



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Penllwyn
Y Cabin
Penllwyn
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3LP**

Date of inspection: January 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 Penllwyn is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in a cabin on the grounds of Ysgol Gynradd Penllwyn in Ceredigion. The setting provides education and care for children between two and four years old in four-hour sessions, five mornings a week. The setting is registered to admit up to 19 children per session. There are currently 19 children on roll, nine of whom receive early years education funded by the local authority.

Many children at the setting speak English as their main language at home.

Three qualified members of staff work at the setting, with two having shared leadership duties since September 2015.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in March 2017 and by Estyn in March 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Most children develop effective independent learning skills
- Most children's literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are developing successfully
- Nearly all children enjoy coming to the setting and are very happy there
- Nearly all children are very well behaved, are considerate of others and are polite
- Practitioners provide a range of beneficial learning experiences that engage most children's interest appropriately
- There is an effective working relationship between children and practitioners
- Practitioners work together effectively as a team to establish a stimulating and homely learning environment

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- All members of staff understand their roles and responsibilities in full and contribute successfully to realising objectives
- Leaders use the guidance and advice of external agencies successfully in order to improve the quality of provision and raise standards
- Committee members are very supportive of the setting's life and work
- Self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures identify many strengths and areas for improvement successfully
- A range of beneficial partnerships support provision successfully
- A strong working relationship between staff and parents ensures that they are very willing to support the setting
- Leaders and the management committee manage resources efficiently

Recommendations

- R1 Plan purposefully to build on children's knowledge and skills through effective enhanced activities
- R2 Ensure more effective use of observations and assessments in order to meet children's learning needs
- R3 Refine the self-evaluation report to ensure that it focuses clearly on the effect of provision on children's progress and wellbeing

What happens next?

The setting will produce 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?	Good
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Standards: Good

Most children make sound progress from their starting points and develop effective independent learning skills. They are inquisitive learners and are willing to experiment and investigate for themselves by using their thinking skills successfully. Most are willing to try and to solve problems independently without the support of an adult.

Most children's literacy skills are developing successfully. They listen carefully to stories and show an interest in books and their content. Most children respond appropriately to practitioners' questions during learning activities and when following familiar instructions. Most sing familiar songs enthusiastically and show a sound understanding of vocabulary, for example when singing about the days of the week. Confident Welsh speakers use a range of vocabulary and natural syntax when discussing their work with adults. Most children find their names without support and place them on the feelings chart successfully. They make marks effectively and use a variety of media, such as paint, chalk and coloured pencils. More able children have a firm control of pencils in order to follow the shape of letters and simple patterns. A few are able to write their names and simple words successfully.

Most children's number skills are developing soundly for their age and ability. Many recite numbers up to 10 confidently and match numbers and objects successfully. The most able children count to twenty and a few are able to add two one-digit numbers successfully and record the answers on paper. Many children are beginning to recognise familiar two-dimensional shapes successfully. They follow simple patterns soundly when placing colours in order.

Many children have appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They are beginning to use a programmable toy successfully to move from one object to another. They use an electronic tablet suitably to support their learning, for example when making a simple picture and taking pictures of each other.

Many children have well-developed physical skills. They balance skilfully when stepping from one block to another and when standing on one leg. Most use small implements with firm control in a variety of different tasks, such as paintbrushes, chalk and crayons.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children enjoy coming to the setting and are very happy there. They settle soon after they arrive and are happy in the company of their peers and practitioners. Nearly all children are very well behaved, are considerate of others and are polite. They learn to take turns, share and practice good self-control.

Nearly all children choose activities independently and enjoy taking part in all of the learning experiences that are available to them. Most children recall previous learning successfully and use their knowledge appropriately to solve similar problems, for example when counting the number of boys and girls who are present.

Most children develop good independent learning skills, for example when putting on and taking off their coats and washing their hands before eating. They concentrate for appropriate periods and persevere on different tasks and activities successfully. Many discuss their work enthusiastically with each other and adults, and show good attitudes towards learning. They undertake their duties as 'helper of the day' confidently, for example when serving water and milk to their peers during snack time. During this time, most children show good social skills. They are polite and sit with their peers, and learn to say thank you when taking refreshments. Nearly all children show a sound awareness of good hygiene by washing their hands before eating. Nearly all children bring their own fruit for snack time and show a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily.

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

Practitioners provide a range of beneficial learning experiences that engage most children's interest appropriately. They consider children's interests in addition to their own ideas when planning a variety of valuable learning activities and experiences. Practitioners contribute beneficially to planning a suitable curriculum jointly, which corresponds to the principles and curriculum of the foundation phase. They make suitable use of purposeful areas, both indoors and outdoors, to enrich provision. This supports suitable opportunities for children to investigate and discover for themselves, and to foster independent learning skills. However, practitioners do not plan purposefully enough to build on children's knowledge and skills through effective enhanced activities.

Practitioners plan suitably to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills. They ensure appropriate opportunities to develop children's literacy skills through a range of regular activities and exercises. For example, they practice responses to familiar questions with the children during registration and circle time, and sing familiar songs every day. However, they do not always plan purposefully enough to develop children's oral skills in line with their linguistic ability. Practitioners plan suitable opportunities for children to develop their ICT skills through an appropriate range of interesting learning experiences, including using apps on a tablet and controlling a programmable toy appropriately.

The setting provides beneficial opportunities for children to learn about Welsh traditions and celebrations, for example by celebrating St Dwynwen's Day and St David's Day. They use visits and visitors effectively to enrich learning experiences. For example, they have visited a horse-riding centre as part of their work on animals. Children also visit Ysgol Penllwyn occasionally to watch shows and take part in special occasions, for example to learn about the work of the police and to meet with famous people from the rugby world. Practitioners organise valuable opportunities for children to visit local businesses and organisations, which supports their understanding of day-to-day life in their community effectively.

Practitioners provide interesting learning opportunities that encourage children to treat people from different cultural backgrounds with respect and tolerance. For example, they taste food and dance the dragon dance as part of activities and learning experiences that are linked to celebrating the Chinese New Year.

Teaching: Good

The effective working relationship between children and practitioners contributes well to creating an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual respect. Practitioners work together effectively as a team to establish a stimulating and homely learning environment that encourages children's involvement and participation successfully. They praise children for their efforts regularly and manage behaviour sensibly and sensitively. Practitioners use purposeful questioning and open-ended questions to develop children's language and thinking skills skilfully. Overall, practitioners model the Welsh language appropriately and encourage children to practice and stretch and language skills by singing and talking to them regularly.

In general, practitioners have a sound understanding of the principles of the foundation phase and child development. They ensure a suitable balance between activities that are chosen by the child and those that are led by adults.

The setting has suitable arrangements for assessing children's progress. Practitioners assess children's starting points appropriately and use this information to plan robustly for the next steps in their learning. They record observations of children's progress regularly in order to track their progress and provide parents with beneficial feedback. However, they do not always use this information effectively enough in order to plan purposefully enough for the needs of specific groups of children.

Care, support and guidance: Good

One of the setting's main strengths is the way in which practitioners promote children's wellbeing effectively. They create a homely and welcoming atmosphere, which ensures that nearly all children enjoy their time at the setting. They promote the importance of healthy eating effectively through activities such as snack time and lunchtime. By encouraging children to help to serve drinks, they develop their self-confidence and social skills successfully. This also contributes beneficially towards developing children's language by learning new vocabulary and by talking to each other and adults informally.

The setting provides appropriate opportunities to develop children's spiritual and moral development, for example by encouraging children to discuss their feelings during 'circle time' and through collective worship before eating lunch. Practitioners ensure that children are transferred safely to the care of their parents or carers. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Following recent training and beneficial links with external agencies, practitioners ensure that children are given regular opportunities for physical exercise. These effective learning experiences, in addition to valuable use of the purposeful outdoor area, promote children's health and fitness successfully. The setting provides appropriate opportunities for children to learn about sustainability by recycling food waste and paper. This develops their understanding of how to care for the world suitably.

The setting has robust processes for responding to the needs of any child with additional learning needs, where necessary. They co-operate successfully with specialist agencies, such as the speech and language therapist, in order to deliver purposeful programmes for specific groups of children.

Learning environment: Good

Cylch Meithrin Penllwyn has a stimulating, attractive and welcoming learning environment for children. The Welsh ethos is strong at the setting and is an integral part of the day-to-day work. Practitioners work well together to ensure an inclusive ethos in which all children are respected and are given equal opportunities. The setting has a good supply of purposeful resources that support the principles of the foundation phase successfully. Learning areas are attractive and are set out appropriately in order to satisfy children's interests and promote their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

The setting is safe and is kept clean. Colourful and attractive displays celebrate children's work and successes effectively. The outdoor area enables children to venture and to discover for themselves, in addition to developing their physical skills successfully. For example, they experiment in the mud kitchen and by role-playing in the nature reserve and the pirate ship. By planting and growing vegetables in the outdoor area, children learn about food in addition to how to take care of plants.

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

The setting has two experienced practitioners who share leadership and regular duties successfully. They share clear and purposeful aims and objectives that place a sound emphasis on ensuring children's wellbeing and progress. Leaders share their vision appropriately with other practitioners and work together effectively as a team. They use guidance and advice from external agencies skilfully in order to improve the quality of provision and raise standards. All members of staff understand their roles and responsibilities in full and contribute successfully to realising the setting's objectives. This contributes effectively to an industrious ethos where children and practitioners feel valued.

The setting now has appropriate procedures for evaluating practitioners' work annually. This leads to purposeful training and support that meets practitioners' needs effectively, for example in conducting training to develop children's physical skills and to improve practitioners' understanding of the foundation phase.

Leaders and the management committee work together effectively in order to ensure that statutory policies are implemented. They meet regularly and receive relevant information regularly from the leaders, which supports them in making sensible decisions about provision and funding. The committee is very supportive of the setting's life and work, and members visit regularly to discuss issues with practitioners. They take their roles seriously and are very active, for example in applying for grants regularly in order to add to funding. Committee members, together with parents and friends of the setting, make a valuable contribution towards ensuring that the building and the outdoor area are of good quality and meet the requirements of staff and children. They also help practitioners to organise special days, such as the Easter egg hunt, which is held in one of the three local schools in turn.

The setting gives valuable attention to local and national priorities. It focuses effectively on promoting children's literacy and numeracy skills, in addition to promoting their wellbeing and fitness.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders work successfully with the local authority advisory teacher and the committee to ensure beneficial arrangements in terms of improving the quality of the setting. They act promptly on any advice or recommendations that lead to improvements in terms of provision and children's achievement. As a result, practitioners and committee members share the same goal of creating provision of the highest standard for children. All practitioners are open to new ideas and use knowledge from training courses regularly. The committee and the registered person have up-to-date knowledge of the setting's work through regular meetings and frequent visits. As a result, they are able to provide appropriate support, where necessary.

Practitioners make beneficial use of the local authority's procedures in order to conduct a formal self-evaluation each year. The setting provides a valuable opportunity for parents to share their comments through questionnaires and open evenings. The committee and registered person contribute beneficially to the process and support practitioners effectively. The setting's current report identifies many priorities for improvement successfully, and these are transferred to the development plan. However, the report is not always evaluative enough and does not focus effectively enough on evaluating children's standards and the quality of teaching. The improvement plan identifies clear objectives that focus well on improving children's outcomes, in addition to enriching provision and partnerships. The plan includes appropriate targets, actions and timescales, in addition to responsibilities and success criteria. Beneficial evaluations of previous plans show continuous progress, for example in improving the quality of provision to promote children's wellbeing and fitness.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of beneficial partnerships that support provision successfully. The close link with nearby schools enriches children's learning experiences effectively. The setting organises special events and days with these schools in order to develop effective community links. Teachers from Ysgol Gynradd Penllwyn visit the setting regularly to support singing sessions and to get to know the children. All of these arrangements support robust transition arrangements, which ensure that children are prepared well for the next step in their education.

Practitioners work effectively with the local authority's advisory teacher and Mudiad Meithrin. They act quickly on their advice and guidance, which contributes well towards improving provision and children's outcomes. The strong working relationship between staff and parents ensures that they are very willing to support the setting, for example by organising fundraising activities and by improving the learning environment. The open door policy ensures that parents are given good opportunities to discuss any concerns that they may have with practitioners at a very early stage. By completing recent questionnaires, parents are beginning to offer their comments and views on the setting appropriately. Practitioners make appropriate use of social media in order to inform parents about the setting's work and events regularly.

The setting makes effective use of the community to enrich children's experiences. For example, children visit the local shop to learn about the work of people who help them. Parents and members of the community also visit the setting in order to share their experiences with children. For example, a veterinary surgeon and a farmer help children to learn about how to care for animals.

Resource management: Good

The setting has enough practitioners with appropriate qualifications and relevant experience to work with young children. They make good use of their experience and expertise in order to support children successfully. Appropriate performance management systems support staff development successfully. As a result, practitioners take advantage of opportunities to attend training and to observe good practice in other settings in order to develop their knowledge and teaching skills, for example to develop assessment arrangements.

Leaders and the committee manage resources efficiently and ensure a good supply of learning equipment that responds effectively to the requirements of the foundation phase. Committee officers have a sound understanding of the setting's financial situation. They prioritise funding appropriately and work together successfully to ensure adequate funding for the setting, for example by applying for financial grants and raising money through fundraising activities in the community.

Children's outcomes, together with the quality of provision and leadership, ensure that 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
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)	<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