



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

A report on

**Mes Bach Childcare
Ysgol Gynradd Comins Coch
Comins Coch Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3BQ**

Date of inspection: October 2018

by

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

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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Context

Mes Bach Childcare is an English-medium setting. It meets in a purpose-built building on the grounds of Ysgol Comins Coch, Aberystwyth, in Ceredigion local authority. The setting provides education during term time, in either morning or afternoon sessions, five days a week, between 8.30am and 3.30pm.

The setting is registered to admit up to 20 children at any given time, and admits children between two and four years old. Nearly all three-year-old children currently receive funded early years education. Many 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 a manager and four qualified practitioners, including a room leader. The manager and room leader began their posts in March 2018. The setting was last inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in September 2018 and by Estyn in February 2013.

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 effective progress in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- Most children are motivated and interested learners
- Nearly all children behave well and listen sensibly to adults and each other
- Practitioners plan interesting and effective learning experiences
- Practitioners challenge children to perform at their best at all times
- Practitioners work well together and their consistent care and support practices create a safe learning environment for children to learn
- Practitioners use the areas of learning inside the building purposefully to support children's learning well

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The manager and room leader provide a clear direction to the work of the setting
- The manager evaluates the setting's practices robustly
- The manager and management committee consider the views of everyone involved with the setting rigorously, as part of effective self-evaluation processes
- Practitioners receive effective training to support their continuous professional development
- Beneficial use of partners and external services supports the manager and the practitioners purposefully, to target improvements in children's learning
- Successful use of funds and grants ensures improvements in the quality of provision
- The management committee supports the setting well

Recommendations

- R1 Organise large group sessions more effectively to maintain the interest of all children
- R2 Use daily observations purposefully to plan and track the next steps in children's learning effectively
- R3 Improve the provision in the outdoor area to ensure that children develop a wide range of skills effectively

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

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

Most children make effective progress in relation to their starting points. They use their literacy and numeracy skills successfully when completing every day and challenging tasks.

Most children develop effective communication skills. They speak well and make themselves understood clearly during focus tasks and independent activities. They listen and respond to instructions sensibly. This is particularly evident when they create a jungle scene using mud, jelly and broccoli, and when they sort different coloured balls using tweezers. A few children use sophisticated language purposefully in spontaneous and structured play, for example when cutting spaghetti with scissors to different lengths.

Many children show increasing interest books. They handle the books in the reading areas as natural readers. Many of them sit quietly and follow stories read to them well. They respond enthusiastically to the content of a story, such as when they discuss the emotions displayed by different characters and animals.

Many children make marks successfully. They enjoy practising their writing and use a variety of media such as paint, chalk, pencils and wet mud. A few children begin to form letters of the alphabet and numbers independently and in recognisable forms, such as when they record their names on paper and in sand. Many children have a sound understanding of the purpose of writing, for example when they record the people who buy tickets for a bus tour independently.

Most children use mathematical language purposefully and in relevant contexts. For example, they compare lengths of spaghetti as 'long' and 'short' and state that different stones are 'heavy' or 'light' when discussing their weight. Many children count, recognise and name numbers to ten confidently and a few of them count back from ten to zero accurately.

Most children choose relevant equipment and materials to solve mathematical problems effectively. They count the number of different sized elephants competently when sorting and matching them and group jungle animals successfully according to their different characteristics. They recognise two and three-dimensional shapes well. This includes marking two-dimensional shapes on blackboards with chalk and building towers with three-dimensional shapes in the construction area.

Most children are beginning to use their ICT skills productively, for example when using a suitable range of equipment, such as cameras and recording equipment. They use contemporary educational software, which includes language and mathematical apps on electronic tablets, to develop their ICT and fine motor skills effectively.

Nearly all children are developing their use of Welsh appropriately. Many sing nursery rhymes and songs in Welsh enthusiastically, and follow instructions given in Welsh readily. Many of them are beginning to use the language spontaneously in their play, especially when counting and identifying colours.

Most children develop good thinking skills, which has a positive effect on their problem-solving skills and the standards they achieve. For example, they work well with others to mix cakes in the mud kitchen, following a recipe and using designated ingredients. Most children develop their physical skills well, such as when they climb and slide on outdoor equipment and ride bikes and cars in the outdoor area. Many children display effective creative skills, which includes singing and performing in the willow dome's theatre area, using a range of musical instruments.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children demonstrate motivation and interest in their learning and they maintain positive levels of engagement during tasks. They enjoy the activities and many share resources and work sensibly with each other both indoors and outdoors. Most children demonstrate positive attitudes to new experiences, such as when participating in fitness activities and when printing animal shapes with paints and sponges.

Nearly all children are polite and behave well. They show respect to adults and to each other. Nearly all children listen carefully to practitioners, for example when mixing water and mud before painting with brushes at an easel. Nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly, after using the toilet, messy play and outdoor activities.

Most children are beginning to make sensible choices during free play. They express personal opinions and preferences well, such as when deciding to move from one area of learning to another independently, both indoors and outdoors.

Nearly all children engage well with adults and visitors at the setting. Many are confident and independent learners. This is especially evident when they explain sensibly to each other the purpose of their actions, without adult involvement or prompting, for example why they are cutting and sorting dough to match the needs of different animals, such as making bananas for the monkey to eat.

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

Practitioners plan well together to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects the ethos of the foundation phase successfully. The planning meets children's needs and interests well and provides stimulating opportunities for them to learn independently. Practitioners allow children to contribute their own ideas to the planning of every theme. They record their ideas in the planning area in order to inform future planning effectively. Practitioners ensure an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-led activities.

Practitioners plan opportunities to develop children's literacy, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills. They plan a range of stimulating literacy and numeracy activities in all

areas of learning to challenge the children to perform at their best. These include creative opportunities such as role-play in the 'Safari Tours' area.

The setting provides regular and innovative challenges to help children develop their problem-solving skills. An effective example of this is when practitioners encourage children to choose appropriate materials to build houses for animals and to co-operate effectively to make hot air balloons together.

Practitioners develop children's physical and creative skills successfully. They allow children to explore and experiment on slides and in tunnels and practise kicking and throwing skills with a variety of equipment.

Practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for children to develop their understanding of Welsh. They encourage them to respond to simple phrases and instructions, and join in with songs and rhymes enthusiastically. Practitioners support all children effectively and as a result, many children use Welsh words correctly during independent play.

The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions and celebrations successfully. These activities include celebrating Saint David's Day and the life of Santes Dwynwen. Additionally, they bake traditional cakes and compare Wales to other countries and cultures, such as African and Middle Eastern countries.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits to enrich children's learning experiences and to enhance their understanding of their local area. They have visited the fire station to learn about the emergency services and walked along the seafront in Aberystwyth to buy ice cream. The children post letters in the village and participate in nature walks to collect items for their autumn table, which creates interest in the natural world around them. Visitors, who include the postman, a dental hygienist and owners of exotic animals, teach the children meaningfully about the roles of different people in their own community.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of the foundation phase principles and of how children develop and learn. They ensure that all children understand the purpose of the activity effectively. Practitioners motivate and enthuse the children to perform at their best. They greet children enthusiastically as they arrive and manage their behaviour positively and sensitively.

Practitioners collaborate well and have high expectations for all children. They use questioning purposefully to develop children's thinking and communication skills. This is apparent when children discuss the characteristics of leaf colours in the autumn and how different weather conditions affect day-to-day activities. However, practitioners do not always organise large group sessions effectively in order to maintain every child's interest throughout the session.

Practitioners share responsibilities as key workers successfully, which enables them to have a better understanding of children's individual needs. The setting has appropriate systems for assessing and recording children's starting points. Practitioners complete daily assessments and note their evaluations and

observations suitably. However, the assessment procedures do not lead directly to the planning of tasks to target the next steps in children's learning thoroughly enough. As a result, it does not track individual children's progress effectively over time.

Practitioners encourage children to assess their own learning effectively, through purposeful discussions on how to improve their work. For example, practitioners challenge children to explain how the height of a tower affects its stability and which recorded animal sounds match the pictures in the investigation area.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements, such as a thorough daily dialogue between practitioners and parents and carers. At the end of their time at the setting, parents and carers receive useful information about their children's achievements. The setting shares this with the school to support the effective transition process and the next steps in the children's education.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners provide positive opportunities for children to discuss their feelings and to appreciate each other's contribution during tasks and co-operative play. They create a calm environment and encourage children to listen to each other thoughtfully in social settings, such as snack time and when singing Welsh rhymes together. As a result, children learn to relate well to one another and take turns politely, which includes pouring drinks and distributing plates and cups in their turn. Such tasks and the use of 'Helpwr y dydd', to help at snack times, create positive and useful opportunities for children to take on responsibilities. It enables them to learn about making sensible and effective decisions for themselves and others.

The setting provides valuable opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect towards each other effectively. For example, they discuss their own feelings towards characters in a story and how individuals feel following the actions of others. This results in a positive ethos amongst the children when they work together to complete tasks, such as moving sand in buckets and different containers.

Practitioners have successful arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing, including effective systems to promote eating and drinking healthily. As a result, children understand the importance of a balanced diet that includes fruit, vegetables and exercise is good for them. Practitioners encourage children to recycle paper, cardboard, plastic goods and food and to use the compost bin appropriately. This develops children's understanding of sustainability effectively.

Practitioners use positive strategies successfully, which helps children learn how to behave well. The setting is a safe, secure environment and practitioners take good care of the children when they arrive and when they are collected. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Practitioners follow guidelines to identify and support children with additional learning needs effectively. They respond to advice and work with appropriate agencies as necessary, to provide purposeful support for children with specific needs.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is a caring community that has a warm, family atmosphere. Practitioners encourage children to treat others with care and to show them respect, whatever their gender, race or background. It is an inclusive setting and all children have equal access to every learning experience, both inside the building and the outdoor area.

Practitioners provide interesting learning experiences that help children develop their understanding of the world, and encourage them to treat people from all cultural backgrounds with respect and tolerance. This includes celebrating the Chinese New Year and Diwali annually.

Attractive and informative displays enhance the learning environment and celebrate children's achievements well. The teaching areas are of an appropriate size for the number of children registered at any one time. Practitioners utilise the available space indoors well by using different areas intuitively to promote children's learning. This results in flexible learning spaces indoors, which encourage children to make independent choices in their own learning. However, although provision in the outdoor area has improved recently, practitioners do not utilise these resources effectively to ensure that children enhance their skills successfully.

The setting's learning environment is clean and orderly and the manager and management committee maintain the building efficiently.

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

The manager has established a clear vision for the setting based on a thorough understanding of its needs. She has established effective processes and quality assurance systems in a short period of time as manager of the setting. Together with the room leader and the other practitioners, she targets improvements purposefully and provides a clear direction to the setting's work. The manager sets high expectations for herself and others, which focus well on developing better provision to affect positively on the standards children achieve.

The manager and room leader ensure that the daily provision for all children is stimulating and engaging through regular monitoring of their practices. They promote new developments effectively and motivate practitioners to make improvements in a supportive manner. This has led to efficient changes in the planning of literacy and numeracy tasks and a clearer understanding of children's starting points.

Practitioners work well together as a team. They have clear job descriptions, which enable them to understand and fulfil their duties successfully. Through regular discussions, staff meetings and training, they share important information effectively and develop a consistent approach to their daily routines. This includes weekly Welsh lessons that parents can also attend, which demonstrates their willingness to learn and to develop professionally.

The manager and room leader create an environment where children and practitioners feel appreciated, and therefore give of their best. The manager conducts efficient practitioner supervisions and appraisals and the management committee appraises the manager's work effectively.

The management committee receives useful information about the setting's day-to-day practices from the manager. Its members are supportive and challenge the setting rigorously to sustain its successful practices and to develop any areas identified as requiring improvements.

The setting focuses well on local and national priorities. Practitioners develop children's literacy and numeracy skills effectively, as well as developing the provision for ICT, to promote better skills amongst the children.

Improving quality: Good

The setting uses a beneficial range of self-evaluation procedures that enable leaders to identify strengths and the areas that need to be developed. The setting's self-evaluation processes take account of the views of the practitioners, parents and carers, the local authority and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association well. The manager works effectively with the other practitioners and they have established regular arrangements to monitor children's standards and the daily provision. They share information purposefully throughout the sessions and during regular staff meetings. This leads to beneficial improvements, for example refining the performance management processes to target effective training for all practitioners.

The efficient self-evaluation procedures identify priorities for improvement well through regular monitoring of the provision, implementation of relevant training and appropriate evaluations of children's outcomes. As a result, the manager and management committee set purposeful targets against suitable timescales to improve the setting's practices and provision. This includes designating practitioners to specific groups of children and different tasks, which utilises their expertise well, resulting in a positive effect on children's skills.

The manager and management committee allocate sufficient funding to meet the targets that derive from the self-evaluation processes. They prioritise expenditure according to areas identified for improvement effectively and utilise grants to improve provision successfully. For example, a local superstore provided a grant to purchase equipment for the outdoor area to enhance its provision and impact beneficially on children's learning.

Partnership working: Good

The setting works effectively with partners to improve provision and children's outcomes. They co-operate well with external agencies, such as the local authority and the Wales Pre-school Providers Association. This enhances and supports the setting's work purposefully and actively with training and management documentation.

The setting's well-established links with the village school supports children's transfer arrangements well. For example, the arrangements for induction visits and sharing assessments and personal information help the children settle quickly in their new school.

Practitioners take purposeful 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 effective use of social media. It also encourages them to express their own views on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions, which has resulted in improved and regular newsletters. A notable example of this partnership is the setting's invite to parents to join practitioners in weekly Welsh lessons.

The setting uses community links successfully to support and enrich children's learning, which includes the use of the emergency services and visits to the village and to Aberystwyth, to use their amenities to promote children's learning.

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

Resource management: Good

The manager focuses directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work by deploying practitioners and allocating resources effectively. She allows practitioners to work at different roles to ensure that their skills develop purposefully to cater for the needs of all children at the setting. As a result, practitioners share their professional knowledge well and lead tasks responsibly as key workers.

A successful learning community exists at the setting, where effective collaboration between practitioners and other partners support all aspects of the setting's work. This includes effective induction practices with the local school, which provides a smooth transition for children into the next steps of their learning.

The performance management systems are thorough and ensure effective learning experiences and sound teaching practices. The management committee supports and challenges the manager and practitioners as a critical friend, for example in its use of the outdoor area. As a result, the setting manages its resources creatively and sensibly to support learning. For example, it provides a wide variety of ICT equipment, including electronic tablets, cameras, electronic toys and recording equipment, which develops children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills purposefully.

The manager and management committee use the budget and grants well and prioritise spending against set timelines and responsibilities efficiently. Such practices create purposeful, regular and consistent improvements. The setting ensures that the use of funds has a direct impact on the overall provision and on improving children's outcomes.

The setting provides good value for money, due to the positive progress children make from their start points, the effective provision and the purposeful leadership.

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CIW	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<p>This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnerships conditions of registration.</p>
Foundation Phase	<p>The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from three to seven years of age</p>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings that provide education for three and four-year-olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<p>A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh</p>
Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	<p>This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.</p>

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)	This organisation aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education