



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

**A report on**

**Cylch Meithrin Pontyberem  
Pontyberem Memorial Hall  
Heol Nant y Glo  
Pontyberem  
Llanelli  
Carmarthen  
SA15 5HU**

**Date of inspection: December 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:

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

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## Context

Cylch Meithrin Pontyberem is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in a room in Pontyberem Memorial Hall in Carmarthenshire local authority. The setting is registered to admit up to 18 children between two and four years old. It provides early years education sessions from 9.00am to 12.00pm, five days a week during term time. During the inspection, eight children were receiving funded early years education.

No children have been identified by the setting as having additional learning needs. Around half of children come from Welsh-speaking homes. The setting employs three qualified full-time members of staff, including the leader. The leader was appointed to the post in February 2018.

The setting was last inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in October 2017 and by Estyn in November 2011.

## Summary

<b>The setting's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is adequate because:

- A majority of children make suitable progress from their starting points
- Many children's physical skills are developing effectively
- Nearly all children are happy to attend the setting and go straight to their activities without fuss
- Practitioners plan a range of beneficial activities that engage many children's interest suitably
- Practitioners have a wonderful working relationship with the children, which enables them to learn in a caring and supportive environment
- The setting has a wide range of resources of a good standard inside the building

However:

- Many children do not make enough progress in their Welsh literacy skills
- A minority of children do not take enough responsibility in relation to their learning
- Planning does not ensure appropriate opportunities for children to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the areas of learning
- Practitioners do not always have high enough expectations of children's learning

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- The leader has a suitable vision for the setting, which is based on ensuring that children learn in a caring environment
- Staff work together effectively as a team and are keen to improve the setting's work
- The setting has a suitable range of self-evaluation activities, which enables them to identify many strengths and areas for improvement
- Leaders are beginning to use improvement planning procedures in order to improve a few priorities
- The setting has an appropriate range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and standards for children
- The setting has an appropriate number of staff in order to provide an interesting foundation phase curriculum for children

However:

- There is not enough focus on strategic planning to raise standards, and leaders do not ensure that teaching leads purposefully enough to improvements in standards
- Leaders and the registered person do not use the performance management arrangements or first-hand observations rigorously enough to set challenging targets to improve performance
- Leaders do not always prioritise the most important aspects for improvement effectively enough or address them in a timely enough manner

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve children's Welsh language skills
- R2 Ensure that the daily routine creates an appropriate balance between activities that are directed by children and those that are led by adults, in order to challenge children at the appropriate level
- R3 Improve planning to provide regular opportunities for children to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills systematically across the areas of learning
- R4 Raise practitioners' expectations of children's learning, particularly when questioning children effectively
- R5 Improve arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning to identify the most important priorities and plan effectively to improve them

### What happens next?

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this setting is in need of focused improvement. The setting will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the setting's progress every term.

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>
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<b>Adequate</b>
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### Standards: Adequate

A majority of children make suitable progress from their starting points. They recall previous learning appropriately, for example when discussing the story of Christmas while completing a jigsaw. A majority develop sound thinking and problem-solving skills, such as experimenting with objects to see whether they float or sink in the water.

A majority of children develop their literacy skills competently. Many have a sound awareness of the Welsh language and respond to instructions appropriately. They enjoy listening to stories and join in with familiar songs enthusiastically. A minority are beginning to use familiar vocabulary and phrases in their play with encouragement from adults, for example when naming familiar shapes in the sand pit. However, many children do not make enough progress in their oral skills, considering their linguistic backgrounds, and most have a tendency to turn to English while playing. A majority show an interest in reading materials, hold books correctly and turn pages to follow the story suitably. A minority experiment competently with a range of materials and mark-making equipment in a few areas, for example when designing a Christmas stamp in the post office.

A majority of children develop robust early numeracy skills. Many count the number of children who are present up to 14 confidently. A few count objects correctly and identify how many different-coloured objects there are during independent play. A very few more able children count to 10 and back down confidently. With encouragement, a majority are beginning to recognise basic two-dimensional shapes appropriately. In practical situations, such as water play, a majority are beginning to understand the meaning of mathematical terminology suitably, such as big and small, full and empty.

Many children's ICT skills are developing gradually. With support, they use a metal detector to search for objects in the sand. A few are beginning to give simple instructions to a programmable toy suitably, with support from an adult. However, they do not use their ICT skills frequently enough or to an appropriate level across the areas of learning.

Many children's physical skills are developing successfully. An effective example of this is as children run quickly, move slowly and stretch to make shapes with their bodies during a physical session in the hall. Many children develop their creative skills well when selecting materials independently to create a Christmas picture, and by choosing musical instruments to accompany their Christmas songs.

### Wellbeing: Adequate

Nearly all children are happy at the setting and go straight to their activities without prompting at the beginning of the session. They have warm relationships with practitioners, and most relate well to each other. Most children share resources well

with their friends, and usually behave well when taking part in activities. However, during plenary sessions, a few children do not concentrate appropriately, become restless and lose interest. This disrupts other children's learning.

A majority of children make suitable choices about their learning, for example when choosing areas in which to play. However, a minority have a tendency to stay in one area for a period of time, and a few are reluctant to move from that area in order to work somewhere else.

Many children are beginning to take responsibility appropriately, for example when putting on their coats to go outside in the rain, and when getting their food and drink during snack time. This is beginning to have a positive effect on their ability to be independent. A majority are keen to help during sessions and take responsibility for tidying up at the end of the session, although a minority do not take part and carry on playing.

Most children understand the importance of washing their hands thoroughly and independently after playing outside and before eating food and having a drink. Many are beginning to understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily successfully.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Adequate**

Practitioners plan a range of beneficial activities that engage many children's interest effectively. They plan valid activities to begin to develop children's skills suitably across all areas of learning. They are beginning to consider the children's voice appropriately when planning themes, for example by allowing them to choose the story of the week in the local library and by suggesting a few ideas for activities. Recently, visitors and visits have been used beneficially to enrich the curriculum, for example by visiting the Botanical Gardens and a visit by police during the theme on people who help us.

Practitioners seek to ensure an appropriate balance between activities that are directed by adults and opportunities for children to work more independently. Recently, they have begun to give children relevant opportunities to reinforce their previous learning by enhancing specific learning areas. However, overall, practitioners do not structure the daily routine effectively enough to ensure enough challenge for children in activities, so that they are able to make the most effective progress in their learning.

Practitioners make appropriate use of the foundation phase framework in order to identify a few specific skills to develop. These plans are beginning to build suitably on children's previous experiences and learning. However, practitioners do not plan systematically enough to enable all children to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, opportunities to develop children's early writing and ICT skills across the learning areas are limited.

Practitioners plan valuable opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, for example through physical activities in the hall, such as the obstacle course and opportunities to ride bicycles and vehicles. This is one of the strengths of the provision.

Development of the Welsh language is only adequate. There are relevant opportunities to develop children's language by using songs and a few suitable opportunities to teach children new vocabulary and language patterns. However, practitioners do not plan thoroughly enough to ensure that children build increasingly on their Welsh language skills, particularly in relation to their linguistic background. Plans to develop children's awareness of Welsh traditions and history are developing purposefully, for example by attending local eisteddfodau and celebrating events such as St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Overall, practitioners develop a suitable awareness of the philosophy of the foundation phase. They use a range of purposeful strategies and resources to encourage children to learn. An effective example of this is the use of resources, such as a Father Christmas costume and artificial snow, when re-telling a story during a plenary session. Practitioners have a wonderful working relationship with children, which enables them to learn in a caring and supportive environment. Practitioners usually manage behaviour sensitively and robustly.

Practitioners plan activities that develop children's skills suitably across the learning areas. However, they do not have high enough expectations of what children are able to achieve, and they do not tailor activities effectively enough to challenge children in their learning. Practitioners question children appropriately to assess their understanding. However, questions tend to be too closed to encourage children to think and extend their understanding. The quality of staff's Welsh language is varied, and they do not model the language consistently enough or provide adequate opportunities to develop children's oracy skills. As a result, children's standards of oracy are not developing soundly enough.

Practitioners have begun to develop appropriate assessment procedures. Following recent training, practitioners are beginning to use information that derives from observations and assessments to plan the next steps in children's learning suitably. The introduction of 'Learning Journey' profiles is beginning to track pupils' progress efficiently. However, these procedures have only just begun and it is too early to measure the effect on provision and children's standards. The setting is beginning to provide more useful information for parents about their children's learning by giving them opportunities to attend the setting to discuss their progress.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate**

The setting has effective arrangements for promoting eating and drinking healthily. During snack time, practitioners encourage children to choose healthy food and provide water or milk to drink. This time is used effectively to develop children's social skills by encouraging them to take turns, get their food and pour their own drinks independently. The setting plans purposeful opportunities for children to exercise regularly, for example by going for a walk in the local area. This encourages children to live a healthy lifestyle successfully.

The setting promotes children's spiritual and moral development well. For example, practitioners foster a sense of awe and wonder of the world around them successfully, with opportunities for children to observe how leaves change colour

and fall from the trees during the autumn, and opportunities to observe the lifecycle of chicks. Practitioners are beginning to plan suitable opportunities to promote children's cultural development, for example by listening to different instruments during a session in the library, in addition to learning about the celebrations of different cultures. Practitioners provide suitable opportunities for children to learn about sustainability through opportunities to recycle paper.

Arrangements for identifying children with additional learning needs are developing suitably. The setting has appropriate arrangements with other agencies in order to support children, where necessary, including a programme to improve children's language and oracy. However, practitioners are not confident enough in identifying children with additional learning needs. They do not use children's individual targets, which derive from speech and language assessments, effectively enough, for example when planning activities.

The setting is a safe environment, and practitioners take good care of the children at all times, including when they arrive and leave. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Adequate**

Practitioners succeed in creating a warm, welcoming and inclusive ethos at the setting. Practitioners strive successfully to ensure that children feel part of an inclusive community. They identify children's needs effectively, and all children are given an equal opportunity to learn in the different areas. The setting is beginning to develop children's understanding of equality and cultural diversity gradually, for example with an opportunity for children to learn about the Diwali festival.

The setting has a wide range of resources of a good standard inside the building. Practitioners ensure that resources are accessible to the children. This nurtures children's independence soundly as they fetch resources and use them appropriately.

Although the indoor environment is fairly confined, practitioners use the space appropriately to create stimulating learning areas for children. Overall, they plan relevantly to develop children's skills in these areas. However, they do not ensure that children develop their skills across a variety of areas, and a few children stay in the same area for long periods.

The setting has access to a small outdoor area. Practitioners have recently started to develop this area purposefully. They are beginning to plan appropriate opportunities to enrich the curriculum and develop children's skills gradually in this area. However, practitioners do not always use the area effectively enough to develop children's skills fully and coherently.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>
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<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Leadership: Adequate**

The leader, who is relatively new to the role, is developing her confidence and management skills appropriately. She has a suitable vision for the setting, which is

based on ensuring that children learn in a caring environment. She shares this suitably with staff, parents and the management committee. Staff work closely as a team, and are aware of the need to improve aspects of provision to have more of an effect on children's standards. They work together conscientiously to ensure stimulating experiences for children and are keen to improve the setting.

Staff meet regularly and contribute appropriately to planning and assessing children's attainment. However, there is not enough focus on planning strategically to raise standards, and leaders do not ensure that teaching leads purposefully enough to improvements in standards.

Although there are suitable arrangements in place for managing staff performance, they are not rigorous enough. Staff are given relevant opportunities to reflect on their performance, but leaders and the registered person do not use the arrangements rigorously enough to set challenging targets to improve performance. This leads to important shortcomings in teaching. Practitioners are keen to develop professionally and take advantage of various training in order to improve their skills, for example by observing good practice in other settings.

The setting responds appropriately to national and local priorities, including encouraging children to eat and drink healthily. However, they do not ensure that they plan purposefully enough to develop the Welsh language.

The management committee are new to their roles. The management committee and registered person are supportive of the setting. Occasional visits by committee members develop their understanding of strengths and areas for improvement suitably.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

Within a relatively short time, leaders have established a relevant range of self-evaluation activities, which enable them to identify many strengths and areas for improvement. For example, they use regular meetings and input from the advisory teacher to identify many priorities for improvement. However, leaders do not use first-hand observations to evaluate the effect of provision or teaching on children's standards and skills across the learning areas. As a result, leaders do not identify or address important aspects, such as the lack of challenge in teaching.

The leader has produced an action plan to address many of the aspects that derive from the self-evaluation procedures. For example, after identifying the need to improve children's independence, practitioners have planned specific activities to improve this aspect. As a result, children are more independent when putting on their coats and during snack time. However, leaders do not always prioritise the most important areas for improvement effectively enough, such as the need to improve children's Welsh language skills and the challenge in teaching.

There is an appropriate link between self-evaluation activities and the improvement plan. The plan identifies suitable actions and success criteria, and leaders are beginning to evaluate progress against targets competently. However, timescales are not specific or ambitious enough to improve provision and children's standards quickly enough. Recommendations following the previous inspection continue to be aspects for development.

### **Partnership working: Adequate**

The setting has an appropriate range of partnerships that improve the quality of provision and standards for children suitably.

Parents are supportive of the setting's work. The setting is beginning to improve communication and links with parents, for example by improving the information that is available to them through social media. This is a priority for the setting this year. It provides purposeful opportunities for parents to come and discuss any concerns and their children's progress by being available to parents after the session once a week.

The setting has suitable links with the local primary school. The setting takes advantage of beneficial opportunities to develop the relationship further and enrich children's experiences. An effective example of this is taking children to the school to see chicks hatching from eggs as part of their theme work.

Specialists are used effectively to develop children's skills, for example to assess and develop children's speech and language skills.

The setting is beginning to forge beneficial links with the community. For example, it takes the children to the local shop and post office as part of their activities. This develops children's awareness of their community well.

The setting has useful links with the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. Leaders receive regular advice and support from the advisory teacher. This has led to improvements in aspects of leadership, provision and children's outcomes. For example, following the advice of the advisory teacher, practitioners are beginning to develop useful observation and assessment procedures. However, leaders do not act on advice quickly enough to make the necessary improvements to provision and children's standards.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The setting has an appropriate number of staff to provide an interesting foundation phase curriculum for children. Leaders use staff suitably to deliver the curriculum. Practitioners develop their understanding of foundation phase practices suitably.

All members of staff take advantage of relevant training to improve their skills. For example, the leader has used training on playing with blocks to develop the construction area, which provides beneficial opportunities for children to develop suitable problem-solving skills. Valuable opportunities for them to attend training, such as first aid and food hygiene, ensure that they are able to fulfil their role suitably.

The setting has a wide range of resources of a good standard to promote the objectives of the foundation phase curriculum appropriately. Practitioners make suitable use of resources to plan stimulating experiences for children indoors. They are beginning to develop resources in the outdoor area appropriately by extending the resources that are available to the children.

Leaders use funding appropriately to develop priorities, for example by beginning to develop the outdoor area. However, there is no clear link between expenditure and the priorities in the development plan.

Considering children's outcomes, in addition to the quality of teaching and leadership, the setting provides adequate value for money.

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CIW</b>	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<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>
<b>Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)</b>	<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>

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