



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Carreg Hirfaen
Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen
Cwmann
Carmarthenshire
SA48 8ET**

Date of inspection: November 2017

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 Carreg Hirfaen is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in a room on the campus of Ysgol Gynradd Carreg Hirfaen in the village of Cwmann in Carmarthenshire local authority. It moved to this location in February 2016 from its previous home on the site of the old school, where it was known as Cylch Meithrin Coedmor. The setting is open from 8.30am to midday, five days a week.

The setting admits children between two and three years old and is registered to admit up to 19 children. Fourteen children receive early years education funded by the local authority.

Nearly all children come from white British backgrounds and a minority come from Welsh-speaking homes. There are currently very few children with additional learning needs.

The setting employs four full-time members of staff. The leader began in post in January 2010.

The school was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in October 2016 and by Estyn (as Cylch Meithrin Coedmor) in February 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- Most children make good progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all areas of learning
- More able children make very good progress
- A majority of children who are unable to speak Welsh on entry make good progress and develop the language quickly
- Nearly all children are happy when they arrive at the setting and are keen to join in with activities
- Children are well-behaved
- Staff plan stimulating learning experiences for children that are based on their interests, respond well to their needs and reflect the ethos and principles of the foundation phase well
- The quality of teaching is robustly good
- Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are thorough
- It has valuable and effective procedures for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader has a clear vision for its development, which focuses effectively on children's happiness, progress and wellbeing
- Practitioners' roles are clear and are recorded in detailed job descriptions
- The staff's performance management procedure is effective and all have useful access to specific training
- Members of the management committee are supportive of the setting's work and hold the leader and other practitioners to account appropriately in relation to the activities that children undertake
- Self-evaluation is a core part of its work and is based on observing and evaluating the quality of its work in relation to teaching and learning
- There is a clear link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation procedure and the priorities in the improvement plan
- It has an effective relationship with a range of partners, which has a positive effect on provision and children's progress
- The leader and committee manage staff and other resources effectively

Recommendations

- R1 Plan specific activities to develop children's problem-solving skills effectively
- R2 Produce a long-term plan that maps provision clearly over a specific period
- R3 Refine success criteria in the action plan so that they are based on children's outcomes

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

On entry to the setting, most children's literacy and numeracy skills are similar to what is expected for their age. During their time there, most make good progress in developing these skills across all areas of learning. More able children make very good progress.

A majority of children who are unable to speak Welsh on entry to the setting make good progress and develop the language quickly. Nearly all understand daily instructions well and show an increasing awareness of the language when responding to simple questions. Most are able to recognise the days of the week in print and name them in order. They talk confidently about the weather in Welsh in the first session of the morning and ask practitioners about the day's activities. Most listen to each other, share experiences and talk about activities, such as the story of Jack and the Beanstalk or visits, such as the recent one to the local garden centre. A few choose to read voluntarily and show that they know how to handle books correctly. A majority use mark-making equipment independently and with increasing control, for example when writing their name on a picture of a hand during self-registration.

Most develop their numeracy skills well. They count objects to five correctly when building with blocks or playing with farm animals. They name simple two-dimensional shapes correctly and recognise them within the classroom. A majority use mathematical language correctly when handling a range of play equipment and comparing the height of towers of bricks. A majority group objects by colour correctly and name the colours correctly in Welsh.

Most children use a variety of ICT equipment confidently. A few are able to control an electronic toy successfully and choose to record their work independently with a camera. Most follow simple instructions when using computer programs on the interactive whiteboard.

A few children are starting to think about how they will respond to practical tasks, such as drawing a picture of a castle by using various media. However, children's ability to solve specific problems successfully is limited.

A majority of children develop good physical skills by taking part in a range of activities that are of interest to them, such as dancing, running and walking slowly in the 'amser actif' (active time) session. A majority use their physical skills regularly to work on a large scale, for example when building a cardboard tower or riding a bicycle. The ability of a majority of children to handle small equipment, such as writing implements, painting and small world toys, is developing well.

Wellbeing: Good

When they arrive at the setting, nearly all children are happy and keen to join in with activities. Practitioners have a very close relationship with each other and with the children and their parents, which ensures that they settle quickly.

Nearly all children are well-behaved and work together effectively, and follow instructions intelligently and comply obediently with the order of the sessions. Nearly all children have a positive attitude towards learning and undertake their activities enthusiastically. For example, individuals take turns to be responsible for monitoring the weather each day, while the 'helpwr heddiw' (helper of the day) distributes snacks and tidies up. This develops their independent skills effectively, in addition to their ability to take responsibility. Most understand the principle and importance of eating and drinking healthily.

Nearly all children make choices confidently when deciding where they would like to play and what they would like to do during sessions. They work fairly independently and respond positively when they are challenged to improve.

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

The setting's medium-term planning is useful for identifying the stimulating learning experiences that are provided, which are based on children's interests and respond well to their needs. They reflect the ethos and principles of the foundation phase well. Plans identify clearly opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills within the theme. As a result, literacy and numeracy tasks are prominent in all areas of learning and challenge children to apply themselves to their tasks conscientiously. Good examples include activities to match numbers, colours and dishes during snack time and discussing stories or singing nursery rhymes during plenary sessions. Planning to develop children's Welsh language skills is at the heart of all activities. Planning to develop children's early ICT skills is appropriate. Practitioners provide good opportunities for them to use a range of equipment, such as a camera on a mobile telephone, a laptop, a toy and electronic tablets.

Following weekly discussions, practitioners often adapt activities to address any weaknesses or different needs that they have come across when observing the children playing and working. Occasionally, they provide appropriate opportunities for children to contribute their own ideas for activities. This encourages their curiosity and develops their thinking and independent learning skills effectively. For example, the children have shared their ideas about the current theme, 'Jack and the Beanstalk', and practitioners have helped them to record them on an appropriate sheet.

Regular opportunities are planned for children to use bicycles and other large equipment in the outdoor area. Practitioners provide sound opportunities for children to dance or go for a walk regularly on the school grounds, by following each other and varying the way that they move. These activities are a way of developing children's physical skills effectively, in addition to their awareness of the importance of physical exercise.

Although practitioners encourage children to think for themselves, they do not plan purposefully enough to enable them to practice enough of their problem-solving skills regularly.

The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions, celebrations and culture successfully. This includes celebrating St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day each year, and using traditional legends as a basis for their themes.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. They have visited a local garden centre to coincide with the current theme, and paramedics, fire officers and the local police have visited the setting to talk to the children about their work. This raises children's awareness of people that help them in the community.

Although medium-term planning is successful, practitioners do not plan in order to map provision methodically in the long-term.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is robustly good. All practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and understand the principles of the foundation phase.

Practitioners have high expectations for each child and they work together effectively to ensure that all children make progress that is at least good. They manage children's behaviour very effectively in a kind but positive way. This encourages children to participate conscientiously in all activities and enjoy them. They challenge children frequently by questioning them while they are taking part in focus and continuous tasks, and encourage them to speak Welsh continuously from the outset. They know when to intervene purposefully in children's experiences and play in order to stimulate and motivate them to succeed, and to explain what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, children are highly-motivated, their desire to improve their work is consistently good and they achieve to the best of their ability.

Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are thorough, and initial assessments are useful to enable practitioners to measure progress. All practitioners record any notable progress that children make each day and add this to their individual profiles. They celebrate children's notable successes and commitment at the end of the morning session and record this on the 'Siart Seren' (Star Chart). This promotes effort successfully. Assessments that are based on focus group tasks are used regularly to target the next steps in individual children's learning.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements. Daily dialogue between practitioners and parents and carers at the entrance reinforce this. At the end of the children's time at the setting, practitioners transfer specific information about them to the primary school. This helps them to transfer smoothly to the next stage in their education.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has effective procedures for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Practitioners use large group sessions, such as carpet

time, snack time and story time, to nurture these values and encourage children to take turns and listen attentively to each other's contributions. This ensures that nearly all children consider and respect each other's feelings very maturely.

Practitioners encourage children to take turns politely as they wash their hands, distribute snacks and receive a drink. They give children appropriate responsibility for putting butter on their crackers and clearing their dishes at the end of snack time. Undertaking the role of 'helpwr heddiw' (helper of the day) or 'monitor tywydd' (weather monitor) provides valuable opportunities for all children to take responsibility in turn and develop their independent skills. Practitioners create a relaxed environment for children at specific times of the day by playing music quietly which, in turn, encourages them to settle completely naturally. They pray reflectively before going home.

There are efficient arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing, and the setting promotes healthy eating and drinking successfully. As a result, children understand that fruit, vegetables and physical exercise contribute positively to a healthy lifestyle. Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, card and plastic bottles. This develops their understanding of sustainability successfully.

The setting is a safe environment for children. Practitioners are very caring when admitting children in the morning, during the session and when they go home at the end of the session. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The setting's provision for children with additional learning needs is good. The leader is responsible for organising and adapting provision to address any specific individual's additional learning needs, and she records the relevant details appropriately. She works successfully with parents and specialist agencies to provide appropriate individual education plans for children who need them, and reviews their progress regularly.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community in which all children are given an equal opportunity to learn in all of the different areas, both inside the building and in the area that is partially indoors.

The setting's active and relaxed ethos reflects the emphasis that the leaders place on co-operation and applying themselves to activities. Practitioners place a continuous emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. They teach children successfully about different cultures and festivals, such as Christmas, the Chinese New Year and Diwali each year.

Resources are used specifically to fulfil the principles of the foundation phase and meet children's specific needs. They are used effectively in continuous activities, focus tasks and various and interesting activities to enhance learning. Resources, which are in very good condition, are kept at an appropriate level to enable children to reach them and put them away once they have finished with them. This promotes their sense of responsibility effectively. The setting has enough ICT resources to develop children's skills successfully.

The classroom is part of the local primary school's new building, and is kept clean and safe. The outdoor area, which is partly open but has a roof, is safe and includes growing and planting areas, a sand pit, a workshop and appropriate areas for mark-making and role-play. The setting uses these areas creatively. However, the location of the main room and the partially outdoor area within the main building makes it difficult for children to move freely between the indoors and outdoors. The school hall and grounds are used sensibly for specific activities that cannot be delivered in the classroom.

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

The leader has a clear vision for developing the setting, which focuses effectively on children's happiness, progress and wellbeing. She shares this vision successfully with other practitioners, parents and members of the management committee. She has high expectations of herself and the other practitioners, and she has established sound procedures to share information about daily procedures and children's progress among practitioners. Practitioners' roles are clear and are recorded in detailed job descriptions. This ensures that they understand what they need to do, promotes effective teamwork and enables them to support and challenge children to achieve to the best of their ability.

Staff performance is managed effectively, and all members of staff have useful access to specific training. This links well with their professional needs in addition to the setting's priorities for improvement and other national priorities. For example, following recent training on enhancing continuous provision, the setting has expanded the opportunities for children to develop their independent skills.

Members of the management committee are supportive of the setting's work and ensure that staff and children have good access to resources of a high standard to enable them to comply fully with the principles of the foundation phase. By visiting regularly and receiving a report each term, they know the setting well and hold the leader and other practitioners to account appropriately in relation to provision.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation is a core part of the setting's work and is based on observing and evaluating the quality of its work in relation to teaching and learning. Practitioners are responsible for assessing the effect of their own work, and that of their colleagues, on children's progress. This promotes open co-operation and a clear sense of teamwork and continuous improvement. All practitioners are monitored each term by the leader, and the leader by the chair of the management committee, and the outcomes of this procedure contribute directly to the detail in the self-evaluation report and the formal annual appraisal of their performance. This leads naturally to improvement in provision, standards and children's wellbeing.

There is a clear link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation procedure and the priorities in the improvement plan. Leaders ensure that the improvement plan identifies a sensible number of clear and appropriate targets, activities, who is responsible, the cost and the effect. Comments are noted regularly during the year

based on development against the targets. However, the effect of activities refers too much to provision rather than children's outcomes in some areas, and is not always specific enough. As a result, it is difficult to measure the effect of activities on children's outcomes.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has an effective relationship with a range of partners, which has a positive effect on provision and children's progress. It has an open-door policy and staff always greet parents at the door and are willing to discuss relevant issues with them on the spot, where appropriate. Useful open evenings are held for them each term to enable them to discuss their child's development more formally, in addition to any concerns or issues that they would like to raise with staff. Social media, letters, posters and the setting's noticeboard are used effectively to inform parents about events and to share any other useful information. Parents appreciate this greatly.

The setting has a strong partnership with the primary school, and it is fortunate to be located on its campus. This enables it to share resources, which include the hall, play areas and the outdoor area. Children are familiar with attending the building, and practitioners work effectively with the staff by attending training sessions, sharing common policies, for example in relation to behaviour, and organise joint fundraising activities. This robust and beneficial link facilitates the transition process and ensures that children, in turn, are happy when they start at the primary school.

Practitioners have a beneficial partnership with other playgroups and the family centre in the community, which enables them to share resources and hold joint fundraising activities. The Santa Dash that is organised by the local running club is a popular event, and the setting benefits from it. Similarly, the partnership with other playgroups enables staff to receive training, such as first aid, jointly. This is a good way of networking and accessing affordable training.

Regular visits are organised from members of the community, such as the local vicar, to enrich the setting's activities. Paramedics, fire officers and the police rescue dog also visit to raise children's awareness of people that help them. Members of the community are very generous with their time and support to raise money for the setting. A significant amount was raised recently in a fashion show, for example, in order to purchase more play resources.

Resource management: Good

The leader and committee manage staff and other resources effectively. Staff performance is managed successfully, and appropriate training is arranged to raise their awareness of specific issues, based on their professional needs and the setting's improvement objectives. A good example of this includes literacy training, which has improved children's standards of oracy. The setting is supported effectively by the local authority link officer and Mudiad Meithrin, among others. For example, they have encouraged practitioners to reflect better on their practice and evaluate its effect in relation to learning and teaching.

Appropriate use is made of the early years deprivation grant, which is held centrally by the local authority, to train practitioners in sensible areas, such as numeracy and literacy.

Funding is managed efficiently by the management committee's officers, and they organise regular activities to raise significant amounts of money to support the setting's work. As a result of the robust effect of provision on the standards that children achieve, 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	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	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.
Foundation Phase	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
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	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
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.

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