



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Cylch Meithrin Hirael  
Ysgol Gymunedol Hirael  
Orme Road  
Bangor  
Gwynedd  
LL57 1BA**

**Date of inspection: October 2011**

**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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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## About the setting

Cylch Meithrin Hirael is a Welsh medium setting based in Bangor, Gwynedd. Nearly all the children attending the cylch come from the city itself. The area is recognised as neither privileged nor socially or economically disadvantaged.

The cylch is located in a cabin on the site of Ysgol Gynradd Hirael and has been at this location for many years. It has sole use of the building and uses the school's outdoor areas.

The cylch reports that a few children come from homes where Welsh is spoken. English is the main home language of most children and around a third of the children do not speak Welsh or English at home. Children represent the full range of ability and the cylch accepts children with additional learning needs. Whilst none of the present group of children has been identified with such needs, the cylch has, in the past, received support from outside agencies. The cylch states that seven children attending at present are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A few children are from socially disadvantaged homes.

The cylch is registered for a maximum of 16 children per session and accepts children from two years old. A total of 21 children attend the cylch at different times during the week. The local authority and the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin support the cylch. During the inspection, two children of three years old were present in both sessions.

The leader has held the position for around three years. She is assisted by two members of staff and they all have suitable qualifications.

There is an informative booklet available for parents and carers that provides them with details of the cylch. Parents and carers bring and collect their children and this provides for a meeting with the staff if needed. The cylch opens for ten sessions a week, Monday to Friday, between 11.00 am to 1.00 pm and 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm. The cylch is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales. The cylch's management committee oversees the work of the cylch.

The cylch was last inspected by the Care and Social services Inspectorate Wales in July 2011. Estyn has not previously inspected the cylch.

## 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 performance of the cylch is good because:

- learning experiences are generally planned well;
- all children are supported well and benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum;
- the teaching is effective and concentrates well on Foundation Phase outcomes;
- good resources are available, especially indoors;
- adults speak Welsh competently and this has a positive effect on how children learn the language;
- the cylch is led and managed well;
- there is a good relationship between adults and children;
- there are very strong links with the school; 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 provide a clear direction for the work of the cylch;
- changes and developments over time show that the cylch has a good record of improving for the sake of the children;
- the leadership is beginning to develop systems that are more self-evaluative;
- the whole staff have a positive and active attitude towards development and training;
- positive support links are used consistently;
- very good links exist with the school; and
- the indoor learning environment is stimulating.

## Recommendations

In order to improve, the cylch needs to:

- R1 set clear learning objectives and success criteria for the children at the start of every focus activity to ensure that individual children are challenged appropriately;
- R2 continue to develop the self-evaluation systems, so that the practices become embedded in the day-to-day life of the cylch;
- R3 ensure that development plans are structured appropriately according to specific targets, time scales and success criteria;
- R4 develop better provision for outdoor learning.

### 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

Time is set aside when all staff meet to plan the curriculum that provides the children with useful and interesting activities. The curriculum is flexible and is matched to the children's interests. However, there is not enough challenge at times for individual children according to their ability.

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

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 freedom to select their own tasks and activities.

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.

Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their basic and key skills of literacy, numeracy, understanding of the world, physical and creative skills. A positive aspect of children's learning experiences is the provision made for them to acquire the Welsh language. Welsh is the natural language of communication between adults and children. Through coherent opportunities, many children, whatever their background, display enjoyment in speaking the language through looking at Welsh story books and singing.

All children have ample opportunities to develop their thinking skills through varied activities like painting and role play, which focus on numeracy skills and wellbeing.

The traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales are given due emphasis, like celebrating of St. David's Day. 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. Such activities help children to develop effectively an understanding of the wider world and raise their awareness of age appropriate global citizenship.

All children have opportunities to plant bulbs and look after plants and so begin their understanding of plant growth and sustainability.

### **Teaching: Good**

The quality of teaching shows that the staff have a good, practical knowledge of children's development and a clear understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase.

The staff have good expectations of the children and these expectations are put into practice well. The staff's active role in planning the curriculum ensures that all know their roles well and best use is made of their expertise. However, when a focus activity is introduced, there is not enough reference made to the activity's learning objective and its success criteria.

The system of sharing responsibilities means that staff have a detailed knowledge of a small number of children and as such are well aware of their achievements and progress.

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

Staff model language well to the children's development levels and use questioning well to develop children's thinking and communication skills. The competent standard of the staff's Welsh promotes a good awareness of the language to all children. The cylch provides a stimulating environment that successfully ensures children's involvement and enjoyment.

Assessment procedures and recording children's achievements are completed efficiently. There are appropriate records of children's achievements and these are made available to parents. Staff know the children well and are able to plan the next steps in their learning.

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

The cylch's provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing is good. All children enjoy their time at the cylch. They 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, further develops and extends children's experiences well.

Follow-up work in their classroom shows the wide range of experiences that arise from their activities. 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. All children experience a well-planned curriculum designed to extend their understanding about the world they live in. The cylch is an organised unit, where children value each other and the staff, in turn, value them.

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. 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 that develop their self-esteem.

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

The cylch's staff are vigilant in identifying children requiring specialist help. They make use of professional help and guidance. The cylch has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. Staff have received regular and appropriate training. Staff undertake risk assessments routinely.

The cylch is secure, where the entrance door is locked and only opened by a member of staff, 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 special educational needs co-ordinator and is familiar with the necessary procedures for supporting such a child. Where necessary external agencies are involved. 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. Staff know their children well and their individuality is recognised. All children have equal access to a stimulating curriculum, although the outside area is not used to its full potential.

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 have successfully eliminated 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 favourable child-adult ratio. Staff expertise is used well both in planning and in supervising activities. The cylch is well resourced to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase



curriculum and the needs of the children. The resources are accessible to children and this promotes the children's sense of independence and responsibility.

The local environment, the building, school and the cylch's resources are used well on a regular basis and they contribute 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 leader involves all staff in planning and this ensures the best use of their expertise. The leader is actively involved, giving clear directions and accepting advice. This ensures a sense of purpose to the work of the cylch. There is a positive ethos and a commitment to provide the best possible experiences for the children.

The leadership and all staff are focused on children's needs and the cylch successfully achieves this aim in practice. Recently, staff have received relevant and appropriate training and this has impacted well on the quality of provision.

Effective links with the parents are in place. Parents are kept well informed of their children's achievement 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 has taken good account of relevant legislation and guidance and they meet legal requirements in full. The self-evaluation systems are new and the process of development planning is not structured well in terms of appropriate time scales and success criteria.

The cylch has taken good account of National priorities, including implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum. It has also made good use of opportunities to work with the school that shares the same site to ensure extremely useful and very solid links.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The cylch has strengths that outweigh areas for improvement when self-evaluating. It has recently identified areas for improvement and is beginning to implement them for the benefit of the children. This has included oral activities for children, using the locality and reporting to parents. However, the self-evaluation systems are new and they have not had time to develop into a practical, regular process that affects the cylch's development planning in enough detail.

The targets noted to achieve the improvements are not detailed or prioritised in an appropriate and effective development plan. Therefore, the cylch does not have

appropriate time scales and success criteria in place to achieve the targets identified from the self-evaluation.

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

**Partnership working: Good**

Parents, in the questionnaire replies and in discussion expressed their total satisfaction with the cylch and are highly 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 children leave the cylch, parents feel that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The link with the school, where the cylch is located, is extremely good.

The support provided by the local authority staff and the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin benefits the cylch. Their advice and suggestions have helped in developing the cylch and has contributed to the current good standards of provision.

**Resource management: Good**

Staff work together very effectively. Planning is shared well and this results in individual expertise being used purposefully.

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

The cylch provides adequate outdoor experiences for the children through regular use of the schoolyards.

The cylch has identified areas for development and they are aware of how to move the cylch forward.

Overall, the cylch provides good value for money.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

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

Seven questionnaires were returned. Discussions with a sample of parents during the inspection indicated their positive support for the cylch. Parents and carers were pleased with nearly all aspects of the cylch, especially the care provided and the children's progress.

#### **Responses to learner questionnaires**

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

## Appendix 2

### Reporting Inspector

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))