



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Ponthenri
Ponthenri Community Hall
Bargoed Terrace
Ponthenri
Llanelli
SA15 4PW**

Date of inspection: October 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 Ponthenri is a Welsh-medium setting that meets in Ponthenri Community Hall in Carmarthenshire local authority. The setting is registered to admit 16 children, and practitioners provide early years education to eight children who are funded. The setting is open five mornings a week.

Nearly all children are from white British backgrounds and a minority come from Welsh-speaking homes. Very few children have additional learning needs.

The setting employs three members of staff. The leader and one of the practitioners were appointed to their posts in May 2017.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in November 2015 and by Estyn in November 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is adequate because:

- A majority of children make appropriate progress during their time at the setting and achieve robust standards in most areas of learning
- Many children have good oral skills, communicate confidently in Welsh and talk enthusiastically about their experiences
- A majority of children develop their numeracy skills appropriately and make suitable progress from their starting points
- Many of the children are happy and confident learners who arrive at the setting with curiosity and a healthy attitude towards learning
- A majority of children treat each other with respect, wait to take turns and share equipment voluntarily
- Practitioners promote robust teaching by ensuring that there are suitable opportunities for children to play, investigate and discover as an integral part of the setting's day-to-day life
- Practitioners model the Welsh language naturally and effectively, which has a positive effect on many children's oral standards

However:

- A minority of children have weak listening skills and have difficulty concentrating when listening to a story or the introduction to a task
- A majority of children's literacy and numeracy skills are not developing soundly enough, particularly those who are more able
- More able children have a low level of commitment and, as a result, they do not use their thinking and problem-solving skills effectively enough in order to challenge themselves confidently across the areas of learning
- Most children's independent skills are not developing robustly enough, and only a very few make their own choices and decisions during activities
- Practitioners' plans do not ensure that all children are given sound opportunities to develop skills coherently across the curriculum
- Practitioners do not use assessment and tracking information effectively enough to challenge all children purposefully and plan the next steps in their learning

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- The new leader has a clear vision that ensures a robust direction for the setting's work
- The leader works closely with practitioners to create a suitable ethos, which encourages and values teamwork
- There is a close partnership between the setting, the local authority's advisory teacher and Mudiad Meithrin, which leads to a number of beneficial new procedures that are beginning to move the setting forward
- The leader's understanding of the setting's strengths and weaknesses is developing appropriately
- The management committee is very supportive of the setting's work
- The setting's improvement plan is a useful document that considers a majority of areas for improvement for teaching and planning purposefully
- The setting has a sound partnership with parents and carers, who appreciate the quality of care that practitioners show towards their children

However:

- The leadership does not have a sound enough effect on improving the quality of important aspects of provision
- Self-evaluation processes do not make enough use of first-hand observations in order to evaluate children's standards and skills across the areas of learning
- The development plan does not include measurable success indicators in order to evaluate the effect of actions on children's attainment and progress
- Members of the management committee do not meet regularly enough to monitor the effect of provision in detail in order to ensure improvements in children's skills

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that learning experiences provide a consistent and robust challenge in order to raise the standards of more able children
- R2 Improve children's ability to make decisions and take responsibility for what they learn, in order to develop as successful independent learners
- R3 Ensure that practitioners' plans provide regular opportunities for children to develop literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills systematically across the areas of learning
- R4 Make more effective use of assessment information in order to plan the next steps in children's education
- R5 Ensure that self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures focus clearly on children's outcomes

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

On entry to the setting, many children's standards correspond to what is expected for their age. A majority make appropriate progress during their time there and achieve robust standards in most areas of learning.

Many children have good oral skills, communicate confidently in Welsh and talk enthusiastically about their experiences; for example, they use appropriate phrases and adjectives when discussing the conkers and pumpkins in the investigation corner. A majority make sound progress in their oral skills and follow instructions and questions with increasing confidence. Many children have a suitable awareness of Welsh nursery rhymes and songs, and they try to sing them regularly. A majority of children's listening skills are developing appropriately, and these children are very keen to sit still, for example to listen to a story or respond to instructions from Wendi'r Wiwer (Wendy the Squirrel). However, a minority of children's listening skills are weak and they have difficulty concentrating, particularly during the introduction to a task. They join in overenthusiastically during these periods, interrupt and often ignore the adults' instructions.

A majority of children show an interest in books and are beginning to handle them appropriately as careful readers, by turning the pages correctly. A few more able children recognise key characters and re-tell their favourite stories with a good understanding of sequence. Most children recognise their own names in written form during the morning registration period. A few more able children write their names in full. They are beginning to show a suitable understanding of the function of writing, for example when taking orders in the role-play shop. A majority of children are beginning to form the letter of the alphabet and numbers independently and in a fairly recognisable form. A majority are beginning to use an appropriate range of mark-making equipment with support from practitioners. They develop increasing control while making marks by using a wide range of materials, for example when drawing pictures of the three little pigs with a pencil for the wall display.

A majority of children develop their numeracy skills appropriately and make suitable progress from their starting points through practical use of number and shape; for example, they count up to ten leaves or autumn creatures, and group and name two-dimensional shapes by size and colour. A few children are beginning to use appropriate equipment to develop a suitable understanding of simple number bonds up to 10. A majority use a suitable range of mathematical language; for example, they describe different toys and 'big' and 'small' when playing with cars and when using building blocks. However, more able children's numeracy skills are not developing soundly enough and they do not persevere during numeracy activities. They have a low level of commitment and, as a result, they do not use their thinking and problem-solving skills in order to challenge themselves confidently across the areas of learning.

Many children have good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They use digital cameras and metal detectors confidently, listen to electronic stories and retrieve pictures that have been saved on a tablet successfully.

Most children undertake the art activities that are provided for them enthusiastically, and their creative skills are developing well; for example, they make a collage of a hedgehog and use cotton wool to make a picture of y Ddafad Ddrwg (the Bad Sheep). However, only a very few children make their own choices during these activities and develop the ability to work independently.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Many children are happy and confident learners. They arrive at the setting with curiosity and a healthy attitude towards learning. They have warm relationships with practitioners and a majority of children relate well to each other. They take part enthusiastically in all of the experiences that are provided for them and ask for support, when needed. Children undertake the role of 'helpwr heddiw' (helper of the day) confidently and complete simple tasks. However, a minority of children show low levels of motivation. They do not make their own decisions regularly enough and are too dependent on support from practitioners.

A majority of children treat each other with respect, wait their turn and share equipment voluntarily. These children listen attentively to each other and adults, and behave appropriately. However, a minority do not focus on tasks and are restless for long periods of time, particularly during focus tasks. They lose interest easily, which has a negative effect on their progress and on their ability to work with their friends.

Most children have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. They take part enthusiastically in activities to help them to keep fit, such as dancing in the hall and painting with their feet on a roll of wallpaper. They understand the importance of washing their hands thoroughly and independently before eating their fruit and having a drink. A few children develop an awareness of the need to eat healthily. They know that eating too much of some foods is unhealthy and that they need to eat fruit and vegetables in order to have a balanced diet.

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

Practitioners provide interesting activities that link appropriately with the children's interests in line with suitable themes. Very recently, practitioners have begun to use a new planning system with an appropriate focus on fulfilling the philosophy of the foundation phase. These plans are beginning to build effectively on children's previous learning. However, practitioners do not provide systematically enough to enable all children to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. As a result, planning does not ensure that children practice the skills that are introduced in focus tasks, continuous activities or across the areas of learning.

The curriculum provides an appropriate balance and suitable opportunities to develop most areas of learning. However, practitioners do not plan purposefully enough to develop children's physical skills through regular outdoor activities. Practitioners

have appropriate plans that make suitable use of the main hall, in addition to relevant opportunities to use the nearby park in order to provide valuable experiences for children.

Practitioners are beginning to plan beneficial opportunities in order for children to develop their self-confidence. These are recent developments that have not yet had time to become embedded. These plans are beginning to provide a very few purposeful activities in order to provide suitable opportunities for children to choose their own tasks. Provision includes appropriate opportunities for all children to develop respect towards each other in order to form a good relationship with their peers and adults.

An effective aspect of children's learning experiences is the provision to develop the Welsh language. Adults use the language effectively and model it successfully. Through beneficial opportunities, nearly all children, whatever their background, enjoy speaking the language and make sound progress in their oral skills.

Plans focus suitably on developing children's awareness of Welsh traditions and history. Firm attention is given to celebrating St David's Day and St Dwynwen's Day. Practitioners plan appropriate activities to develop children's respect towards multicultural backgrounds. Children are given valuable opportunities to develop an understanding of other traditions and celebrations, for example by learning about the Chinese New Year and Diwali. These activities help children to develop a sound understanding of the wider world and their awareness of global citizenship in a Welsh context that is appropriate for their age.

Teaching: Adequate

Practitioners have developed a supportive, colourful and stimulating learning environment. They have a suitable practical understanding of the requirements of the foundation phase. They promote robust teaching by ensuring that there are suitable opportunities for children to play, investigate and discover as an integral part of the setting's day-to-day life. They understand the importance of providing regular opportunities for children to learn through first-hand experiences and organise suitable activities as part of themes; for example, they ensure beneficial opportunities for children to join children from the nearby primary school for Mrs Wishi Washi day and a visit from a family of dinosaurs.

All practitioners model language very well in order to develop children's communication skills. This has a powerful effect on most children's standards of Welsh. There is a close relationship between all practitioners and children. The best use is made of their expertise when sharing teaching responsibilities. However, practitioners' expectations of what the children can achieve are not high enough. They do not set clear learning objectives at the beginning of activities in order to make sure that individual children are challenged effectively enough in line with their abilities. Many activities are repetitive. As a result, a minority of children lose interest in tasks and their behaviour is restless and disrupts the flow of activities and children's overall progress.

Although practitioners work together effectively, they intervene unnecessarily at times during activities, and do too much for the children. They do not ensure that all

children make choices and take part in the learning sufficiently by developing their independent skills successfully. During these periods, and particularly when activities do not challenge the children fully, practitioners use suitable strategies in order to manage disruption.

The setting is developing suitable assessment procedures. Following beneficial training on using the foundation phase profile, practitioners' understanding of assessment is developing appropriately. This has led to detailed assessments of children's attainment on entry to the setting. Practitioners are beginning to make suitable use of this information in order to identify strengths and specific aspects that need to be developed further. All practitioners are involved in the process of recording children's achievements in addition to their daily successes. They use observations appropriately to create useful individual learning records. However, they do not always use assessment information effectively enough to plan the next steps in their learning. In addition, they do not track children's progress in enough detail to show progress and to set challenging targets, particularly for more able children.

Parents appreciate the regular opportunities to communicate informally with practitioners about their children's achievements, both before and after the sessions. Reports that are shared with parents and the primary school when the children start there are useful and provide a suitable overview of their strengths and the way forward.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The setting is a happy and welcoming community in which children's health and wellbeing is a priority. The setting's arrangements for care and support have an appropriate effect on children's personal development. Practitioners know the children well, treat them with respect and value their rights and opinions. They place an appropriate emphasis on living a healthy lifestyle, including eating wholesome foods and exercising regularly. As a result, the setting's arrangements for promoting eating and drinking healthily are robust.

The setting has appropriate provision to ensure children's spiritual, moral and cultural development. However, provision for children's social development is not effective enough. This contributes to unruly behaviour among a minority of children at times.

Visitors and visits broaden children's experiences effectively. The setting visits the community through trips around the village, the park and nearby footpaths. The use of the local area develops children's knowledge and understanding of their community successfully. Children are given good opportunities to say thank you, and learn to take turns appropriately when eating fruit and drinking drinks around the table. Practitioners provide effective opportunities for children to recycle food, paper and plastic.

Practitioners are vigilant when identifying children who need specialist support. They work appropriately with community services to provide support, when necessary. Arrangements to support any child with additional learning needs are sound.

Staff have suitable qualifications and good experience, and the adult to child ratio is very favourable. They are very careful when supervising the children, particularly as they move from the hall to the classroom because of the stairs that need to be used. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted regularly, as required. Practitioners are careful as the children are collected and ensure that they are in the care of their parents or a familiar carer. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children are sound and are not a cause for concern.

Learning environment: Adequate

The setting is a happy learning environment. It has an inclusive ethos and children have equal access to all activities. Practitioners are supportive, and this helps to ensure that children feel safe and free from any excessive anxiety.

Resources are shared effectively between continuous activities and opportunities to enrich learning. The building provides a safe environment for learning. Displays of the children's work celebrate their achievements well. Practitioners use the resources in the building to meet the requirements of the foundation phase curriculum and a majority of the children's needs successfully. The main room that is used to teach the children is very small, and the noise levels are unacceptable at times. This contributes to the disorderly environment, at times, and limits the opportunities for children to be independent. Although the leader ensures that resources are within the children's reach, the lack of space prevents them from using them freely and from moving freely from one area to another.

Although the setting does not have access to an outdoor area, practitioners use the local park and the large hall within the building from time to time in order to provide suitable opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. However, practitioners do not use these areas effectively enough in order to develop children's skills across the areas of learning fully and coherently.

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

The new leader has a clear vision that ensures a robust direction for the setting's work. She is an energetic worker who has strived successfully since being appointed to develop her understanding of how to lead the setting to raise the standards of learning and teaching. She works closely with practitioners to create a suitable ethos, which encourages and values teamwork. Her vision sets the development of the Welsh language as a high priority, and she shares this vision effectively with key stakeholders through a number of communication sources. The leader has developed a very positive relationship with parents and the community, who appreciate the provision greatly.

The leader works closely with the local authority's advisory teachers and Mudiad Meithrin to introduce a number of beneficial new systems that are beginning to move the setting forward. She is beginning to share these practices appropriately with the rest of the practitioners to improve their professional practice. However, the new arrangements for planning and assessing children's attainment have not yet been established sufficiently. As a result, the leadership does not have a positive enough effect on improving important aspects of provision.

Regular staff meetings ensure that practitioners are aware of the setting's priorities for improvement and that they work consistently to ensure these. All practitioners contribute beneficial ideas when planning activities and feel that their contributions are valued. Leaders and managers have an appropriate awareness of national priorities. They are beginning to consider the best way to develop children's skills systematically across the areas of learning in order to meet the needs of different groups.

Practitioners' performance management arrangements, which were introduced recently, are beginning to identify strengths and aspects that need to be developed. Leaders use these well to identify support needs, such as providing more time for planning and completing assessments. The training and support that are arranged support the leader and staff's professional development appropriately.

The management committee, which includes a number of new members, is very supportive of the setting's work. Although the self-evaluation procedures and the process of planning for improvement are new, they provide the management committee with suitable information about the setting's performance and ensure that statutory requirements are met. However, the committee does not meet regularly enough in order to monitor the effect of provision in detail to ensure improvements in children's skills.

Improving quality: Adequate

The leader's understanding of the setting's strengths and weaknesses is developing appropriately. With the local authority's beneficial support, she has established formal and systematic self-evaluation processes. Although this is a recent development, the arrangements focus appropriately on evaluating provision and considering the views of practitioners, parents and carers, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin suitably. The leader's practice of encouraging children to express an opinion about their learning experiences at the end of sessions ensures that each individual's contribution is included appropriately in the setting's development. However, self-evaluation processes do not make enough use of first-hand observations in order to evaluate the effect of teaching on children's standards and skills across the areas of learning. As a result, the setting does not give detailed enough attention to improving children's attainment, and procedures have not yet led to raising standards and improving important aspects of provision.

The setting's improvement plan is a useful document that considers a majority of areas for improvement for teaching and planning purposefully. The plan is structured appropriately according to timescales and practitioners' responsibilities. However, it does not consider costs in order to meet the targets that are identified to enable leaders to plan strategically for improvement. The leader monitors progress regularly and prepares a useful report for the management committee. However, the plan does not contain measurable success indicators in order to evaluate the effect of actions on children's attainment. In general, the new processes that are now in place are beginning to show positive improvements in a short space of time.

The setting has made inconsistent progress in response to the recommendations from the last inspection in relation to challenging more able children and making effective use of assessment outcomes to plan provision. The management committee and leader have recently begun to address these aspects more effectively.

Partnership working: Adequate

The setting has an appropriate range of effective partnerships. They have a positive effect on children's wellbeing and are beginning to improve the quality of learning experiences. There is a sound partnership with parents and carers. They appreciate the quality of care that is shown by practitioners towards their children. The leaders keeps them well-informed about their children's successes and what they are learning, by preparing comprehensive newsletters and posting information on social media. The setting also provides parents with valuable information about how to support their children, for example in order to develop their Welsh language skills.

The setting liaises appropriately with the primary schools into which it feeds, and transfers relevant information about children's backgrounds, progress and attainment. Children are given valuable opportunities to visit the school for joint activities, and a teacher visits the setting in order to conduct singing and storytelling sessions. As a result, children transfer to the primary school smoothly and settle there quickly.

The setting has beneficial partnerships with the community; for example, children visit the local park in order to recycle food. A useful partnership has been developed with the local authority, which ensures beneficial support and access to valuable training for practitioners on foundation phase practices. This advice and guidance is beginning to contribute purposefully to the setting's effort to raise standards and improve provision. There are suitable links between the setting and Mudiad Meithrin. The leader takes advantage of the administrative and financial support that is given. She works effectively with the development officer in order to provide beneficial educational experiences in a Welsh environment.

Resource management: Adequate

The setting makes appropriate use of staffing and resources to support children's development. All practitioners have suitable qualifications, and their knowledge of the foundation phase curriculum is developing appropriately through beneficial support from the education authority. The leader makes appropriate use of performance management arrangements in order to identify areas for development. She acts quickly to ensure that the staff's needs are met through purposeful training. However, practitioners have not attended specific training in order to support them in developing children's literacy and numeracy skills effectively.

The management committee's treasurer ensures that expenditure is managed carefully to ensure that the setting continues to be sustainable. The leader manages the budget effectively and ensures that the setting has an adequate supply of good quality resources. The recent investment in ICT equipment is already having a positive effect on many children's skills.

Although progress can be seen recently in a number of areas, strategic planning has not had time to become established and have an appropriate effect on schemes of work, assessment and provision. As a result, children's standards are adequate and, therefore, the setting provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

The reporting inspector

Mr Dyfrig Wyn Ellis	Reporting Inspector
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Copies of the report

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

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