



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

A report on
Ely and Caerau Integrated Children's Centre

**Michaelston Road
Ely
Cardiff
CF5 4SX**

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of pilot inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

This report is also available in Welsh

Evaluation

Ely and Caerau Children's Centre is a safe, calm and inspiring place where young children can explore and learn through play. A team of skilled, experienced practitioners provide many exciting experiences and activities that encourage young children to develop their skills and build their knowledge and understanding of the world. The head and deputy head of centre are passionate about, and have a strong understanding of, early childhood education. They encourage all practitioners, governors and parents to understand the centre's aims and philosophy and to remember that thinking when working with the children. Key to the centre's success is the way in which leaders have brought each part of the provision together to establish a smooth transition for children from community family sessions and childcare through to the nursery and meithrin. All practitioners take part in professional conversations to help to make decisions about the centre's future. In addition, senior leaders recognise the importance of investing in their staff and their professional learning so that they can offer teaching and learning experiences of the highest quality.

Children's well-being and progress are at the heart of the centre's work. Practitioners have a deep understanding of child development and they observe and follow each child's needs and interests. Daily meetings to discuss their planned and spontaneous observations of children's progress enable them to adapt the rich play environment or resources and offer experiences to suit individuals and groups of children, including those with additional learning needs. Practitioners harness children's enthusiasm and challenge them to take the next steps in their learning. This focus on engaging and motivating children fires their natural curiosity. Children become engrossed in their play, persevere at their activities and are confident to take calculated risks, often challenging themselves and showing pride in their achievements.

Many children's physical, creative and critical thinking skills are particularly strong because of their extensive experiences, especially those in the outdoors, including in the Forest School and at the Beach School. In all areas of the learning environment, practitioners encourage the children to try new experiences, think of creative ways to solve problems and question the world around them. Practitioners help children to understand language and express their views by modelling vocabulary and sentence patterns in English and Welsh. They introduce them to the written word through stories, rhymes and mark-making. They offer them experiences that lead to early mathematical exploration and understanding, and gently familiarise them with the digital world. Children respond by imitating, asking and answering questions, joining in with familiar songs and rhymes, handling books and 'writing' at appropriate times in their play, perhaps to create a shopping list. They become fascinated by comparing the size of items around them, sort items according to colour or shape, and they use blocks to create structures, sometimes carefully designed to be symmetrical.

Cameo – using learning journals to capture children's progress and develop a shared understanding of progression in the early years

The centre uses learning journals to capture progress in each child's skills, knowledge and understanding. They include written observations of the child and spontaneous field notes from practitioners, parents and others. Photographs and videos enrich the learning journals; they capture developmental progress and demonstrate how children make connections across all aspects of their learning. The process has evolved and continues to improve over time in response to practitioners' reflection and discussion within the centre and collaboration with a local early years network. This professional dialogue supports a shared understanding of progression.

The way in which the nursery environment celebrates the children's and practitioners' identity and experiences through photographs and displays creates a strong sense of belonging for children and their families. There is real warmth and trust between practitioners and children, and they are at ease in one another's company. This reassures parents and is especially important to children who find it difficult to settle at first or those who may need extra help to make progress. Practitioners make the most of on-site expertise, such as the Early Years Inclusion Team. This helps them to identify children with additional learning needs early in their education and enables them to offer the most appropriate support for them and their families.

Senior leaders value their practitioners and all staff work together to make the centre successful. Leaders respect their views and professionalism and support their well-being effectively. Everyone contributes meaningfully to the centre's continuous self-evaluation at regular intervals through the year and helps to identify the priorities for improvement that will make the greatest difference to children. Actions to improve the use of Welsh across the centre have raised the profile of the language in the nursery considerably and enhanced Welsh language development in meithrin. This has given practitioners the skills, confidence and enthusiasm to use the language every day so that children hear, understand and begin to use the language more naturally. Governors have a real grasp of the centre's role in the community and support leaders' decisions, such as funding enrichment activities to ensure that children affected by poverty and disadvantage do not miss out. They offer sensitive challenge in important areas, including questioning leaders about decisions relating to the curriculum and changes in assessment practices.

Statutory compliance

Safeguarding arrangements

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

Healthy eating and drinking

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

School finances

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including use of the pupil development grant.

Health and safety (site security)

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations and next steps

There are no specific recommendations relating to this inspection.

The centre should continue its improvement journey.

Additional information

Teaching and learning

- The well-organised, purposeful and supportive play environment is a strength of the centre. Children benefit from a wide range of rich, first-hand experiences.
- Practitioners motivate children well and provide an interesting and varied curriculum that inspires children to learn. As a result, children have positive attitudes towards learning. They are curious from a very young age and persevere when discovering the world around them.
- Practitioners have a strong understanding of child development and use this well during daily meetings to evaluate children's progress and inform planning.
- Practitioners' observations and regular discussions about individuals help them to develop a good understanding of each child's needs and interests. They use this information well to adapt experiences and the environment every day to meet the developmental needs of all children, including those with additional learning needs.
- Practitioners evaluate children's progress effectively, using learning journals. Each journal provides a clear record of a child's progress and development through hands-on experiences such as exploring clay, sand and water play and

at the beach school. Practitioners use observation notes, assessments, photographs and anecdotes to celebrate children's learning and share with parents.

- The interior and exterior learning areas interlink seamlessly. Children have the freedom to explore the learning environment throughout the day.
- Most children develop particularly good creative, investigating and problem-solving skills in many areas of the provision. This means that they build a strong sense of the world around them.
- Many children have very good physical and co-ordination skills that are constantly being challenged and refined. Children apply these skills confidently in their exploration of the outdoors, for example when using a hammer and drilling in the woodworking area.
- Children use their curiosity to develop good mark-making skills which they consolidate when using clay, in sand on the beach and gravel in forest. They use these skills purposefully, for example to 'write' notes home to parents, and to paint a of autumn.
- Practitioners are good language role models in English and Welsh. They make good use of questioning to encourage children to articulate their thinking, solve problems and learn from mistakes. As a result, most children speak confidently and sing rhymes and songs enthusiastically. Many are becoming interested in the written word, through sharing books with others at story time.
- In meithrin, many children are developing a basic understanding of Welsh. They understand and respond appropriately to instructions and enjoy Welsh stories and songs during the day and in family time.
- Practitioners introduce children to the digital world appropriately through the use of digital cameras, tablets and mobile phones where it is relevant to do so.
- Children show a good early understanding of many basic mathematical concepts such as 3D shapes, symmetry and volume as they investigate with building blocks, experiment with water and sort beads on the light box.
- Quiet corners, celebrations from a range of religions and cultures around the year and celebration Friday offer children time to reflect on their feelings and think about morality and spiritual at a level they can understand. Communications between the centre and children visiting family around the world are beginning to develop a strong sense of cultural awareness.

Care, support and well-being

- Children's well-being and progress are at the heart of the centre's work and, as a result, there is a strong sense of belonging. Pictures on walls capture children's experiences, curiosity and wonder and this creates a safe and welcoming family area. Personal wall displays like "What is in a name?" celebrate children's identity and invite the visitor into their little world.
- The culture of safeguarding is strong across the complex site.
- Rigorous attention to site safety and security and good organisation allows children the freedom to explore their environment in a calm, flexible manner.
- Practitioners have a deep understanding of the individual child's interests and needs. As a result, they are secure and happy in their environment and are willing to take risks and challenge their own physical development.
- Children have good opportunities to voice their preferences when choosing activities and experiences, both indoors and outdoors.

- Through a vast range of experiences, core stories and valuable group time, most children learn to express their feelings well. This means that there is a positive spirit of mutual respect at the centre.
- Practitioners and children show care and warmth towards each other and are at ease in each other's company. This trust and understanding between child and adult are especially important to children with additional learning needs, and those who sometimes struggle to settle.
- The centre works effectively with external agencies, for example the educational psychologist in addition to on-site agencies such as the Early Years Inclusion Team to deliver bespoke advice to identify and nurture individuals. Practitioners involve parents in decisions that affect their children, and this creates a triangulated approach that enables children, especially the most vulnerable, to transition effectively between provisions and in and out of the centre.
- With the aid of clearly defined areas, multi-sensory approaches and free flowing environments, children with additional learning needs make good progress.
- Good training opportunities for practitioners and parents equip them with the skills and knowledge to care and support their children.
- Many learning activities on offer to children raise early awareness of the responsibilities and experiences of adult life. For example, children helped to design a shared garden for the new on-site housing development. They grow vegetables and use them to make soup, and they access a range of 'occupations'. These include working with wood and clay, weaving and sewing, and block play, all woven through the curriculum to develop life-long skills.
- The centre promotes good attendance and helps parents to understand the impact of poor attendance on children's progress. Children's attendance, although not statutory, compares well with that in the other stand-alone nurseries in the local authority, at 89%.

Leading and improving

- The head and her leadership team have a clear vision for the centre, that focuses closely on establishing a holistic approach to the well-being and progress of children.
- Senior leaders value their practitioners and other staff in the centre, support their well-being effectively, and respect their views.
- Key to the centre's success is the way in which leaders have brought every part of the centre together, taking a strategic approach to development and including all practitioners (from day care, both nurseries and provision for community engagement) in professional conversations about the way forward for the centre.
- Leaders consider the views of others carefully before making important strategic decisions about developments at the centre.
- Leaders foster a strong sense of commitment and collaboration within the team. They value and respect all practitioners and encourage them all to contribute to important aspects of the centre's work. This includes regular feedback into the centre's self-evaluation and valuable contributions that help to identify the centre's priorities for improvement.
- Leaders play an important role in ensuring that priorities focus on the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding and in developing practitioners' increasing understanding of assessment and progression.

- Improvement priorities and related actions for the current year are clearly defined and there are robust processes for monitoring the impact of action. This means that governors, practitioners and leaders responsible for each priority can evaluate progress.
- Well-considered and co-ordinated professional learning for practitioners across the centre demonstrates leaders' commitment to extending practitioners' skills, knowledge and understanding so that they can offer teaching and learning experiences of the highest quality to all children.
- Governors play an important role in the centre's work and understand the community it serves well. They provide leaders with valuable support, and offer sensitive challenge in important areas, including questioning leaders about decisions relating to the curriculum, changes in assessment practices and spending. They have a good understanding of their statutory responsibilities, including for safeguarding and ensuring healthy eating and drinking in the centre.
- Leaders recognise the benefits of maintaining close strategic links with other services based at the centre. These links enhance the provision and support available to pupils and their families.
- With the support of the local authority finance officer, the head of centre and governing body manage the centre's complex budget effectively, monitoring many different funding streams.
- Spending focuses suitably on the school's priorities and supporting practitioners' professional learning.
- The centre uses its EYPDG effectively to support parents to encourage language development in Welsh and English and to fund enrichment activities so that children affected by poverty and disadvantage from low-income households do not miss out.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).

Appendix 1: About Ely and Caerau Integrated Children's Centre

Name of provider	Ely and Caerau Integrated Children's Centre
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	69
Pupils of statutory school age	0
Number in nursery classes	69
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	N/A
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2014
Start date of inspection	07/11/2023
<p>This inspection focused on the education provision in the two classes for nursery aged pupils, one Welsh medium (meithrin) and one English medium (nursery). The nursery classes are a part of the whole centre that includes childcare and community provision. Although the team did not inspect those areas of provision, it is important to note that all parts of the centre work in close collaboration under the leadership of the head and deputy head of centre.</p>	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Appendix 2: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%