and grants purposefully. The setting prioritises expenditure efficiently against the targets in the development plan and makes regular improvements by discussing and prioritising specific funding purposefully. An example of this is the recent investment in new ICT equipment, which has had a positive effect on children's ICT skills. The setting's reserves have also been earmarked in plans to extend provision further and improve the building and facilities for children.

The setting improves children's achievements through effective provision and successful leadership. As a result, 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	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 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)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

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