



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Efail Isaf
Efail Isaf Community Hall
Heol Y Parc
Pontypridd
CF38 1AN**

Date of inspection: February 2015

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 Efail Isaf is a Welsh-medium playgroup that has served the local area of Efail Isaf in Rhondda Cynon Taf since 2007.

The playgroup is registered to take up to 26 children per session and children are admitted from the age of two years. At present, there are 18 children on roll, including six three-year-olds, all of whom receive funded early years education.

A majority of the children have English as their home language and a minority come from homes where at least one parent speaks Welsh.

There are six full-time staff and two part-time staff, including an operational and area manager who has no direct teaching responsibility. Most staff are suitably qualified and experienced in working with young children. The setting leader has been in post since April 2014.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) in December 2014. This is the first time that the setting has been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of Cylch Meithrin Efail Isaf is good because:

- Children enjoy coming to the setting and settle in quickly
- Practitioners know the children very well and are caring towards them
- Children make valuable progress in their personal and social skills, preparing them well for the next stage in their education
- The setting provides a good range of high quality learning experiences for the children
- All practitioners involve themselves very well in children's play to help them learn and practise new skills

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement for Cylch Meithrin Efail Isaf are good because:

- All practitioners work together well as a team
- Practitioners know the setting well and have a strong commitment to constant improvement
- An operational manager supports the setting extremely effectively
- A useful range of partnerships supports children's progress and wellbeing effectively
- Practitioners make good use of training and advice to improve the quality of their teaching and the learning experiences offered to children

Recommendations

- A1 Refine planning to meet the needs of the more able children and those who speak Welsh as a first language
- A2 Continue to work towards providing a safe and secure outdoor area to promote rich learning experiences for the children and develop their physical skills

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan, which 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?	Good
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Standards: Good

Most children make suitable progress in learning from the time that they start in the setting. In particular, most children make valuable progress in their personal and social skills, preparing them well for the next stage in their education.

Most children are able to listen and respond to simple instructions given in Welsh successfully. For example, they follow directions in Welsh to put resources away at tidy up time. Their speaking skills are less well developed, although a majority of children whose first language is Welsh communicate confidently. Nearly all children make marks confidently in a variety of ways, for example when they draw in shaving foam. They make good progress with their early writing skills. A minority are beginning to write for a purpose, such as writing a letter to Siôn Corn. Most children enjoy listening to stories and show an interest in books. For example, they enjoy listening to stories about Elfed the elephant.

Most children are able to count up to ten in Welsh and English. A minority are able to match number and symbols at least up to five. Many are able to sort and match confidently. Their mathematical language is developing appropriately, such as when making big and small cakes with dough.

Most children use a range of small tools with a degree of control, such as painting pictures of their storybook elephant or gluing shapes on recycled milk cartons to make elephant models. Children's ability to run, jump and balance is less well developed.

Wellbeing: Good

All children enjoy coming to the setting and settle quickly. Nearly all are eager to participate in activities and many concentrate for a good length of time, such as when playing an animal picture matching game. They follow the setting's rules and routines well. For example, they hold hands while walking to the woods.

Nearly all children behave well and many play happily together. They are beginning to share, take turns and exercise self-control successfully. Many show perseverance and determination to complete tasks. For example, they persevere to complete jigsaws and peg washing on the line. Nearly all children show care and respect for the resources they use and help to tidy up with a little encouragement.

During snack-time, nearly all children pour their own drinks independently. Many use a knife and fork skilfully to eat their potatoes and say "thank you" with a little prompting. They are aware of the need for good hygiene by washing their hands before eating. Nearly all children have a go at putting on their own coats to go outside and try to put on wellingtons with a little help.

Nearly all children make confident choices and quickly become involved purposefully in their play.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Learning experiences offer a worthwhile range of interesting opportunities that generally focus well on the interests of children. Practitioners plan a broad and balanced curriculum with an appropriate emphasis on play and learning through first-hand experiences. For example, children sort vegetables by colour and wash and peg dressing-up clothes on the line. However, planning does not always build systematically on children's skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, activities do not challenge all children consistently or extend the language skills of children who speak Welsh as a first language.

The setting provides children with beneficial opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Practitioners promote children's speaking and listening skills well through daily story sessions, singing and circle time activities. Children learn to recognise their names through self-registration each morning and books and the printed word are highly visible throughout. There are suitable opportunities for children to mark make, such as writing a list in the in shop or writing a letter to Siôn Corn.

Practitioners encourage children's numeracy skills well through regular opportunities to count, sort and match objects. For example, children count clothes on the washing line and radishes in the shop. A trip to the woodland area provides an opportunity for children to consolidate their counting skills by finding lost toy animals and counting how many they find.

Children have appropriate opportunities to learn about living in Wales and Welsh culture through celebrating Santes Dwynwen and St David's Day. An attractive display board of Welsh symbols, important places and famous Welsh people further increases children's understanding of living in Wales.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners work together well as a team to provide a stimulating and exciting learning environment that actively promotes children's involvement, participation and enjoyment. They actively encourage children to persevere and to make progress in their learning. They have established strong routines that ensure that children settle quickly and feel safe and secure. They use praise effectively to manage children's behaviour in a positive way, contributing to a happy and purposeful atmosphere.

All practitioners plan and provide appropriate opportunities for children to learn through play so that they are actively involved in stimulating activities. They involve themselves well in children's play to help them learn and practise new skills. For example, they encourage children to follow the rhythm of a song when playing their musical instruments. Many practitioners are effective language role models, helping the children to develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. However, occasionally a few practitioners use incorrect Welsh language patterns.

All practitioners are involved in regular and comprehensive assessments of children's learning. Key workers take responsibility for small groups of children effectively. As a result, practitioners know the children very well and are confident that they are making progress. They share useful information about children's development regularly with parents both informally and during termly coffee mornings.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has effective arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing well, and to encourage children to take care of themselves. For example, practitioners encourage children to eat with a knife and fork, to put on their coats and to wash their hands before snack. The setting makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Children eat healthily at snack time and drink milk or water. Visits to the playground, field and woodland encourage children's physical activity suitably.

Learning experiences foster children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences positively. Daily routines, such as snack time, provide worthwhile opportunities for children to develop important social skills such as sitting at a table and chatting with friends, co-operation and independence. Celebrating festivals, such as Hanukah, Sukkot and Chinese New Year, help children to understand better the world in which they live. Practitioners encourage important values such as fairness, respect and a sense of right and wrong successfully. For example, practitioners encourage children to take responsibility for caring for resources and tidying away, to take turns and to look after each other. Appropriate arrangements are in place for children to learn about the importance of recycling materials and composting unwanted food.

The setting has suitable processes in place to support children with additional learning needs. Practitioners access appropriate professional help for children and their families if necessary and use this to support children's specific needs well.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting is a caring and supportive community where practitioners treat all children fairly and encourage them to treat each other in the same way. As a result, children are happy in each other's company and are very willing to help their friends, adults and visitors.

There is an ample supply of age appropriate, good quality resources to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum successfully. The building is secure and well maintained.

Practitioners work extremely hard to create an exciting learning environment indoors. They put out and clear away an extensive range of resources each day to support all curriculum areas well. Practitioners use homemade and purchased screens to divide and demarcate learning zones. Resources are easily accessible and there is an

appropriate focus on words and numbers in displays. As a result, children are generally busy and engaged purposefully. Three role-play areas encourage children's imaginative play well while the canopied book corner encourages children to take an interest in books.

The outdoor learning environment consists of a very small area cordoned off from the Village Hall car park, which is in close proximity to a small playground, field and wooded area. Practitioners make good use of the space that they have and supplement this by occasional visits to the field and woodland. However, the general lack of space on site restricts what the setting is able to provide on a daily basis. The area is too small to allow for regular use of wheeled toys or activities that are physically demanding. The setting tries to compensate for this by holding weekly physical activities indoors but these are too infrequent to impact positively on children's physical development. Practitioners supervise this area well and the numbers of children using the area are restricted for safety reasons. However, this area is not wholly safe and secure.

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

The setting leader and her deputy have been in their posts since September 2014. In this time, they have established strong working relationships and a very caring ethos in the setting. They share responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the group effectively and have built up very positive relationships with parents and carers. They have high expectations, and actively support and challenge all practitioners to do their best, setting a very good example. Together, they place a strong emphasis on achieving the best outcomes for the children in the setting.

The leader has developed a constructive working relationship with the hall committee, leading to improved experiences for the children. She keeps the management committee well informed about the setting's progress. This contributes to a strong sense of community within the group.

An operational manager oversees the work of the setting extremely effectively. For example, she ensures that there are worthwhile performance management procedures in place and that all practitioners receive appropriate training. She also provides valuable continuity and support for the management committee, ensuring that all policies and procedures are in place. As a result, the setting works efficiently and there is a high standard of care for children.

The setting leaders implement national priorities, such as healthy eating, successfully and are taking good account of the literacy and numeracy framework in their improvement plans.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders know the setting well and have a strong commitment to constant improvement. All practitioners reflect regularly on the daily provision and discuss the main issues appropriately during weekly team meetings. Leaders consult parents

both formally and informally, giving them good opportunities to contribute their views. They make good use of helpful advice from the local authority advisory teacher and respond promptly to suggestions made. As a result, the setting is consistently improving the opportunities offered to the children.

Leaders carry out a very thorough annual review that successfully identifies areas for development. This enables them to set useful improvement targets for the coming year. They have an effective development plan in place that has led to progress in areas such as improving opportunities for children to practise their mark-making skills. The plan includes useful emphasis on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills, which are national priorities.

The management committee is kept well informed about the setting's progress and supports the setting well.

Partnership working: Good

A useful range of partnerships supports children's progress and wellbeing effectively.

There is a close partnership with parents and carers. Practitioners actively encourage parents and carers to feel welcome and see them as caring and supportive. For example, the setting invites parents to a coffee morning in the autumn to discuss their child's progress and to 'play' alongside their child. Parents and carers are supportive of the setting. They raise funds and use their expertise to enrich children's learning experiences appropriately, such as by providing physical fitness sessions.

There is a valuable partnership between the setting and its local primary schools. Children regularly visit their local primary schools for special events and receive visits from school staff. Transition arrangements for children with additional learning needs are particularly successful. As a result, children are well prepared for their next step in education.

A constructive relationship with the local authority advisory teacher and the Mudiad Meithrin development officer enhances the work of the setting well. For example, the setting increased opportunities for children to develop their independence at snack time following advice from the advisory teacher.

There are suitable partnership links with the local community. The use of the local woodland, for example, has enhanced the opportunities for children's learning outdoors.

Resource management: Good

The manager and management committee ensure that the setting has enough suitably qualified practitioners and resources to support children's learning well. They manage the practitioners appropriately and provide them with suitable performance management opportunities. As a result, all practitioners access suitable training that meets their development needs appropriately. Practitioners make good use of training to improve the quality of their teaching and the learning experiences that they offer to children. For example, the deputy leader is developing practitioners' skills in asking more open-ended questions as a result of attendance at a recent course.

The setting leader deploys practitioners effectively and encourages them to take responsibility for resourcing and supporting areas of learning. The manager and leader are particularly successful in managing the lack of a suitable outdoor play area. For example, when weather permits, practitioners hold weekly physical activity sessions and use the local field and woodland to provide experiences that are not possible in their current outdoor area.

Leaders and managers have an appropriate understanding of their budget and spending priorities have a clear educational purpose.

In view of the outcomes achieved by children, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Sheila Margaret Birkhead	Arolygydd Cofnodol
Beverley Jenkins	Inspection Team

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

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	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) 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 partnership's 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 3 to 7 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 which 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)	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 which 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.