



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Seren Fach
Dyfryn Road
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF45 4DA**

Date of inspection: November 2016

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 Seren Fach is a Welsh medium setting, located in the town of Mountain Ash, in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. The setting opens for five days a week and it has eight practitioners. The setting's registration allows it to take up to 24 children at any one time and the setting accepts children from two to four years old.

Nearly all children are of white British origin and nearly all children speak English as their first language. Currently, there are very few children with additional learning needs.

A manager and a volunteer board of directors manage the setting and it is a charitable limited company. The leader began her post in September 2012. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in January 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 current performance is good because:

- Most children make strong progress in their literacy and numeracy skills
- Nearly all children are enthusiastic learners
- Nearly all children behave responsibly
- Learning experiences are planned well
- Teachers challenge children to perform at their best
- Practitioners work well together and their tender care creates an effective learning environment
- Most practitioners' spoken Welsh develops children's learning of the language positively
- Stimulating indoor areas engage the children successfully
- The use of community amenities supports outdoor learning purposefully

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The manager and leader provide a clear strategic direction to the work of the setting and quality assure its practices efficiently
- Thorough evaluation systems exist that consider the views of everyone involved with the setting
- Practitioners' training is effective
- Purposeful use of support services benefits children, the leadership and practitioners
- Positive relationships with parents, the community and the local school support the next steps in children's learning well
- Sensible use of funds ensure improvements in the quality of provision
- Sensible support from the board of directors sustains effective provision, sound financial regulation and firm leadership practices

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for children to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R2 Ensure that practitioners' introductions to focus tasks are effective, to maintain children's interests

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most children demonstrate strong progress in the development of their skills across all areas of learning, especially their literacy and numeracy skills. They talk sensibly about how they develop their skills during the creation of paintings with handprints and when discovering insects in soil and ice.

Nearly all children's Welsh language skills are low on entry. However, their early understanding and use of the language is developing well. In a short period, many children demonstrate a good basic understanding of the language. For example, they use words and simple phrases well while collecting leaves in the nearby woods and during the purchase of fruit with real money in the role-play shop.

Many children understand what to do when directed in Welsh. This is particularly evident when they listen attentively to stories and when they begin to trace numbers by moving cars around tracks in the shapes of different numbers. They attempt to speak clearly and make sure that others understand them when responding to practitioners' questions in Welsh during tasks. They listen to instructions and act on them promptly, demonstrating an increasing awareness of the language. They respond well during group activities when deciding which musical instruments to play together or the chinks needed to complete tasks at an easel.

A minority of children use language patterns and phrases purposefully without adult prompting. This occurs during informal play and focus activities, such as when riding bikes in the indoor area, playing dominoes and completing jigsaws. Most children show interest in books. They understand the purpose of the illustrations and compare characters effectively. Most children handle the books in the reading area as confident, early readers.

Most children experiment with mark making effectively. This is a prominent feature at the setting and children enjoy writing experiences using a variety of media. Examples include painting with paintbrushes, scribbling and circling with chinks, collecting fruit orders with pens and forming letters in the sand. Very few children begin to form letters of the alphabet and numbers in reasonably recognisable forms when handling pencils and crayons. The majority of children explain the purpose of writing in the correct context. A minority of children recognise their own and others' names during registration on the interactive whiteboard.

Most children use mathematical language purposefully and in everyday contexts. The majority of children recognise, name and count numbers to five with adult support and a minority count to ten and beyond accurately, when sorting shapes and different coloured objects. Very few children demonstrate a basic understanding of how to bond numbers to five through arranging toys in the small world area.

Most children understand the differences in size when seating dolls in carrier seats. They explain with accuracy if objects are 'too big' or 'too small' and when they stand 'near to' or 'far away' from trees and the side of the road. Nearly all children use a good range of mathematical language when co-operating together in spontaneous play, for example when comparing the length, height, weight or capacity of different objects. They also use numbers well in practical activities when comparing two and three-dimensional shapes as flat or round, and when counting in sequence the amount of dinosaurs in the sand and leaf pit.

Nearly all children enjoy listening to music and respond enthusiastically to nursery rhymes and familiar songs in Welsh. They play instruments with great enthusiasm during orchestral activities with shakers, guitars, maracas and other percussion instruments. They understand clearly that music contains a beat and that musical phrases are louder or softer than each other.

Most children use technology effectively when using cameras, electronic toys and tills in everyday activities. However, their use of educational software to develop their ICT and fine motor skills are limited.

Many children choose relevant equipment and materials to solve practical problems effectively. For example, they use cameras and magnifying glasses to discover 'long' and 'short' caterpillars in a section of the town's woodland area. Most children develop good thinking skills. This has a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve, such as when they work with others intelligently to construct structures using blocks and while contributing to simple graphs on large pieces of paper.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children behave well and are polite. They respond with respect to adults and each other. Nearly all children listen carefully to adults, such as when they pair up to walk to the woods. Following the use of the toilet, messy play and outdoor activities, nearly all children wash their hands thoroughly, without too much adult prompting.

Nearly all children show motivation and interest in their learning and most children demonstrate high levels of engagement during tasks. They enjoy the activities in the areas of learning and share and work sensibly with other children. Most children demonstrate positive attitudes to new experiences, such as when collecting leaves enthusiastically into plastic bags.

Nearly all children relate well to adults and visitors when they arrive at the setting and when they leave. Many children are confident and independent learners. This is especially evident when many of them explain thoughtfully which areas of learning include their favourite activities.

Most children are beginning to understand that they have rights as individuals and that they have an option of expressing personal opinions and preferences, such as when deciding to remain at specific tasks.

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

The manager, leader and practitioners provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects the ethos of the Foundation Phase well. The learning experiences target the needs and interests of children successfully and provide them with positive opportunities to develop as independent learners. The practitioners work together effectively to deliver engaging and purposeful activities. Such activities stimulate and motivate children to learn through practical, creative and challenging experiences.

The provision of learning experiences is stimulating and it offers continuity to children's learning. The setting plans in detail to develop children's literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. Literacy and numeracy tasks are very evident in all areas of learning and practitioners challenge children to perform at their best consistently. The planning of early writing activities and the understanding of numbers challenges every child sufficiently to develop better skills when beginning to form letters and numbers.

The setting's provision for Welsh language development acknowledges that children's skills are low on entry. Practitioners address this through the effective and regular modelling of words and phrases. As a result, children's understanding of the language is developing well and they are beginning to respond well using simple phrases.

They encourage children to use the language as much as possible through stimulating activities with specific groups of children led by key workers. These key workers challenge and question children intelligently in response to the wide range of activities inside the building and in the daily visits to the nearby woods and the town's facilities.

Practitioners organise the theme's activities to challenge children effectively. Such planning enriches activities further. It contributes significantly to the children's daily enthusiasm as they learn through interesting experiences both inside the building and outdoors around the town. Practitioners provide children with stimulating opportunities to role-play in the fruit shop and kitchen area, to estimate how many insects are in the soil and to experiment with paints when hand printing colourful compositions. Activities of this nature build systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills well.

The setting promotes the children's awareness of the traditions, celebrations and culture of Wales successfully. These activities include celebrating Saint David's Day and Saint Dwynwen's Day, reading Welsh folk tales together, making cawl from garden produce and baking Welsh cakes and bread.

The provision for ICT development offers opportunities to use a range of equipment, such as cameras, electronic toys and tills. However, practitioners do not give children sufficient opportunities to use purposeful educational software and more advanced technology to develop their ICT skills fully.

The setting makes beneficial use of visitors to enrich children's learning experiences. For example, the emergency services, the road safety officer, dental hygienists and performers educate children purposefully about people's roles in their community. Practitioners use local shops and cafés, public transport, the park and woodland area to promote the children's understanding of their local community successfully.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners are up to date with information about child development. They understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase well and they collaborate effectively. The leader and the practitioners demonstrate a sensible balance between child-led activities and those that are guided by adults. They provide a broad range of opportunities to learn through play and practical experiences.

Practitioners greet the children warmly and enthusiastically as they arrive for every session. They continue with this enthusiasm throughout the session. Practitioners manage children's behaviour positively and safely and this encourages the children's successful participation and enjoyment in all activities.

The practitioners have high expectations for all children and challenge children consistently in every focus task. They intervene sensibly in children's play and stimulate and motivate children to perform at their best during continuous and enhanced activities. Practitioners question children well in order to develop thinking and communication skills. This is apparent when discussing the changes that occur as a caterpillar develops into a butterfly and when different coloured insects are placed in matching coloured buckets. However, introductions to focus tasks are occasionally too long and as a result practitioners do not maintain children's interests effectively.

All practitioners complete daily assessments regularly and consistently. They encourage the children to assess their own learning well. They then discuss sensitively with the children what they need to do to improve their work. Practitioners record evaluations and discussions daily on effective recording sheets and in the children's development books. This leads directly towards the planning of tasks and it targets the next steps in children's learning efficiently. As a result, the procedures for assessing and recording children's achievements are accurate and useful. All the evidence is matched rigorously using the Foundation Phase profile to individual children's outcomes, as they mature at the setting.

The setting informs parents and carers regularly about their children's achievements. At the end of their time at the setting, practitioners present an informative development book of photographs, children's work with annotations and reports on the child's progress to parents.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Efficient arrangements exist to support the health and wellbeing of children and the setting operates effective procedures to promote healthy eating and drinking. As a result, the children understand that fruit, vegetables and exercise contribute to a sensible lifestyle.

The setting offers positive opportunities to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children. For example, practitioners use group discussions to consider each other's feelings during registration and at meal times. This fosters values such as honesty, fairness and respect for each other successfully.

Practitioners provide rewarding opportunities daily for children to reflect, discuss feelings, say thank you and pray. This creates a quiet environment, when children sit to listen to adults and say thank you for their food. As a result, the children take turns politely while eating snacks and serve milk and water carefully around the dining tables.

Practitioners provide regular opportunities for children to re-cycle paper, cardboard, plastic containers and food. This develops the children's understanding of sustainability effectively.

The setting uses positive behaviour strategies, which eliminate any form of harassment or oppressive actions. The setting is a safe environment and the practitioners take good care of the children when they arrive and when they are collected. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The setting records children's learning needs accurately when they join and during their time at the setting. Practitioners review children's progress regularly and identify their starting points thoroughly by following the guidelines of the Foundation Phase profile. Therefore, the setting targets children with additional support effectively when it is required. Practitioners discuss these children with the appropriate agencies in order to provide assistance as soon as possible to target their needs.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal opportunities to all the areas of learning and resources. Practitioners have a thorough knowledge of all children and their individuality is recognised successfully. Practitioners challenge children daily in a positive, careful and sensitive manner.

The setting promotes a caring ethos through its daily activities and the approach adopted by the practitioners. Everyone has a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. The setting achieves this effectively by celebrating different festivals from around the world each year, such as the Chinese New Year, Eid, Hanukkah and Diwali. It also uses dolls from different cultural backgrounds purposefully to promote people's similarities and differences.

Generally, the setting uses its resources well to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase and children's needs. The wide range of interesting resources are used effectively in continuous activities, the focus tasks and the opportunities to enrich the learning. The resources are accessible to all children, and promote their sense of responsibility purposefully. However, the setting does not have sufficient ICT resources to develop the children's skills thoroughly.

The building is of a suitable quality; it is clean, well-maintained and safe. Although the setting does not have an outdoor area it uses the indoor areas and the outdoor resources of the town very well, including daily use of the nearby woods. Practitioners provide growing and planting opportunities for the children using indoor growing beds at specific times of the year. Indoor climbing apparatus, bikes and stimulating challenges are well organised in the large activity room. The setting also uses the town's riverside areas effectively for environmental investigations.

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

The setting's strategic objectives, plans and policies focus well on ensuring effective provision, meeting children's needs well and promoting children's achievements. The leader manages a team of committed practitioners well and motivates them towards improvements in positive, sensible and supportive ways. She provides a positive strategic direction to the daily and long-term practices of the setting, which promotes and sustains improvements well. In collaboration with the manager, she manages the planning, teaching and learning effectively. She ensures that practitioners have high expectations of all children.

The leader uses relevant information about the setting to bring about improvements to the provision. Recently, this includes developing assessment practices to target children with delayed speech, utilising the town's facilities to provide effective outdoor learning opportunities and to enhance creative developments, with a specific focus on music provision. She also focuses well on national priorities, such as developing literacy and numeracy strategies to improve children's skills.

The leadership, which includes the supportive board of directors, ensures that the provision for the children is interesting and purposeful. They ensure that practitioners fully understand their roles and work as a motivated team, through regular supervision and appraisal practices. This system ensures the best use of practitioners' expertise and defines different roles and key worker responsibilities well. The board of directors meets regularly and it receives information about the setting's day-to-day practices regularly from the manager and leader. They challenge the setting robustly to sustain good practices and to further develop the areas that require improvements.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has a positive culture of self-evaluation that focuses on improving the quality of its services. Leaders have established consistent arrangements to monitor children's standards and the daily provision. The effective collaboration and information collated on a regular basis, along with staff meetings and the local authority's evaluation toolkit contribute to these practices successfully.

The processes of self-evaluation take account of the views of the dedicated practitioners, parents and carers, the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. This information enables the setting to obtain a broad understanding of its provision. As a result, the self-evaluation report, derived from these systems, identifies the strengths

of the setting well. It also clearly identifies the areas of development, and the reasons behind them effectively.

Leaders maintain effective practices of quality assurance and they implement change through well developed action plans. They prioritise spending in line with the actions identified for improvement. They receive valuable advice from others to support these changes. This includes training practitioners regularly to record children's developments as they mature at the setting, which affects children's skills purposefully.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has a range of effective strategic partnerships. The setting works successfully with these partners to improve provision and the standards and wellbeing of children. This includes a positive link with the local school, to where most children transfer at the end of their time at the setting. The nursery class teacher visits the setting and the children visit the nursery with their parents and practitioners. This supports children's transition arrangements well. Arrangements for the transfer of personal information and assessments are effective and beneficial to the children as they settle into school.

Practitioners take active steps to involve parents and carers in the life of the setting. The setting informs parents and carers regularly on all aspects of the setting's work. They are also encouraged to offer their own opinions on issues to improve the setting through questionnaires and regular discussions.

The setting's community links support children's learning well. This includes successful fundraising events and grant funding bids. In addition, the setting supports local and national charities, which fosters tenderness and care among the children.

The setting works purposefully with outside agencies, such as the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin. This reinforces the positive relationships that exist and these organisations actively support training and management documentation effectively.

Practitioners work and connect with a broad range of other partners, which also make important contributions to improving the provision. These include agencies that support the setting with training in first aid, food hygiene courses, risk assessments, manual handling advice, business support, Foundation Phase developments and child protection training.

Resource management: Good

Leaders focus directly on improving all aspects of the setting's work by deploying practitioners intelligently and allocating resources effectively. They ensure that the setting has enough qualified practitioners, with relevant training, to meet the needs of the children.

Purposeful leadership practices enable practitioners to develop and share their professional knowledge well. Consequently, a vibrant learning community exists,

where effective collaboration between practitioners and other partners support all aspects of the setting's work.

The performance management systems are thorough and ensure interesting learning experiences and sound teaching practices. The setting manages resources creatively to support learning, especially due to the lack of outdoor facilities. This includes changing the room layout regularly to support different themes and utilising the town's amenities to support outdoor learning.

Leaders use the budget well and prioritise spending against set timelines and responsibilities successfully. This creates purposeful, regular and consistent improvements through beneficial negotiations and well-financed improvement plans. The setting ensures that the use of funds have a direct impact on the provision and children's outcomes.

The setting provides good value for money, due to the progress children make from their start points, the effective provision and the purposeful leadership.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Yn dynodi'r meincnod – mae hwn yn gyfanswm o'r holl ymatebion hyd hyn ers mis Medi 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the setting.	15	10 67%	5 33%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r lleoliad yn gyffredinol.
		80%	20%	0%	0%		
My child likes this setting.	14	10 71%	4 29%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r lleoliad hwn.
		84%	15%	0%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.	15	13 87%	2 13%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn y lleoliad.
		86%	13%	0%	0%		
My child is making good progress at the setting.	15	11 73%	4 27%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn y lleoliad.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Children behave well in the setting.	14	7 50%	7 50%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae plant yn ymddwyn yn dda yn y lleoliad.
		72%	27%	0%	0%		
Teaching is good.	15	11 73%	4 27%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		81%	19%	0%	0%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	15	10 67%	5 33%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		84%	16%	0%	0%		
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	14	7 50%	7 50%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		76%	23%	0%	0%		
My child is safe at the setting.	15	12 80%	3 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn y lleoliad.
		85%	15%	0%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.	14	6 43%	8 57%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		72%	27%	1%	0%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	15	9 60%	6 40%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		63%	30%	5%	1%		
I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.	15	11 73%	4 27%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n gysurus ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r lleoliad, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		80%	18%	1%	0%		
I understand the setting's procedure for dealing with complaints.	14	4 29%	10 71%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Rwy'n deall trefn y lleoliad ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		65%	31%	3%	1%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to school.	13	8 62%	5 38%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol.
		74%	25%	1%	0%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	13	4 31%	9 69%	0 0%	0 0%	2	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		63%	32%	4%	1%		
The setting is well run.	15	11 73%	4 27%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r lleoliad yn cael ei redeg yn dda.
		82%	17%	1%	0%		

Appendix 2

Reporting inspector

Nicholas Jones

Reporting inspector

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)	<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 which 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.