



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Plant Bach Sarn
Sarn Lifelong Learning Centre
Merfield Close
Sarn
Bridgend
CF32 9SW**

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 Plant Bach Sarn is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in a room in Sarn Lifelong Learning Centre in Bridgend local authority. The setting is open for five sessions a week between 9.15am and 1.15pm. The setting provides education and care during these hours.

The setting is registered to admit up to 24 children at any given time, and it admits children between two and three years old. No children currently receive funded early years education. Flying Start funds many of the two-year-old children.

Nearly all children come from a white British background and very few speak Welsh as their first language. There are currently few children with additional learning needs.

The setting employs five members of staff during the week. The leader took up the post in September 2001.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in January 2017 and by Estyn in May 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:

- Practitioners plan learning experiences thoroughly to challenge children successfully
- Stimulating teaching improves children's outcomes purposefully
- Practitioners work together regularly to improve children's learning experiences and standards
- Provision for the Welsh language is effective
- The practitioners' diligent and sensible care creates a happy and industrious environment
- An effective learning environment engages children's interest successfully
- A range of resources is available to children both indoors and outdoors, which has a purposeful effect on their experiences and learning

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader sets a robust and clear direction for the setting's work
- Regular and appropriate self-evaluation systems lead to setting relevant targets
- Practitioners are keen to develop professionally and attend useful training
- Support services are used conscientiously
- the management committee provide active and purposeful support
- there are useful partnerships with parents and specialist agencies
- sensible use of funding ensures improvements in both the indoor provision and outdoor area

Recommendations

R1 Reduce the paperwork in relation to planning in order to operate a simpler system

R2 Improve opportunities for children to move independently between the indoor and outdoor areas

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?	
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Standards:

Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, the Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because there were not enough relevant children present during the inspection to report on without identifying individual children.

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

The leader and practitioners work together effectively to provide exciting activities across all areas of learning. Their day-to-day work engages children's interest purposefully. This creates independent and enthusiastic learners when working both inside and outside the building. For example, they encourage the children to engage in hands-on learning by role-playing in the mud kitchen and measuring each other's height in the police station. As a result, they provide an interesting curriculum that reflects the ethos of the foundation phase purposefully. Planning for learning experiences is very thorough and meets children's needs and interests successfully. However, although planning systems are effective, they are laborious and complex, and the paper work creates an excessive workload for the leader and practitioners.

All practitioners discuss individual children's progress in regular meetings, and organise themes and activities based on this. They provide valuable opportunities for children to express their personal ideas to enrich activities further. This includes matching numbers on vehicles with parking spaces in the outdoor area, and using magnifying glasses to find and number fingerprints in the investigation area. These activities add positively to the children's daily enthusiasm as they learn through play.

Provision to develop children's literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and thinking skills is purposeful. Literacy and numeracy activities are prominent in all areas of learning and challenge children to perform at their best consistently. Effective practical examples of this can be seen as children discuss the features of the autumn by collecting leaves and twigs in the local area, and as they attempt to create different letters with their fingers in the shaving foam. As a result, learning experiences are purposeful and provide sensible continuity and progression in children's learning.

Development of the Welsh language is beneficial to the children. Nearly all practitioners are consistently good language models. They support children who are starting to learn the language successfully. Practitioners encourage children to use the language as much as possible through stimulating activities and regular reinforcement. They challenge and question all children purposefully in the indoor and outdoor learning areas. As a result, most children's understanding of the language is developing significantly and they respond to familiar vocabulary and phrases in a short period of time.

The setting promotes children's awareness of Welsh traditions, celebrations and culture successfully. These activities include celebrating St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day, and cooking traditional dishes, such as 'cawl'.

Provision to develop ICT is effective. The setting plans useful opportunities for children to experiment with a wide range of equipment, such as cameras, electronic tablets and programmable toys. All practitioners challenge children effectively by using Welsh language educational software and apps. This develops most children's early ICT skills successfully.

Practitioners focus on developing children's physical skills intelligently. They allow them to climb on adventure equipment, slide to the floor independently and ride bicycles energetically to improve their physical experiences. Practitioners plan valuable opportunities to develop their creative skills by using chalk and water to make marks in the outdoor area, and using musical instruments and bells purposefully to make unusual sounds.

The setting makes beneficial use of visits and visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. For example, experiences such as visits to the seaside, museums in Cardiff, local shops, the post office and the library reinforce the curriculum effectively. Visitors such as the police, a nurse and a dental hygienist teach children successfully about the roles of people in their community.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have high expectations for children and challenge them regularly in focus tasks and continuous activities. They intervene purposefully in children's experiences and play in order to stimulate and motivate them to succeed. They understand the importance of providing broad opportunities to learn through play. An effective example of this is experimenting with building towers in the construction area, and organising a tea party for dolls next to the mud kitchen.

All practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and are knowledgeable about the requirements of the foundation phase. They manage children's behaviour positively and safely by setting firm boundaries throughout the session. This encourages children's participation and enjoyment in all activities successfully.

Practitioners encourage children to take part in various activities effectively. However, this does not ensure regular opportunities for children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas. This limits children's ability to make choices about their learning to some extent. Practitioners use questioning purposefully to develop children's thinking and communication skills. This is done skilfully by discussing the feelings of a prisoner at the police station and the speed of different balls as they are sent down long cylinders in the outdoor area.

Procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are effective. Practitioners discuss sensibly with children what they need to do to improve their work. They have a sound understanding of children's outcomes, for example by using the foundation phase profile. Practitioners use assessment arrangements, such as evaluations and everyday discussions, every day to plan the next steps in children's learning purposefully.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements. Daily dialogue between practitioners and parents reinforces this well. At the end of their time at the setting, comprehensive information about their children's achievements is available to parents through useful booklets.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting provides positive opportunities to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Practitioners use lively plenary sessions successfully to encourage children to greet each other, reflect on other people's feelings and say thank you. Practitioners' sensible methods nurture values such as honesty, fairness and respect successfully among children. This reinforces the importance of these values in the setting's everyday life. An effective example of this is the 'helper of the day' system, which assigns duties to individuals and provides valuable opportunities for all children to take responsibility in turn. As a result, children are polite when eating their snacks and serving milk and water around the dining table.

There are effective arrangements to support children's health and wellbeing. These arrangements contribute well to children's overall development and wellbeing and support their learning successfully, such as promoting activities to increase the heart rate in the outdoor area. The setting has robust arrangements for promoting eating and drinking healthily. As a result, children understand that fruit and vegetables are part of a sensible diet. Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to recycle paper, cardboard, plastic, food and an opportunity to compost in the outdoor area. This develops their understanding of sustainability purposefully.

Practitioners use positive behaviour strategies, which eliminate any disruption or unacceptable behaviour successfully. As a result, children are happy and safe in the company of adults and often ask for help and support without apprehension. The setting is a safe 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 are not a cause for concern.

The setting records children's learning needs thoroughly on entry to the setting and during their time there. The additional learning needs co-ordinator reviews children's progress regularly. She identifies their starting points thoroughly by following the guidelines of the foundation phase profile. As a result, the setting targets children with additional learning needs effectively, when necessary. Practitioners discuss these children with the appropriate agencies, such as the language therapist, to provide support as quickly as possible to target individuals' needs.

Learning environment: Good

The setting promotes a supportive ethos through daily activities and the positive attitudes that are adopted by practitioners. It is an inclusive community in which all children have equal access to all areas of learning and equipment. Practitioners have thorough knowledge of all children, and their individuality is recognised successfully through daily discussions and detailed records. Practitioners challenge children daily in positive, careful and gentle ways.

Practitioners place a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. The setting achieves this successfully by celebrating a number of festivals from around the world each year, such as Rosh Hashanah and Hanukkah. The setting also uses dolls from different ethnic backgrounds to promote cultural differences purposefully.

Practitioners use resources successfully to meet the requirements of the foundation phase and children's needs. They ensure that resources are within children's reach and that children are able to reach equipment without any difficulty. This promotes their sense of responsibility successfully, as they handle books, use electronic tablets and make marks with chalk and water in the outdoor area. As a result, a wide range of resources is used effectively in continuous activities, focus tasks and opportunities to enhance learning.

The building is of suitable quality, is well-maintained and safe. The interesting outdoor area is used purposefully. Practitioners plan purposeful opportunities for children to develop their skills, for example in the growing and planting areas and the mud kitchen. Practitioners use facilities in the local area sensibly, such as shops and the library, in order to reinforce the curriculum.

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

The leader has established a clear vision to create improvements, which is based on a sound understanding of the setting's needs. This provides a sound strategic direction for the setting's work. She monitors daily provision rigorously to ensure that it is entertaining and interesting. She discusses plans and the purpose of daily activities before the sessions begin in useful meetings.

The leader promotes new developments purposefully and encourages practitioners to make improvements in a supportive manner. This has led to using the foundation phase profile effectively, recording daily assessments for each child very thoroughly, and developing the outdoor area successfully. As a result, the leader and experienced practitioners have high expectations for provision and children's standards.

The leader ensures that practitioners understand their roles in full and that they work diligently as a team. On the whole, regular supervision and evaluation practices are well-established. These systems ensure that the best use is made of practitioners' expertise, particularly when providing vocabulary and standard language patterns in the Welsh language, and when dealing with individual children's personal needs.

Regular discussions and staff meetings enable practitioners to share information about individual children's development effectively. The leader has succeeded in creating an environment where children and practitioners feel that they are valued and therefore give of their best.

The management committee receives useful information about the setting regularly from the leader. It meets to organise fundraising activities and monitors funding regularly. Administrative processes are rigorous and support the setting's needs.

The management committee understands clearly which aspects of the setting are strong and which need to be improved. The management committee's regular and detailed minutes provide a clear and sound reflection of their robust understanding of the setting's work.

The setting focuses well on local and national priorities. It develops children's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills successfully, in addition to developing outdoor provision purposefully. It plans purposefully to develop the Welsh language, and this has a positive effect on children's oracy skills.

Improving quality: Good

A positive culture of self-evaluation permeates throughout the setting's work. The self-evaluation report identifies the setting's strengths purposefully, and the development plan identifies areas for development effectively.

The leader and her colleagues have established consistent arrangements for monitoring children's standards and provision. The conscientious co-operation that can be seen each day, in addition to staff meetings, contributes to this successfully. As a result, self-evaluation gives purposeful consideration to the views of practitioners, children, parents and carers, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. Information that derives from these processes provides a complete picture of the setting's work.

The leader takes purposeful steps to maintain regular practices and implement changes through effective development plans. She and the management committee prioritise expenditure purposefully in line with the actions that have been identified for improvement. Therefore, they improve provision by adopting different strategies and receiving valuable advice from others, for example when responding to the recommendations from the previous inspection.

The leader and practitioners are open to new ideas and willing to experiment with different strategies to succeed. They are very willing to accept suggestions from the local authority's advisory teachers and Mudiad Meithrin. For example, advice on how to use the foundation phase profile and how to focus on children's starting points has been implemented in full and, as a result, has been developed successfully.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of effective partnerships. It works successfully with these partners in order to improve provision and children's standards and wellbeing; for example, there are positive links with local schools. Regular meetings that are held to support the transition to school life are purposeful. Arrangements for sharing personal information and assessments are methodical and beneficial to the children.

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. They are also encouraged to express their own views on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires, social media and regular discussions.

The setting's links with the community support children's learning effectively. This includes successful fundraising events and bids for grant funding. The setting also supports local and national charities, which nurtures kindness and care among the children.

The setting works purposefully with external agencies, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. This reinforces the positive relationships that exist, and these organisations support documentation and policies, training and management advice effectively.

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 first aid training, food hygiene courses, risk assessments, foundation phase training and safeguarding children.

Resource management: Good

The leadership aims consistently to improve all aspects of the setting's work by managing staff and resources purposefully. It has succeeded in ensuring that the setting has enough qualified practitioners with comprehensive training. It is a stable, robust and effective team.

The leader encourages practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge successfully. As a result, the setting is a successful example of a positive learning community with a culture of diligent co-operation between practitioners and other partners, such as Flying Start and the lifelong learning centre.

Performance management systems are sound and ensure interesting learning experiences and positive teaching practices. The setting manages resources creatively to support learning. This includes valuable use of the outdoor area for physical activities, enquiries and investigations.

The leader and management committee have a clear understanding of the budget and the challenges that have been associated with it for several years. They prioritise expenditure carefully and identify responsibilities and sensible timescales. They make regular improvements by discussing and funding plans to improve purposefully. The setting ensures that the use of funding has a direct effect on provision and children's outcomes.

The setting provides good value for money because of the effective provision and 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
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 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