



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Cylch Meithrin Aberdâr  
The Urdd Centre  
Wind Street  
Aberdare  
Rhondda Cynon Taf  
CF44 7ES**

**Date of inspection: January 2012**

**by**

**Nicholas Jones  
Reporting Inspector**

**for**

**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:

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

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## About the setting

Cylch Meithrin Aberdâr is a Welsh medium cylch based in the Urdd Centre, Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taf. All the children attending the cylch come from the town and the surrounding area. The area is recognised as being socially and economically disadvantaged.

The cylch has been in this location for over 30 years and has sole use of a large room within the centre and the outdoor area.

The cylch reports that very few children come from homes where Welsh is spoken. Children represent the full range of ability and the cylch accepts children with additional learning needs. No children in the current group are recognised as having additional learning needs. In the past, the cylch has received assistance from outside agencies to support children that have additional needs. No children attending at present are from a minority ethnic background and a few come from socially disadvantaged homes.

The cylch is registered for a maximum of 22 children and it accepts children from two years old. There are currently up to 56 children attending the cylch at different times during the week. Eleven of these are three years old. During the inspection, four three-year-old children were present in both sessions.

The manager and leader have held their positions since 2003. Nine members of staff assist them, on either a full or part time basis, and they are all suitably qualified.

There is an informative booklet available for parents and carers that provides them with details of the cylch. Parents and carers bring their children to the door of the cylch and this provides for a meeting with the staff if needed. The cylch is open for five days a week between 9.15am and 4pm.

The cylch is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. The management committee oversees the work of the cylch. The Mudiad Meithrin and the local authority support the cylch.

The cylch was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in October 2011. Estyn inspected the cylch in 2006.

## Summary

<b>The setting's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of the cylch is good because:

- learning experiences are planned well;
- all children are supported well and benefit from interesting activities;
- the teaching is adequate and concentrates appropriately on Foundation Phase outcomes;
- good resources are available;
- there is a good relationship between adults and children; and
- the staff work effectively together and everyone contributes purposefully to the success of the cylch.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leadership and staff are beginning to provide a clear direction for the work of the cylch;
- the new self-evaluation systems are beginning to impact appropriately on the development plan;
- all the staff have a positive and active attitude towards professional development and training; and
- the learning environment is used effectively.

## Recommendations

In order to improve, the cylch needs to:

- R1 ensure that all children are challenged sufficiently during focus tasks;
- R2 ensure that daily assessments are completed consistently and that they lead directly to children's individual targets;
- R3 continue to raise the staff's standards of Welsh; and
- R4 continue to develop the new self-evaluation systems so that they impact appropriately on the long-term development plan.

### What happens next?

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

## Main findings

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

#### Standards:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

#### Wellbeing:

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

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

**Good**

#### Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is planned well to meet the philosophy of the Foundation Phase curriculum and to achieve the identified outcomes of children's learning. The curriculum builds effectively on children's previous knowledge and experiences and incorporates appropriate opportunities for the development of skills across the curriculum.

Time is set aside weekly, when all staff meet to plan the curriculum. This provides the children with useful and interesting activities. The curriculum is flexible and is matched appropriately to the children's interests.

There are worthwhile opportunities incorporated into the day-to-day working of the cylch for children to develop their self-confidence and to become independent learners. Whilst specific activities are planned, children have the freedom to select their own tasks and activities.

Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their basic and key skills of literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creativity. The provision for developing the children's information technology skills is good and the staff consistently direct the children towards the use of technological resources. Children have many opportunities to develop their thinking skills through appropriate activities, which focus on every area of learning in their turn.

An effective aspect of the children's learning experiences is the provision made for children to acquire the Welsh language. Welsh is not always the natural language of communication between adults and children. However, through coherent

opportunities, all children are encouraged to speak the language.

The traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales are given due emphasis, like the celebration of St. David's Day and Santes Dwynwen. Good opportunities are also provided for children to acquire knowledge and understanding of other cultures and traditions, such as during their study of the Chinese New Year, Hanukkah and Diwali. Such activities help children to develop a good understanding of the wider world and raise their awareness of age appropriate global citizenship effectively.

The purposeful provision includes opportunities for all children to develop respect for each other; opportunities to form good relationships with each other and with adults; and to become tolerant of each other.

All children have good opportunities to plant seeds, look after plants and recycle paper. This begins their understanding of plant growth and sustainability effectively.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

The staff have a good, practical knowledge of children's development and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. There is a positive relationship between all the staff and the children. The staff are sensitive to the needs of the children, which encourages every child's involvement and enjoyment.

The staff's active role in planning the curriculum ensures the best use of their expertise. However, when a focus activity is introduced, there is not enough reference made to the learning objective and the success criteria of the activity. The children are therefore not challenged sufficiently according to their abilities.

There is a good balance between adult directed and child selected activities, both indoors and out of doors. All children are free to select from either independent or adult led activities.

Staff model language appropriately to the children's development levels and use questioning well to develop children's thinking and communication skills. The standard of the staff's Welsh varies in quality and many of the staff are attending courses to raise their own standards in Welsh.

The system of sharing responsibilities is new, which means that the staff are beginning to develop detailed knowledge of a small number of children.

Assessment procedures and the recording of children's achievements are completed efficiently. However, the daily assessments do not lead directly to individual children's targets. Therefore, the staff are not totally aware of an individual child's targets and what the individual child needs to do to improve.

There are records of children's achievements available to parents at any time.

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

The cylch's provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing is good. Nearly all children enjoy their time at the cylch. Nearly all children arrive showing a sense of

anticipation and are keen to get involved. They partake enthusiastically in activities set out for them. The broad curriculum, which consists of visits and visitors, develops and extends children's experiences well.

Follow-up work in the classroom shows the wide range of experiences that arise from their activities and the children's sense of wonder. Visits to the community and visitors to the cylch develop children's knowledge and understanding of their own community effectively.

The cylch's provision for ensuring children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Values, such as honesty, fairness, respect and an understanding of what is right and wrong, are fostered through the day-to-day activities and accepted without question. All children know and accept the social norms of living together, sharing and accepting the views of others and being members of a community. Individual children, in turn, accept specific responsibilities, like tidying resources and equipment, which develops their self-esteem. The cylch is an organised unit, where children value each other and in turn, the staff value them.

Children's cultural development is good, which incorporates Welsh customs and traditions and it extends to other cultures when the children celebrate events like the Chinese New Year and Diwali.

The cylch's staff are vigilant in identifying children requiring specialist help. They make use of professional help and guidance effectively when necessary. Staff receive regular and appropriate training.

The cylch has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

The cylch is secure, where the internal door and the entrance door are locked. A member of staff only opens them, consequently no one can enter or a child leave unaccompanied. Good care is taken when children are being collected to ensure they are in the care of their parents or of a known carer.

Regular reviews of children's progress ensure that any child suspected of requiring additional help is noted and their progress is monitored closely. The cylch's leader is the additional learning needs co-ordinator and is familiar with the necessary procedures for supporting such a child.

Where necessary, external agencies are involved and support is provided if needed. At present, no child has additional learning needs.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The cylch, through its day-to-day activities and the approach adopted by the staff promotes a positive ethos. All children have equal access to a purposeful curriculum supported by an appropriate outside area. The homely atmosphere and the friendship provided by the staff ensures that a tolerant attitude pervades the cylch. The cylch employs positive behaviour strategies that successfully eliminate any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. All children enjoy equality of opportunity.

The cylch's staff are well qualified and experienced and there is a very favourable adult to child ratio. Staff expertise is used well both in planning and in supervising

activities. The cylch uses its resources well to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the needs of the children. The resources are accessible to all children and this promotes the children's sense of independence and responsibility.

The local environment is used effectively through visits to nearby businesses. This contributes well to children's understanding of the world around them.

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

Staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities and work together well as a team, sharing values, aims and objectives. The manager and leader involve all staff in planning and this ensures the best use of their expertise. The manager and leader are actively involved, giving clear directions and they accept advice from outside agencies in order to improve. There is a positive ethos and a commitment to provide the best possible experiences for all children.

The leadership and all staff are well focused on the children's needs and the cylch successfully achieves this aim in practice. The staff receive relevant and appropriate training and this impacts well on the quality of provision.

Effective links with the parents and carers are in place. They are kept well informed of their children's achievements and progress and this helps them to support their children's learning.

There is a well-established management structure in place with a clear definition of duties. The management committee, in an advisory role, has taken good account of relevant legislation and guidance and they meet legal requirements in full.

The self-evaluation systems and the process of development planning are new. Development planning is structured effectively in terms of appropriate time scales; however, the new system has not had enough time to impact fully on the long-term strategy of the cylch.

The cylch has taken good account of national priorities, including implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The cylch has strengths that outweigh areas for improvement when self-evaluating. The cylch has recently identified areas for improvement and is beginning to implement them for the benefit of all children. This has included attempts to develop further the cylch's short-term planning and assessment practices. However, self-evaluation is not a practical and regular process that affects the development planning in enough detail.

The self-evaluation systems are not evaluative in identifying what needs to be addressed. It does not lead directly to the targets noted in the development plan.

The recommendations from the previous Estyn report in 2006 have not all been completed successfully. The use of assessment procedures in planning the next steps in children's learning remains as an area of development.

Staff attend training opportunities and these professional learning experiences impact positively on children's learning and wellbeing.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Parents, in the questionnaire replies and during discussions expressed their satisfaction with the cylch and are appreciative of the standards of care and the quality of education available. They appreciate the open door policy and the opportunities they have to meet staff on a daily basis.

By the time the children leave the cylch, parents feel that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The links with the local schools, the Mudiad Meithrin and the local authority have positive aspects that are used to benefit the work of the cylch. The advice and suggestions have helped in moving the cylch forward and has contributed to the good standards of provision.

The cylch has been successful in obtaining grant funding that has provided developments to the outside area, the provision of an interactive whiteboard and an electronic canopy for use in the rain and sunshine.

### **Resource management: Good**

The cylch's staff work together effectively. Planning is completed collaboratively and this results in the most being made of individual expertise for the benefit of every child.

The cylch is resourced well and the resources available are used effectively to further the aims of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The resources are also accessible to the children and this encourages independence and has a positive impact on their learning.

The cylch uses the building and the outdoor area effectively and provides appropriate experiences, which are planned well. The leader and manager lead appropriately and use support agencies purposefully.

The cylch provides good value for money.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (less than 10).

#### **Responses to discussions with learners**

Nearly all children are happy in the cylch. Their enthusiasm is evident when they arrive and meet with their peers. Nearly all of them are self-confident from knowing that they are supported well and that they are provided with interesting tasks.

## Appendix 2

### The reporting inspector

Mr Nicholas Jones	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.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development, as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings, which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<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>

<b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<b>National (NDNA)</b>	This organisation, which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
<b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.