



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Bro Alun
Delamere Avenue
Gwersyllt
Wrexham
LL11 4NG**

Date of inspection: March 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 Bro Alun is situated on the campus of Ysgol Bro Alun in Gwersyllt, near Wrexham. The setting opened in September 2013 as a voluntary setting registered under the Children's Act 1989. It provides care and education in morning and afternoon sessions to children up to four years old through the medium of Welsh.

It is a playgroup under the guidance of Mudiad Meithrin and is open 39 weeks a year, with two-and-a-half-hour sessions morning and afternoon, five mornings a week during term time. At the time of the inspection, there were 40 three-year-old children on roll. Thirteen children have funded places and three are Sure Start children. In addition, 27 children receive Meithrin Mwy education.

Very few children come from Welsh-speaking homes. English is the home language of nearly all children. There are no children who speak English as an additional language and only a very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are currently no children with additional learning needs at the setting.

The number of children has increased greatly in the last year. There are now 11 practitioners employed at the setting. The leader has been in post since the setting opened.

The setting was inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales on 9th September 2015. This is the setting's first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's performance is good because:

- Many children make good progress from their starting point across the six areas of learning
- Many children apply their key skills very successfully in a variety of contexts across the areas of learning
- Many children apply themselves effectively to their learning activities in the indoor and outdoor work areas
- A majority of children's Welsh literacy skills are completely appropriate for their age, ability and linguistic background
- Nearly all children are happy when they arrive at the setting and, on the whole, they work independently when undertaking familiar tasks
- Children are enthusiastic in their activities and persevere effectively with various tasks
- Practitioners provide a good variety of experiences for children, which include opportunities for them to experiment and discover
- Practitioners work very well together

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader and her fellow practitioners have a robust vision to develop a clear direction for the setting
- There is a strong sense of teamwork in the setting, and all practitioners share responsibilities effectively
- The setting's self-evaluation process is robust
- The setting's managers and leaders operate successfully to improve provision for children
- Very robust links with the primary school provide clear progression for the setting's work

Recommendations

- R1 Plan specifically to develop children's ICT skills across the areas of learning
- R2 Provide opportunities for children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas when choosing activities
- R3 Ensure that the system for tracking children's progress is used effectively in order to plan the next steps in their learning

What happens next?

The setting will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Many children make good progress from their starting point across the six areas of learning. They apply their key skills successfully in a variety of contexts across those areas, and apply themselves effectively to their learning activities in the indoor and outdoor work areas. A majority recall previous learning well and are inquisitive when undertaking new tasks.

A majority of children's literacy skills are completely appropriate for their age, ability and linguistic background. In areas with which they are familiar, many children begin to speak confidently with familiar adults and use an increasing vocabulary that is suitable to the context consistently. Most listen carefully to instructions and follow them effectively.

They show great interest in books and their content, and handle them effectively as readers in the book corner. They enjoy looking at story books that are read to them, or that relate to the setting's current theme. Nearly all children respond to stories with interest by answering questions about the content appropriately.

Nearly all children make marks effectively by using a variety of media, such as paint, chalk, water and pencils across a minority of learning areas, particularly in the outdoor area. A majority of children control a pencil to form shapes and follow patterns fairly correctly.

Many children develop their numeracy skills successfully across the areas of learning. Most children are able to count to ten confidently. Nearly all children join in confidently when singing number rhymes or counting objects across the learning areas, for example eggs in the box, or farm animals. Many create patterns and sort objects successfully by specific properties, for example sorting cars by colour or size.

Many persevere well with their activities during free choice periods, and solve problems independently, for example when experimenting with pouring water from one container to another. A majority of children are effective learners and are willing to try and learn by making mistakes at times.

In light of the opportunities that are available to them, children's skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are developing appropriately. They play with electronic toys confidently, and use a digital camera successfully to take pictures and record work that they have enjoyed. However, they do not use computer equipment frequently enough to communicate ideas successfully.

Nearly all children's physical skills are developing soundly. They handle pencils, scissors and paintbrushes with increasing care and accuracy, and ride cars and various bicycles very confidently in the outdoor area. They enjoy outdoor activities.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are happy when they arrive at the setting and, on the whole, they work independently when undertaking familiar tasks. They are enthusiastic during their activities and persevere effectively with various tasks. A majority are beginning to work together with ease, for example when playing together in the sand or with water in the outdoor area, and when role-playing in the cafe or the veterinary surgery. Nearly all children work well with familiar adults and play an active part in their learning. Children contribute effectively to planning work by suggesting and developing activities to enrich the continuous provision; for example, a veterinary surgery was developed as children carried toy animals to the role-play corner.

Nearly all children are courteous and, on the whole, are willing to take turns when undertaking activities or waiting to go outside or come back into the building. In general, a majority share resources appropriately and interact with each other maturely.

Nearly all children take turns to wash their hands carefully after going to the toilet and before snack time. They also understand that fruit and vegetables are healthy foods, and make independent choices when choosing the food that they would like to eat. Most are courteous to each other and to adults.

They undertake healthy physical activities eagerly when playing with large toys and when taking part in outdoor activities.

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

Practitioners provide a broad and balanced curriculum for children, in line with the requirements of the Foundation Phase framework. They provide them with a good variety of experiences and include appropriate opportunities for them to experiment and discover.

Schemes of work are structured well. The termly plan identifies provision clearly across the six areas of learning and to develop children's literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. They also identify clearly how to enrich the various learning areas to ensure appropriate challenge for children. Short-term planning provides focus activities that are structured robustly to develop children's skills.

Practitioners provide suitable opportunities for children to use a variety of ICT equipment to develop their skills and support their learning. However, this provision has not been planned in enough detail to ensure progress and progression.

Practitioners ensure that continuous provision in the indoor and outdoor learning areas is appropriate and offers children a good selection of activities. That provision is extended effectively by suitable tasks that are relevant to the setting's current theme.

Practitioners ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for children to make independent choices about their activities in the areas both inside and outside the building. There are good opportunities for children to develop their oral and listening skills successfully in singing and story sessions, and learning areas ensure suitable experiences for children to develop their numeracy skills and, to a lesser extent, their writing skills. However, children are not given enough opportunities to move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas.

There is purposeful provision for children to develop their physical skills across the learning areas. For example, they are given effective opportunities to control mark-making equipment on various surfaces, handle kitchen utensils in the mud kitchen, and play with large toys in the outdoor area.

Practitioners ensure that children benefit from visits from people from outside the organisation. For example, during the last year, a nurse, a postman and a policeman have visited the setting to talk to the children. Practitioners also ensure that there are good opportunities for them to visit specific places to enrich the curriculum and to raise their awareness of their local area. For example, children visited a pet shop as part of the 'Animals' theme, and they visit a local woodland to broaden children's knowledge of the world around them.

Practitioners plan effectively to enrich children's Welsh vocabulary by modelling language soundly. As a result, nearly all children's oral Welsh skills are developing appropriately. The setting also plans appropriately to develop children's awareness of the Welsh dimension and Welsh culture. For example, there are good opportunities for children to celebrate Welsh holidays, such as St Dwynwen's Day and St David's Day, in addition to taking part in concerts and performances in the local community with children from the primary school.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a rigorous understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. They work very well together and ensure that there are effective opportunities for children to develop their skills across the six areas of learning.

The setting's daily activities are organised and convenient. This ensures that children are industrious consistently during each session. Practitioners have forged a good relationship with children, which is evident from the moment children arrive at the setting. All practitioners are sound language models, which has a positive effect on children's oral skills. All practitioners know the children and their needs well, and they use questions purposefully to challenge them to achieve to the best of their ability. This develops children's ability to think for themselves and act independently. Focus activities challenge children of all abilities to achieve well. They are planned to develop children's specific skills effectively.

The setting has robust assessment procedures. Oral praise to children for their efforts is evident, and gives them the confidence to persevere. All practitioners observe children during their activities regularly and identify any significant progress. These observations are recorded succinctly in an appropriate observation booklet each day, and are used effectively to provide direction for subsequent schemes of work.

Recently, the setting has begun to track children's progress effectively in order to create a clear profile of each child's achievement and attainment. However, this system has not had enough time to become embedded in order to enable practitioners to plan the next steps in children's learning.

Through informal discussions and an open morning during the summer term, parents are given complete information about their children's progress. There is a close link between practitioners and parents, and any issues are discussed immediately.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's arrangements to promote hygiene, eating healthily and keeping fit are effective. Practitioners ensure that children always wash their hands before snack time and after going to the toilet. Snack time is a valuable opportunity for children to develop their important social skills and their awareness of healthy foods. The setting ensures that children use the purposeful waste bins that are available to recycle fruit leftovers.

There is effective provision to develop children's physical skills and raise their awareness of the importance of taking part in physical activity in the outdoor area, for example by playing on large toys and visiting the nearby school's play areas. These experiences develop children's fitness levels and help them to enjoy physical activity.

The setting has good provision to promote children's personal and social development; for example, there are appropriate opportunities for children to decide what they would like to do during sessions. They are encouraged to ask for support when needed, and they do so confidently.

Children are given appropriate opportunities to take part in cultural events on their own or accompanied by children from the primary school that shares the same site; for example, they conduct a Christmas concert for parents, and celebrate World Book Day by encouraging children to bring books with them to the setting.

Practitioners provide effective experiences in order to develop children's moral and spiritual awareness. At the end of the session, they lead the children in a short prayer. They promote and model polite and good behaviour consistently, which means that children treat each other and adults with respect.

Practitioners plan appropriately to promote children's understanding of other cultures and religions, for example by giving them opportunities to wear different costumes in the role-play corner and by turning it into a Chinese restaurant.

The setting has purposeful arrangements to meet the requirements of children with additional learning or social needs. This includes arrangements to refer children to agencies that provide suitable support, if necessary.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting, which is in a purpose-built room in the new primary school building, is a happy and welcoming community in which all children have equal access to all activities. Practitioners place an appropriate emphasis on care and respect. The ethos, in terms of Welshness and the Welsh language, is robust and is a core part of activities.

The room and the outdoor area are appropriate to meet the requirements of provision and children's needs. The leader has arranged the learning areas to promote the philosophy of the Foundation Phase effectively. They are attractive and include suitable resources to support children's development across the six areas of learning. The walls include colourful displays that stimulate learning and celebrate children's work in an interesting manner. On the whole, the setting has good resources that reinforce learning effectively.

The setting makes good use of the local area to reinforce children's experiences, for example by taking them to the forest school, or to a local play area.

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

The leader and her fellow practitioners have a robust vision to develop a clear direction for the setting. It focuses well on improving provision and ensuring that children make good progress. They share this vision effectively with the management committee and parents, and operate in accordance with it consistently.

Practitioners meet daily to discuss important issues for the day, and weekly to discuss children's progress and to plan work. These meetings focus well on issues relating to progress and wellbeing, and on ensuring that provision is effective.

There is a strong sense of a team within the setting, and all practitioners share responsibilities effectively and work together very well. As a result, the setting runs smoothly from day to day, and children's progress and wellbeing are central to its activity.

All statutory policies are in place and have been updated appropriately. National and local priorities are given suitable attention; for example, there is a clear emphasis on developing children's literacy and numeracy skills.

The management committee is an active body, with effective officers who ensure continuity in its activity. Members of the committee support the setting's work well and are very aware and work consistently to ensure support and funding for the setting.

Improving quality: Good

The setting's self-evaluation process is robust and includes all practitioners. There is a suitable two-year timetable in place, and practitioners follow it effectively and record progress clearly in a continuous document. During the autumn term, progress against priorities is evaluated.

Although concise, the self-evaluation document is detailed and relates appropriately to evaluating all aspects of the setting's work. The content is evaluative and gives appropriate attention to identifying strengths and priorities for improvement.

Priorities in the setting's action plan for children who receive early education derive directly from the findings of the self-evaluation report. It focuses appropriately on children's progress and wellbeing and on enriching provision. It identifies clearly what needs to be improved, success criteria for each priority and an evaluation of them after the implementation period. However, it does not identify clearly how much funding is needed to implement each of the priorities for improvement.

During the period since it was established, the setting's managers and leader have shown the ability to act successfully to improve provision for children.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has beneficial links with parents, and appropriate information is shared consistently between them. As a result, parents have clear information about the setting's work and their children's progress, and they are happy.

There are very robust links between the setting and the local primary school, which is on the same site. This is a good support in preparing children to transfer there when the time comes. In particular, the headteacher of the school, by undertaking the role of the registered person and assisting in appointing staff and other managerial issues, has developed a good working relationship with practitioners. Children visit the Foundation Phase class during the term before they transfer. There are also good arrangements for the setting's children to use the primary school's resources, for example the playing field and the forest school.

The setting takes good advantage of support from the local authority. Practitioners receive relevant training sessions and effective support, for example to develop use of the Foundation Phase profile to plan suitable activities. There are clear procedures in place to ensure that the setting takes advantage of the local authority's specialist services, if necessary. Similarly, they benefit well from guidance and training from Mudiad Meithrin. The local link officer is a regular visitor, and provides advice and training on policy issues, health and safety and some elements of provision. The setting also takes good advantage of opportunities to improve practitioners' qualifications through training by Mudiad Meithrin.

Resource management: Good

The setting has enough qualified staff who fulfil their duties effectively. The leader has allocated responsibilities clearly and, as a result, the setting operates with ease. All members of staff are given appropriate opportunities to take advantage of training to develop their understanding and knowledge of a number of relevant areas.

The performance management system is effective. It includes annual appraisals at the end of the summer term, and continuous monitoring activities throughout the year. The leader's performance management is undertaken by the chair on behalf of the management committee.

In general, the setting manages the good range of resources successfully to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Practitioners monitor and evaluate the use of resources effectively.

The treasurer and vice treasurer of the management committee take responsibility for the financial management of the setting, including payments from parents and contributions from the local authority to fund three-year-old children and Sure Start children. This work is undertaken effectively, and the committee is very active in arranging fundraising activities throughout the year.

Because of the effective provision and the good quality of teaching, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fewer than 10 responses were received. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Terwyn Tomos	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 3 to 7 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 which 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)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
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