



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

**A report on**

**Cylch Meithrin Hirael  
Ysgol Hirael site  
Ffordd y Gogarth  
Hirael  
Bangor  
LL57 1BA**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the setting's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
<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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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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## Context

Cylch Meithrin Hirael is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in a cabin on the grounds of Ysgol Hirael, Bangor in Gwynedd local authority. The setting is open five mornings a week between 9.00am and 3.00pm.

The setting is registered to admit up to 16 children at any given time and admits children between two and four years old. Very few children currently receive funded early years education.

A few children come from white British backgrounds and no children speak Welsh as their first language. There are currently no children with additional learning needs.

The setting employs two practitioners, including the leader. The leader began in post in May 2008.

The setting was last inspected by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in April 2014 and by Estyn in October 2011.

## 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:

- Purposeful teaching engages children's interest in improving their day-to-day work effectively
- Practitioners make purposeful use of the Welsh language with children
- Practitioners work together conscientiously and provide engaging activities for children, both indoors and outdoors
- Practitioners support children positively and create a warm and caring ethos for them
- The learning environment is organised effectively to target children's interests and stimulate them to work promptly
- Practitioners use resources successfully

### Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader sets a robust direction for daily and long-term work
- The leader has high expectations in terms of the effect of teaching on children's achievements
- Regular self-evaluation processes lead to setting purposeful targets in order to make improvements
- Practitioners are keen to benefit from relevant training
- The leader makes effective use of external agencies, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin
- The management committee ensures suitable support

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Ensure that assessments lead directly to planning the next steps in children's learning purposefully
- R2 Improve opportunities to develop children's information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R3 Ensure that the management committee's monitoring and evaluation practices are rigorous, methodical and regular

### **What happens next?**

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

#### Standards:

#### Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, or their wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present at the time of the inspection to report on without identifying individual children.

### Key Question 2: How good is provision?

**Good**

#### Learning experiences: Adequate

Practitioners plan flexible and interesting activities that motivate children to learn effectively through practical and creative tasks. They ensure beneficial opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. Literacy and numeracy activities are prominent across the setting, such as in the post office and the veterinary surgery. As a result, practitioners motivate children to perform at their best consistently. For example, practitioners stimulate children to count different coloured teddies together and record patients' needs in the doctor's surgery thoroughly on paper.

On the whole, activities engage children's interest purposefully. However, although planning is functional, it does not consider individual children's needs in enough detail to target the next steps in their learning effectively. Planning does not define learning objectives and the purpose of focus tasks clearly enough to challenge children further. Although there is a range of interesting tasks, practitioners do not evaluate the effect of activities on children's outcomes thoroughly enough. As a result, practitioners do not always ensure the most progress in children's learning by planning for the future.

Practitioners plan purposefully to develop children's physical and creative skills effectively. They enable children to explore and experiment when climbing on the school's adventure equipment, riding bicycles outdoors and painting their hands to make prints of red and orange flames.

Regular indoor and outdoor challenges support children's skills as they solve problems purposefully. Effective examples of this include arranging numbers in the water from one to five and creating a collage from the equipment in the doctor's bag. As a result, practitioners encourage children to offer their ideas to solve any problem successfully. This contributes well towards children's enthusiasm as they learn through play, both indoors and outdoors. Beneficial activities such as these include cutting shapes with scissors, painting the fence with water and a brush, and handling books sensibly in the library.

The setting's provision for developing the Welsh language is successful. At times, practitioners' lack of confidence with the Welsh language can be seen. However,

they model the Welsh language consistently and correctly with children. They encourage children to use the Welsh language as much as possible by singing songs, repeating nursery rhymes, counting and responding to familiar phrases. This improves children's spoken language in a short space of time. The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions and celebrations successfully. These activities include celebrating St David's Day, St Dwynwen's Day and decorating traditional biscuits and cakes.

Provision to develop ICT skills is appropriate and provides suitable opportunities for children to use cameras, tills, electronic toys and tablets. However, practitioners do not plan purposefully enough in order to develop children's skills effectively enough across the areas of learning.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. For example, visits to the local market and the optician, and visitors such as a road safety officer and the fire service, teach children about the roles of people in their community and their local area successfully.

### **Teaching: Good**

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and a sound understanding of the requirements of the foundation phase. This has a positive effect on children's outcomes. Practitioners work together purposefully to create a stimulating working environment for children. They celebrate children's strengths and support them consistently as they learn and use new skills. Effective examples of this are the various activities that are set for groups to investigate the features of acorns and fruit with magnifying glasses, and an opportunity to explain the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes when rolling dough.

Practitioners intervene sensibly in children's play, and stimulate and motivate children to explain their understanding effectively. They welcome children enthusiastically as they arrive at the setting and continue with that warm approach throughout the sessions. They manage children's behaviour positively and safely. This encourages children's participation and enjoyment in all kinds of activities successfully.

Practitioners encourage children to move freely between the different learning areas when they are indoors or outdoors. They encourage children to work with other children effectively during literacy and numeracy tasks in various areas of learning. This includes activities such as building towers with blocks in the construction area and counting how many buckets of sand they fill with a partner.

Practitioners use questioning purposefully to develop children's thinking skills and willingness to make decisions in order to solve problems successfully. This can be seen when children set the table in the kitchen with knives, forks and dishes, and bake a mud cake in the outdoor kitchen with useful equipment.

Practitioners record daily assessments appropriately by using the local authority's record booklets. They discuss sensibly with children what they need to do to improve their work during tasks. Practitioners have a useful understanding of what children are able to do over time. However, they do not use daily assessments consistently enough to target the next steps in children's learning rigorously, when planning the way forward for individuals.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements at the end of sessions. When they leave the setting to go to school, practitioners present a full record of useful information about children's progress to parents. These are based on daily comments over time and show children's progress and improvements.

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

Practitioners provide positive opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They use group sessions effectively to encourage children to focus on each other's feelings, to respond in Welsh and act responsibly. This includes enabling them to speak in turn and share equipment and food sensibly during snack time. As a result, practitioners promote values such as fairness, respect and co-operation successfully.

Practitioners create valuable opportunities for children to say thank you each day. This adds to the atmosphere of reflection as children sit to listen to adults, wash their hands, and wash and tidy the dishes at the end of snack time. By doing so, children take turns politely while eating snacks and sharing drinks around the dining tables.

There are useful arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing. Arrangements such as eating healthy snacks and playing energetically in the outdoor area support children's learning effectively. They contribute sensibly to their understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. As a result, the setting has efficient arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. Practitioners provide opportunities to grow vegetables in the outdoor growing areas. This supports children's understanding of the fact the fruit and vegetables are part of a sensible diet and support healthy lifestyles. Physical challenges in the outdoor area, and on the school's adventure equipment, encourage children to understand that exercise contributes purposefully to a healthy lifestyle.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, card, plastic goods and food. Junk modelling, such as cylinders and boxes, are an active part of the setting's day-to-day practices. This develops their understanding of the importance of sustainability successfully.

The setting is a safe environment and practitioners care for children watchfully as they 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. Practitioners use positive behaviour strategies purposefully. They ensure that children feel happy and safe in their company through sensible and sociable discussions. As a result, children often ask practitioners for help and support to improve their work and broaden their experiences.

Practitioners record children's starting points accurately on entry to the setting by using the foundation phase profile. They review children's progress regularly and identify and support children with additional learning needs effectively. Practitioners work with useful agencies, when the need arises, to provide support for children with additional needs.



## **Learning environment: Good**

Practitioners promote a positive ethos through established daily activities and sensible attitudes towards our differences and similarities as human beings. As a result, everyone recognises, respects and celebrates diversity successfully. The setting achieves this actively by celebrating different festivals from around the world, such as the Chinese New Year and Saudi Arabia day. Practitioners encourage children to play with dolls from different ethnic backgrounds in the doctor's surgery to emphasise that everyone has similar feelings and needs, even though we may look different.

Practitioners have a sound understanding of children's needs and recognise their individuality sensibly. The setting is an inclusive community where all children are given an equal opportunity to take advantage of all learning areas and equipment, both indoors and outdoors. As a result, practitioners focus on maintaining a considerate and caring environment successfully.

Practitioners use resources purposefully to meet the requirements of the foundation phase and to enhance activities. They use resources creatively to plan fun opportunities for children to apply their skills across the learning areas, for example as they count blocks while cementing them with dough to make a wall.

The cabin is of suitable quality and provides a safe environment for children. It is maintained appropriately. The outdoor area, which is on the school grounds, includes stimulating areas to develop children's skills. The setting uses the outdoor area purposefully for physical play, which includes climbing wooden structures and balancing on beams.

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

The leader is experienced and leads the setting conscientiously. She has a clear vision, which ensures that teaching, use of the Welsh language with children, and learning are effective. There is beneficial co-operation between the leader and her colleague. Jointly, they set a clear direction for the setting and maintain robust practices in all sessions, such as adhering to a specific timetable and setting out attractive learning areas. The leader's management systems promote and maintain improvements purposefully, such as developing better provision in the outdoor area.

The setting's objectives, plans and policies focus purposefully on ensuring effective provision. The leader and her dedicated colleague deal with children fairly. They have high expectations of each child in relation to their behaviour and willingness to work and achieve consistently. They succeed in motivating them to improve in positive, sensible and supportive ways. As a result, these practices meet children's needs and promote their achievements successfully.

The leader uses relevant information about the setting to ensure improvements to provision. Recently, this has included developing assessment practices by using the foundation phase profile effectively, and making beneficial improvements to the outdoor area and challenging children further outdoors. The leader focuses

appropriately on national priorities, such as developing literacy and numeracy strategies. However, the leader has only recently begun to target better provision of ICT resources of a high standard to improve children's skills.

The leadership, which includes a management committee, ensures that provision for children is interesting and purposeful. Although the committee is only small and there are a few members who are very new to their posts, they are beginning to ensure that practitioners understand their roles fully and work together diligently as a team. These procedures ensure that practitioners have a clear definition of their responsibilities. However, supervision practices and regular evaluation of provision are currently unstable. They are not thorough enough to ensure that opportunities to develop professionally through annual appraisals are active and effective.

The management committee receives information about the setting's practices regularly from the leader. They meet to organise activities from time to time. The management committee does not challenge the setting purposefully as a critical friend, in order to build on established practices and target areas that need further improvement. For example, there are no systems in place to monitor funding and, as a result, there is not enough rigour with regard to financial regulation.

### **Improving quality: Good**

A positive culture of self-evaluation and frequent improvements permeates throughout the setting's work. Under the local authority's guidance, the leader has established rigorous arrangements to monitor children's outcomes, provision, her role and that of the management committee. Self-evaluation procedures consider the views of practitioners, parents and carers, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin successfully.

Through purposeful co-operation, the information that is gathered each year through the local authority's quantitative procedures, contribute effectively to these practices. Areas for improvement are identified correctly and, as a result, the setting makes meaningful improvements over time, such as creating a functional outdoor area. As a result, the setting's development plan corresponds correctly to the areas for improvement and derives directly from the self-evaluation process.

The leader prioritises expenditure usefully, in line with the actions that have been identified for improvement. She agrees on targets with her colleague and they implement changes purposefully together. They are keen to accept new ideas that are suggested by the local authority advisory teacher and Mudiad Meithrin officer. They act on their advice regularly for the benefit of the children. This leads to beneficial improvements, such as using the foundation phase profile to improve assessment practices.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The setting works effectively with partners to improve children's standards and wellbeing, in addition to provision. There is sensible co-operation with external agencies, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. This positive relationship reinforces the setting's work and supports it actively with purposeful training and management documentation.

The setting uses community links effectively to support children's learning. This includes using the city's resources, such as the library, which nurtures children's awareness and care of their local area.

The setting has a suitable relationship with the school. The cabin is on the school grounds and the setting is able to use the outdoor equipment to provide effective opportunities for children to learn outdoors. Arrangements for transferring information, when children start at the school, are appropriate and have not been established fully.

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

Practitioners take active steps to include parents and carers in the setting's life. The setting informs parents and carers regularly about all aspects of the setting's work, which includes good use of newsletters. They also encourage them to offer their views on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions. This has had a sensible effect on safe systems to collect children from the back door of the setting.

### **Resource management: Good**

The leader aims consistently to improve all aspects of the setting's work by managing staff and resources efficiently. She has succeeded in ensuring that the setting has enough qualified practitioners with appropriate training.

Procedures to improve the setting are effective and lead to watchful care, interesting learning experiences and robust teaching. They also enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge purposefully, such as improving provision for numeracy in the learning areas. As a result, the setting is a stable learning community.

The setting manages resources creatively to support learning, such as changing the role-play areas frequently in order to stimulate children, and placing a new mud kitchen in the outdoor area. As a result, it makes regular improvements by discussing and funding plans to improve purposefully. For example, the setting has recently improved provision in terms of ICT equipment to target children's needs, but this is in its very early stages in terms of development and its effect.

The leader and registered person ensure that use of funding has a direct effect on children's standards and wellbeing, in addition to provision. In general, they prioritise expenditure and identify responsibilities and sensible timescales against targets in the development plan.

Because of the quality of provision and the effect of leadership on improving provision and children's outcomes, the setting provides good 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>CSSIW</b>	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	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.
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	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
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	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
<b>Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.

<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