



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

**A report on**

**Cylch Meithrin Y Gromlech  
Ysgol Gynradd Dyffryn Ardudwy  
Dyffryn Ardudwy  
LL44 2EP**

**Date of inspection: March 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 y Gromlech is a Welsh-medium setting. It meets in a building at Ysgol Feithrin Dyffryn Ardudwy a Thalybont, which is on the site of Ysgol Dyffryn Ardudwy in Gwynedd local authority. The setting is open five days a week between 8.50 am and 12.50 pm, and provides education and care during these hours.

The setting is registered to admit up to 24 children at any given time, and admits children between two-and-a-half and four years old. All eligible children currently receive funded early years education.

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

The setting employs three qualified practitioners, including the leader. The leader began in post in September 2016.

The setting was last inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales in November 2015 and by Estyn in March 2012.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Most children make sound progress from their starting points
- Most children develop literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively
- Nearly all children behave responsibly and politely
- Practitioners plan an interesting curriculum, which supports children's learning successfully
- Practitioners have high expectations and challenge children regularly in line with their needs and abilities
- Accurate assessment leads to developing the next steps in children's learning purposefully
- Practitioners provide valuable opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Effective use of the indoor area stimulates children to improve their skills

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader provides clear direction for all of the setting's work and she has high expectations of practitioners and children
- The dedicated management committee is supportive and monitors provision intelligently
- There is a robust culture of self-evaluation, which ensures regular improvements
- Practitioners benefit from effective training and professional development
- Successful partnerships with parents and external agencies support provision and children's learning purposefully
- The leader and management committee prioritise expenditure sensibly to improve provision

## Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all children who understand the Welsh language respond in Welsh regularly
- R2 Improve the use of the outdoor area to ensure that children are able to move independently between the indoor and outdoor areas
- R3 Time the plenary sessions better to maintain all children's interest

### **What happens next?**

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

## Main findings

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

Most children make sound progress from their starting points. They learn successfully about their knowledge and understanding across the areas of learning and develop effective literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Most children listen attentively and respond intelligently to practitioners' questioning during plenary sessions. Many use correct language patterns and interesting phrases completely independently in Welsh, during informal play and focus tasks. For example, many discuss characters and events from stories confidently as individuals and in groups. Many children pronounce clearly and use the language purposefully to express an opinion and their personal preferences. They follow instructions promptly and sing Welsh nursery rhymes and songs enthusiastically. As a result, many are natural and intelligent speakers. However, a very few children do not respond in Welsh, even though they understand and act on practitioners' explanations and requests.

Many children show an interest in books and understand the purpose of the story and pictures intelligently. They understand the purpose of writing and repeat the order of stories sensibly. For example, they discuss the characteristics of familiar characters, such as animals that are associated with Easter, sensibly. The majority of children link actions with emotions skilfully, such as recognising that the wolf with the big, sharp teeth is the villain in the story of the three little pigs. As a result, most children handle books in the reading area as confident early readers.

Many children make marks effectively when experimenting with different media. They persevere diligently with early writing experiences. For example, they use pastel colours creatively when painting to create a picture of the spring, and follow the path of an electronic device with coloured pens to make a pattern on long paper. Many explain the purpose of writing when making greetings for their family on an Easter card. A minority of children recognise their own names regularly and succeed in forming the letters of the alphabet and numbers in recognisable forms.

Most children recognise, name and count numbers to five intelligently without support from an adult. They use mathematical language purposefully as they discuss and compare shapes, and count chicks in numbered eggs correctly. A few count correctly to ten and beyond without encouragement. Many children sort different objects by colour and shape successfully and count how many objects of each type they have correctly. A few children understand how to start bonding numbers to five effectively, by using their own fingers and putting objects in order. Most children use numbers purposefully in practical activities, for example when comparing the number of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes that are used when building the houses of the three little pigs. Most children understand the differences in size when comparing objects and whether they are 'small', 'big', 'smaller' or 'bigger'.

Most children use technology enterprisingly. They do so by using a laptop, tablets, electronic toys and devices confidently during focus and continuous tasks. As a result, their use of educational programs, apps and hardware develops their thinking skills and opportunities to solve problems purposefully.

Nearly all children enjoy listening attentively to music and they perform enthusiastically when singing and doing actions to correspond with the words. They develop their physical skills effectively, for example by riding bicycles and vehicles energetically on the school playground, climbing enthusiastically on the school's adventure equipment and jumping from one log to another in the outdoor area.

Many children choose equipment and materials effectively to extend their creativity. For example, the use dough, glitter, eyes, beaks and colourful reeds to make chicks, and place them in nests that they have made from natural materials.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all children relate well to adults and visitors as they arrive at and leave the setting. Many show motivation and resilience when responding to challenging activities. As a result, they focus purposefully on their learning.

Most children enjoy the tasks in all areas of learning, and share and work sensibly with each other. They show positive attitudes towards new experiences, such as experimenting with sand by filling a colander and then sieving it back into the tub, and planting flowers in pots.

Most children are starting to express opinions and their personal preferences intelligently. This is evident as they choose to continue with specific tasks or starting a new activity of their own choosing. Many explain thoughtfully which areas of learning include their favourite activities. They are completely confident and certain when identifying which practical tasks are of the most interest to them. This can be seen as they choose to balance on a beam and on one leg, or as they sing nursery rhymes unaccompanied as soloists. As a result, many children are confident learners who work independently and purposefully during play activities.

Nearly all children are well behaved and polite. They show respect when responding responsibly to adults and each other. Nearly all listen attentively and carefully to adults, for example when serving drinks and putting on their coats to play outdoors. After using the toilet, and after muddy and messy play, and outdoor activities, nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly without much encouragement from practitioners. They understand robustly that hygiene is key to avoiding infection and important for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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

Practitioners provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects the foundation phase ethos successfully. They provide sensible opportunities for children to contribute their ideas towards planning during circle time and regular discussions while completing tasks. As a result, all learning experiences meet children's interests

and needs effectively by providing valuable opportunities for them to learn productively. An effective example of this is the opportunity for children to write messages for their loved ones on Easter cards.

Practitioners plan for developing children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills purposefully. They enable children to choose suitable equipment to solve practical problems that are associated with the current theme. For example, practitioners work well with the children to make the three little pigs' houses out of cardboard boxes, straw and wood.

Practitioners plan engaging opportunities for children to express themselves and to develop their creative and expressive skills successfully. They encourage children to role-play in the kitchen and the dressing up area purposefully. They focus effectively on investigative skills in the discovery areas, such as providing opportunities to use magnifying glasses and take pictures with cameras. As a result, these activities build systematically on the children's existing understanding and skills.

The setting's provision to develop and raise awareness of the Welsh language is sound. Practitioners are good language models for the children. They encourage children to use the language as much as possible through engaging activities. On the whole, all practitioners support children who are learning the language efficiently and challenge confident speakers to improve the standard of their language. As a result, many children's understanding of the Welsh language is developing increasingly, and their use of the language improves regularly.

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, and tracing the history of the village, such as studying the nearby Neolithic burial chamber.

Provision to develop children's ICT skills is purposeful. The setting provides robust opportunities for children to use a range of equipment, such as a laptop and electronic tablets and toys. All practitioners challenge children successfully. They use purposeful Welsh software and apps, and educational hardware, to develop children's early ICT skills and control of technological equipment successfully.

Practitioners focus sensibly on developing children's physical skills, for example by allowing them to climb on the school's adventure equipment and play in the garden and willow dome. There is also an effective emphasis on developing children's creativity by experimenting with paint and role-playing in the mud kitchen and at the builder's workbench.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits to enrich children's learning experiences. Experiences include visits to the post office to post letters, the nearby dolmens and the fire station. A number of visitors visit the setting, such as emergency service officers, a midwife and the air ambulance, who provide valuable opportunities for children to learn about the roles of people in their community.

## **Teaching: Good**

All practitioners have a sound understanding of the philosophy of the foundation phase and work together effectively to ensure that the requirements are met. They provide a wide range of opportunities for children to learn through play and practical experiences, particularly indoors. As a result, all practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development.

Practitioners have high expectations for each child and challenge children sensibly in line with their needs and abilities. They intervene in children's play wisely, where necessary, in order to ensure that they understand the task. This motivates children to perform at their best consistently during focus tasks and continuous activities.

Practitioners question children skilfully in order to develop their communication, number and ICT skills. However, at times, they do not time plenary sessions well enough to maintain all children's interest wholly effectively. As a result, a very few children are restless during circle time and when responding to a few challenges.

Practitioners greet children warmly and energetically as they arrive, and this energy continues throughout the sessions. As a result, practitioners manage children's behaviour positively. This encourages children's participation and enjoyment in all activities successfully. The system of sharing responsibilities ensures that there is consistent challenge for different children, and this targets the development of these children's literacy and numeracy purposefully. However, they do not distribute their responsibilities between the indoors and outdoors wholly effectively. As a result, children are not given an opportunity to move independently between the indoor and outdoor areas.

Procedures for assessing children's achievements are accurate and useful. Practitioners record daily assessments regularly and consistently. They discuss with children what they need to do to improve their work sensibly during focus tasks. They record evaluations and daily discussions effectively in children's booklets. Practitioners link the evidence conscientiously with individual children's outcomes. This leads directly to planning tasks that target the next steps in children's learning successfully.

Practitioners share useful information informally with parents and carers at the end of the session. The setting provides parents with useful booklets and reports when their children leave the setting to go to school.

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

The setting provides effective opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Practitioners use group discussions sensibly to encourage children to consider each other's feelings and whether they are happy or sad. This nurtures values such as fairness and respect for each other successfully.

Practitioners create valuable opportunities for children to sit quietly, and to discuss and listen to adults and other children thoughtfully. For example, children take turns politely when eating their snacks in small groups. During these sessions, there are purposeful opportunities for children to express the reasons for their choices as they

discuss their snacks and drinks. There are efficient arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing, including effective procedures to promote eating and drinking healthily. As a result, children understand that fruit, vegetables and exercise are good for their bodies and their health.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, cardboard, plastic goods and food. They also compost in the outdoor area and use a rap by a character on an ICT program to understand the purpose of the refuse collector in our communities. These activities develop children's understanding of sustainability purposefully.

The setting uses positive behaviour strategies that eliminate any kind of unacceptable behaviour. The setting is a safe environment and practitioners care diligently for the children when they arrive, during the sessions and when they are collected. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

There are robust arrangements to support any children with additional needs. Practitioners work together closely and observe children carefully to identify any concerns. They act on these by communicating with parents and seeking support from specialist agencies, such as the speech therapist to help proceed with specific intervention. The setting keeps formal records of additional comments to help them to track these children's progress thoroughly.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is an inclusive community that promotes a caring ethos through all daily activities. Practitioners place a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. The setting achieves this effectively by celebrating festivals from all around the world. This includes decorating children's hands with henna patterns for Diwali, and parading with a dragon to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

Practitioners make sure that all children are given the same opportunities to benefit from interesting activities in the indoor learning areas and have equal access to the resources that are available. Practitioners know all children well, and understand and respond conscientiously to their individual needs.

The setting uses its indoor resources to meet the requirements of the foundation phase and children's needs successfully. Practitioners use the wide range of interesting indoor resources effectively in continuous activities, focus tasks and opportunities to enhance learning. They enable children to use resources independently, and this develops their sense of responsibility intelligently.

The accommodation is of good quality, clean and is maintained effectively. The outdoor area is suitable and includes growing and planting areas and adventure equipment on the school grounds. However, practitioners do not plan purposefully enough to use the area effectively. As a result, there is a significant difference between the use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The setting uses the local area and the village successfully to add to children's learning experiences, such as visiting the village shop and centre for the elderly.

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

The leader provides robust leadership for the setting's daily and long-term practices. The setting's objectives, plans and policies focus purposefully on meeting children's needs and ensuring improvements in their standards and wellbeing.

The leader leads a team of dedicated practitioners conscientiously and has high expectations of practitioners and children. She succeeds in encouraging them to improve sensibly and supportively. These positive practices promote and maintain improvements successfully. As a result, the leader's vision ensures that the quality of provision succeeds in improving children's outcomes.

The leader shares information about the setting's practices efficiently with all practitioners, and they meet regularly to plan the curriculum and associated activities. This ensures that all practitioners understand their roles fully and work together daily as an effective team. They also respond diligently to national priorities, such as developing literacy, numeracy and ICT strategies and focussing on improving children's standards in the Welsh language.

The leader and practitioners work closely with members of the management committee. Regular supervision and evaluation practices ensure that leaders make the best use of practitioners' expertise. This is extremely evident in literacy, numeracy and ICT tasks and investigative experiences.

The management committee receives robust information about the setting's practices from the leader. It meets to monitor the setting's practices and to try to provide financial support. It challenges the setting regularly as a critical friend to improve provision. An example of this is improving the indoor area and funding new equipment, such as a laptop and electronic tablets.

### **Improving quality: Good**

Procedures to self-evaluate the setting's practices and actions are thorough. Leaders monitor children's standards and the quality of provision regularly and incisively, by using the local authority's quantitative procedures. The leader uses the procedures sensibly to identify the setting's strengths and areas for development. The views of practitioners, parents and carers, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin are considered purposefully through questionnaires and regular discussions. The leader and management committee act beneficially on their advice for the benefit of the children. As a result, the leader and practitioners work together conscientiously to ensure that the setting improves itself effectively.

The priorities in the development plan derive directly from the self-evaluation process and correspond accurately to the areas for improvement in the self-evaluation report. The development plan includes beneficial actions and timescales to achieve the useful targets. Monitoring improvements regularly against the specific targets evaluates the effect on children's learning purposefully. A good example of this is the way in which the setting acts on assessment findings to target the next steps in individual children's learning.

The leader and management committee prioritise expenditure successfully, in line with the actions that have been identified for improvement. This leads to useful improvements, such as implementing the foundation phase profile, improving assessment practices to correspond with planning, and the daily use of ICT equipment at the setting.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting has a range of effective partnerships. The leader works successfully with partners to improve provision and children's outcomes. The setting's links with the community support children's learning purposefully. This includes successful fundraising events, applications for grant funding, and support from parents to construct and repair equipment both inside and outside the setting.

Partnerships with the school, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin are well established. These partnerships support the setting to develop and improve its practices. This enables practitioners to target children's needs at an early stage, and use the expertise of external agencies to support individuals and specific groups of children. These agencies also provide administrative support and up-to-date training. As a result, they support and challenge the setting effectively, particularly in improving assessment, planning and the requirements of the foundation phase.

There are positive links with the local school. This supports the transition arrangements well. Effective systems are used to transfer children's personal information and assessments from one organisation to another. As a result, arrangements are of benefit to the children as they settle in primary education.

All practitioners take active steps to include parents and carers in the setting's life. They inform parents and carers regularly about all aspects of the setting's work effectively, including through social media. The setting encourages them to express their opinion on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions.

Practitioners liaise and work with a wide range of other partners who make an important contribution to improving provision. These include agencies that support the setting with first aid training, food hygiene courses and child protection training.

### **Resource management: Good**

The leader focuses directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work by using practitioners intelligently and allocating resources wisely. With the support of the dedicated management committee, she ensures that the setting has enough qualified practitioners, with valuable training, to meet children's needs successfully.

The leader's leadership practices and the management committee's intelligent support enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge effectively. Practitioners ensure that children are able to use interesting resources to support their learning effectively, such as ICT hardware and software. As a result, the setting is a conscientious learning environment, where robust co-operation between practitioners and other partners support all of the setting's work.

Performance management procedures are sound. They ensure that the effect of purposeful daily practices creates interesting learning experiences and positive teaching.

The leader and management committee use the budget purposefully and prioritise expenditure effectively in line with the targets in the development plan. They ensure that funding is used skilfully to improve provision and children's outcomes. They make effective use of external grants to improve provision for children.

The setting provides good value for money because of the positive progress that children make from their starting points, the purposeful provision and effective leadership.

## 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