



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Rhuthun
Canolfan Awelon
School Road
Ruthin
LL15 1JG**

Date of inspection: May 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 Rhuthun is a Welsh-medium setting. It meets in a hall at Canolfan Awelon in the town of Ruthin in Denbighshire local authority. The setting provides education three mornings a week between 9.20am and 11.25am during term time.

The setting is registered to admit up to 38 children at any given time and admits children between two-and-a-half and four years old. Most of the three-year-old children currently receive funded early years education. Nearly all children come from white British backgrounds and most speak Welsh as their first language. There are currently very few children with additional learning needs.

The setting employs three qualified practitioners, including the leader. The leader began in post in June 2010.

The setting was last inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in October 2015 and by Estyn in November 2010.

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 make sound progress from starting points that are similar to the expected average or above
- Most children develop effective literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- Many children use Welsh language patterns and phrases confidently
- Nearly all children behave responsibly and politely
- Purposeful teaching and daily activities have a positive effect on children's learning
- Practitioners provide valuable opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Practitioners provide diligent and tender care
- Practitioners use the hall creatively to provide children with varied and beneficial physical experiences

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader's expectations and commitment provide a clear direction for all of the practitioners' and children's work
- The supportive management committee monitors provision carefully and conscientiously
- A stable culture of self-evaluation leads to useful improvements
- Practitioners benefit from purposeful and practical training and professional development
- Intelligent use of support services and specialist services has a purposeful effect on provision
- Successful partnerships support provision and children's learning effectively
- The leader and management committee use the budget sensibly to prioritise expenditure wisely to ensure improvements

Recommendations

- R1 Provide purposeful opportunities to enrich children's awareness of their local area
- R2 Ensure that assessment outcomes lead to planning the next steps in individual children's learning
- R3 Ensure that the leader shares responsibilities effectively with practitioners
- R4 Create effective practices to 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
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Standards: Good

Most children make good progress from their starting points, which are, on the whole, similar to or above what is expected for their age. They work well together and under the guidance of adults to develop effective literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Many children use Welsh language patterns and phrases confidently during informal play and focus tasks, without prompting from adults. They follow instructions in Welsh attentively and act on them intelligently. Most children sing Welsh songs and nursery rhymes enthusiastically and are keen to respond meaningfully to practitioners' questions and challenges. This is evident during plenary activities as they discuss stories confidently and recount Jack's trials and tribulations as he buys and plants the beans to grow the beanstalk.

A few children are beginning to read their names and the names of their peers correctly and draw practitioners' attention to familiar letters on displays and book titles. Many children handle books in the quiet area as intelligent young readers. They respond to the content of books sensibly in pairs and individually. As a result, they understand the purpose of pictures and writing, and discuss familiar characters knowledgeably.

Many children make marks purposefully when experimenting with different media. Therefore, they persevere successfully with early writing experiences. For example, they use colourful paint, such as yellow and red, to reflect beautiful flowers, and pens on paper to follow various patterns and different lines. A few children are beginning to form letters and numbers independently and in recognisable forms well.

Most children use mathematical language effectively when playing and experimenting with numbers. For example, they match numbers and objects correctly in the sand and identify missing numbers between one and ten confidently. As a result, many children recognise, name and count numbers to ten independently. A few are beginning to count to ten and beyond correctly when sorting shapes and objects, and when ordering three-dimensional shapes such as a cube, cuboid, cylinder and cone to build towers of different heights. Most children understand that differences in size can affect the weight of an object and that sides of different lengths affect a building's balance and stability. As a result, they discuss the properties of shapes and objects skilfully.

Most children use a variety of ICT equipment successfully. They control electronic toys confidently and choose to use electronic tablets to extend their work and understanding independently. As a result, they use the setting's educational software, apps and hardware purposefully to improve their ICT skills.

Many children choose equipment and materials effectively to solve practical problems. For example, they experiment with shapes that fit together to copy flowers in pots when creating sculptures of different flowers. Most children are creative and experimental when painting and modelling dough to create animals, such as cats and birds.

Most children develop their physical skills well. They jump enthusiastically on a small trampoline, dance and move to music and ride tractors and bicycles energetically in a particular part of the hall.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children relate well to adults and visitors when they arrive and depart from the setting and during their time there. They show motivation and interest in their learning, and most concentrate sensibly during their tasks. Most children enjoy the various activities in all areas of learning, and share resources and work diligently with other children. They show positive attitudes towards new experiences, for example as they play a tambourine in the setting's den and discuss the features and differences between snails and bees during circle time.

Most children are confident learners and work wholly independently during play activities and focus tasks to solve challenges. Many make sensible decisions about which learning areas include their favourite activities, such as role-playing as a builder when making a tower or placing dishes on a table in the home area.

Most children explain confidently which practical tasks are of most interest to them, in addition to what motivates them to succeed. This is evident when they decide to continue with a particular task or start a new activity of their own choosing. As a result, most are beginning to express their opinions and personal preferences clearly to practitioners and their peers.

Nearly all children behave considerately and politely. They show respect when responding to adults and each other, which contributes to the positive ethos in the setting's day-to-day work. Nearly all children listen sensibly to adults, for example when they line up to wash and dry their hands before having a snack. Nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly without encouragement from practitioners after using the toilet and after messy play with paint and sand. This reflects their sound understanding that hygiene is important in order to prevent infection and contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

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

The leader and practitioners work together diligently to provide interesting activities for children. They focus diligently on developing independent learners by providing purposeful and varied activities, such as following the growth of tadpoles in a water tank. They motivate children to learn practically and to elaborate on their personal experiences effectively in plenary discussions and group tasks, such as planting cress. They also promote children's ideas successfully when role-playing as a parent with dolls in the home corner and discussing weather features with each other. As a result, they provide a sensible curriculum and learning experiences that reflect the foundation phase ethos successfully.

Practitioners discuss how to prepare and present exciting and engaging activities each week. The very concise plans focus on children's interests and choices successfully by identifying which activities they enjoy or find difficult. Practitioners

are beginning to use the outcomes of continuous assessments appropriately in order to define the next steps in children's learning. However, this is a recent development and has not yet become embedded in the setting's work.

Although opportunities to provide physical activities for the children are difficult due to the nature of the building and because there is no specific outdoor area, practitioners are creative when planning. They use the hall daily to provide energetic activities for children to ride bicycles and tractors. They also provide beneficial opportunities for them to plant bean seeds indoors in order to watch them sprout. They provide regular opportunities for children to dance, jump on a small trampoline and move energetically in the hall, which promotes the children's sense of fitness effectively. These activities develop the children's physical skills well.

Continuous tasks and focus tasks develop children's skills effectively as they develop their literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills regularly. Effective examples of this are the way in which they allow children to paint flowers and wild animals, and follow instructions to move an electronic device on top of a table independently. This contributes beneficially towards the children's enthusiasm as they learn through play and experiment with pencils and different media, such as dough. Opportunities are also provided for children to order and allocate numbers in the sand, and peg them to a table that corresponds with specific numbers up to 10. As a result, practitioners encourage children to suggest their ideas, through practical challenges, in order to solve problems intelligently.

The setting's provision to develop oral Welsh skills is very beneficial to the children. Practitioners are confident language models. They support children who speak Welsh fluently, in addition to those who are beginning to learn the language, purposefully. As a result, they extend the vocabulary and language patterns of children of all ability levels successfully. Practitioners encourage children to use the language as much as possible through stimulating activities and songs. They challenge and question children frequently in the learning areas, and their sensible discussions and consistent language patterns motivate children to respond intelligently and promptly. The effect of this provision is that many children respond by using familiar phrases soon after they start at the setting, which extends their understanding of communicating with others 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, attending the Eisteddfod and local concerts, and baking traditional cakes.

Practitioners provide effective opportunities for children to use ICT equipment, such as electronic toys and tablets, mark-making equipment and a compact disc player. They also use educational software and apps regularly and purposefully on electronic tablets.

The setting makes appropriate use of visits to enrich children's learning experiences. These include occasional visits to the forest. However, they do not take advantage of opportunities to visit the town, which limits children's understanding of their local area. Visitors such as the emergency services, a dental hygienist and a farmer with a lamb teach children purposefully about the roles of people in their community.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development. They are knowledgeable about the requirements of the foundation phase and work well together. They manage children's behaviour sensibly, which encourages children's participation and enjoyment effectively in all learning areas and daily activities.

Practitioners have sound expectations and support children regularly during focus tasks and continuous tasks. As a result, practitioners ensure that children's motivation and perseverance have a purposeful effect on their work. The leader's presentations and commitment during plenary sessions and story time are lively, which stimulates and maintains children's interest effectively.

Practitioners understand their roles in full when intervening in children's experiences and play. Their methods are sensible and have a positive effect on the children's desire to improve their work. As a result, practitioners stimulate and guide children towards success regularly. Robust examples of this can be seen as children persevere to follow a pattern with pens, snip and cut with scissors and explain the characteristics of different animals when arranging land around the farm.

Practitioners encourage children frequently to take part in various activities. They understand the importance of providing broad opportunities to learn through experimentation and play, and ensure that children rotate regularly in order to experience different skills in all areas of learning. They also question children astutely to develop their communication and thinking skills. This is done successfully as they place themselves in order of first, second and third when lining up for a snack, and understand the difference between 'on' or 'under' and 'in front' or 'behind'.

Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are useful. Evidence corresponds correctly with individual children's outcomes by using the foundation phase profile as they develop at the setting. All practitioners discuss daily assessments sensibly with children in order for them to know what they need to do to improve their work. Practitioners are beginning to use these assessments appropriately to identify the next steps in individual children's learning. However, this is a recent development and practitioners do not yet use assessment outcomes thoroughly enough to target individuals' needs.

The setting informs parents and carers appropriately about their children's achievements through valuable daily dialogue between practitioners and parents and carers. At the end of their time at the setting, the setting provides the local schools with a booklet and records of children's progress, which are also available to parents and carers, should they wish to see them.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides valuable opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Practitioners use snack sessions and story time to nurture these values successfully. They promote children's consideration and understanding of their peers' feelings intelligently. As a result, children treat each other fairly and respect others, including adults.

The leader and all practitioners create a reflective environment by providing positive opportunities for children to think, pray, discuss feelings and say thank you. The effect of this is that children quieten down to listen to others, take turns intelligently and share equipment. Children follow instructions sensibly when lining up for a snack, washing their hands, pouring a drink and choosing the contents of their snacks. These procedures provide valuable opportunities for all children to shoulder personal responsibilities.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, card, plastic goods and food for composting with worms. This develops children's understanding of sustainability successfully. There are also efficient arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing. The setting operates effective systems to promote healthy eating and drinking. As a result, children understand that fruit, vegetables and exercise contribute to a sensible way of life and lead to a healthy lifestyle.

The setting is a safe environment. Practitioners are vigilant as the children arrive at the setting and when they are collected. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The use of positive behaviour strategies eliminates any kind of disruption or irresponsible behaviour.

The setting records children's learning needs conscientiously on entry to the setting and during their time there. They refer children to specialist agencies immediately if specific intervention is needed and provide relevant support when the need arises. As a result, they implement purposeful support for children who need it by using external agencies to support them.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is a wholly inclusive community and practitioners have a clear awareness of children's needs. All children are given equal opportunities to learn in the different areas and their individuality is recognised effectively. Practitioners are in agreement when challenging and supporting children each day in positive and supportive ways.

Practitioners remind children regularly that they live in a society that recognises, respects and celebrates diversity. They promote a positive ethos through their daily activities and sensible attitudes towards other people. They celebrate festivals such as Diwali each year, study aspects of life in Asia and Africa, and use dolls to discuss the features of different cultures. As a result, practitioners teach children about the world's different festivals and traditions successfully.

The leader and practitioners use resources purposefully to meet the requirements of the foundation phase and children's needs. The setting has a sufficient amount of up-to-date ICT resources to develop children's skills successfully. The wide range of interesting and engaging resources is used purposefully to challenge children in focus tasks and continuous activities to enrich learning. For example, they plant sunflower seeds in order to measure the height of the flowers over the summer term. Resources are also at a practical level for all of the children, which promotes their sense of responsibility effectively.

The accommodation is of suitable quality, maintained appropriately and is safe. All areas that are available to them are used effectively and the accommodation is divided sensibly with dividers and tables to manage and inspire the children. The setting also uses movable tables meaningfully to display the children's work and targets.

Practitioners use part of the path that leads from the fire exit appropriately to search for insects, because there is no outdoor area available to them. Practitioners use the indoor area creatively in order to enrich children's physical and gardening experiences. Although these experiences exist, they do not use the nearby facilities in the town regularly enough to enrich children's outdoor experiences in order to develop a better understanding of their local area.

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

The leader maintains the setting's regular practices effectively. She promotes regular improvements and celebrates successes in children's work purposefully. Her vision and enthusiasm are sound. She shares provision and management procedures with a nearby setting, which ensures that children's achievements improve through effective teaching and care. However, the leader does not share responsibilities with other practitioners effectively enough.

The leader and practitioners focus diligently on improving children's standards and wellbeing through robust teaching and fostering a close relationship with parents. This meets children's needs effectively and promotes their progress and personal development sensibly. Practitioners work together efficiently as a team and have high expectations of themselves and the children. As a result, all practitioners motivate the children to improve positively and supportively each day, particular in their Welsh oracy.

The leader uses relevant and up-to-date information about the setting to improve provision. This has recently included using the foundation phase profile to identify the children's starting points accurately, and training all practitioners to use assessment outcomes more effectively to target the next steps in children's learning. These systems are beginning to become embedded appropriately in the setting's day-to-day work.

Practitioners focus on creating engaging and interesting learning areas for children in the hall. As a result, they make beneficial changes to the weekly challenges to correspond with the different themes, such as the farm and garden life. This has a positive effect on children's skills, particularly their Welsh speaking and listening skills. The leader also focuses well on national priorities, such as developing literacy, numeracy and ICT strategies, to improve children's skills before they start school. This includes creating a book area for reflection and providing a wide range of technological equipment to challenge children further.

The leadership, which includes a supportive management committee, ensures that provision for children is effective. The management committee assesses the leader's performance each year and the leader evaluates and supports practitioners intelligently. As a result, all staff understand their roles in full through regular evaluations and discussions.

The management committee supports and works with the setting sensibly to maintain and improve stable practices and develop areas that need to be improved further. It receives useful information about the setting's work and events regularly from the leader, and organises fundraising activities such as cheese and wine evenings. As a result, the dedicated management committee meets regularly to organise activities to increase income in order to improve the setting's resources.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation is an active part of the setting's annual procedures. The leader records details of children's standards and the quality of provision regularly by using the local authority's procedures effectively. This includes quantitative profiles that measure the effectiveness of provision purposefully. The management committee plays a useful part in the process. As a result, leaders have a strong understanding of the setting's strengths and the knowledge to target areas for improvement intelligently.

Effective co-operation between the leaders, practitioners, the management committee, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin contributes to beneficial improvements to the setting's work. Information that is gathered regularly, in addition to visits and evaluations by external agencies, contribute purposefully to the self-evaluation procedures. The support and willingness to improve have a purposeful effect on the setting and prioritise needs promptly. The setting also funds any costs effectively before implementing any changes. This includes improving ICT equipment and organising better activities and resources to challenge children to improve their early writing. As a result, the setting uses the information that derives from self-evaluation procedures effectively to set sensible priorities in the improvement plan.

Practitioners agree on priorities, and change their ways of working and aspects of provision efficiently to respond to the needs that are identified in the improvement plan. Overall, priorities in the improvement plan derive directly from the setting's self-evaluation process.

The leader and management committee prioritise expenditure purposefully, in line with the targets for improvement. For example, the setting organises staff training on how to implement useful language schemes, under the guidance of Mudiad Meithrin and the local authority. As a result, all practitioners operate effectively in line with their advice. This has a positive effect on improving provision for the Welsh language, and children's standards and skills in general.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of effective strategic partnerships. Practitioners work purposefully with partners to improve provision and children's outcomes. For example, they work well with the local authority advisory teacher and Mudiad Meithrin officers to ensure improvements in several aspects of provision. For example, practitioners follow a specific scheme successfully to improve and assess children's oral work in Welsh.

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. However, the setting does not have effective enough arrangements to inform them about their children's progress and achievement during their time at the setting.

There are valuable opportunities for parents to express their views on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires, management committee meetings and daily discussions at the hall door. These community links promote provision successfully by providing financial assistance to support staff. The support is also beneficial in making applications for equipment and relevant grants from local and national businesses in order to improve provision further.

The setting has robust links with the local schools. This supports the children's transition arrangements to the next steps in their learning efficiently. Arrangements for transferring personal information and assessments are useful to the children as they settle in their new schools.

The setting works highly successfully with a nearby setting. Both settings share practitioners and resources purposefully, and target specific needs by making sensible use of practitioners' expertise.

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

Resource management: Good

The leader and practitioners strive consistently to improve all aspects of the setting's work. The diligent leader and supportive management committee use purposeful practices to enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge successfully. They ensure that the setting has sufficient qualified practitioners by providing complete training. As a result, practitioners are used intelligently to target children's needs, and resources are allocated efficiently.

Performance management procedures are stable and ensure good teaching and purposeful learning. The setting manages resources sensibly to support children's learning. As a result, the procedures enable the leader and practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge efficiently. There is good practice in terms of purposeful co-operation between practitioners and other partners, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. This supports the setting's documentation and management procedures effectively.

The setting's daily practices are consistent and ensure that children benefit from interesting and positive learning experiences inside the building. Practitioners ensure that children have ready access to a sufficient number of stimulating resources to support their learning effectively, which includes physical activities.

The leader and management committee have a clear understanding of the budget and the challenges that are associated with it. They prioritise expenditure and use funding and grants carefully, and identify responsibilities and sensible timescales in their plans. Parents and carers also contribute well towards funding the setting through community fundraising events. As a result, the setting ensures that the use of funding has a direct effect on provision and children's outcomes.

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