



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

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Y Bala
Tŷ Hwyl a Sbri
Ffordd y Gerddi
Bala
Gwynedd
LL23 7AY**

Date of inspection: January 2016

by

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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:

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 Y Bala is a Welsh medium setting, which is located in a cabin on the site of a primary school in Bala, in the Gwynedd local authority. The setting opens for four days a week. The setting has four full-time and one part time staff.

The setting's registration allows it to take up to 28 children in a session. It accepts children from two and a half to four years old. At the time of inspection, 20 children attended in the morning and 19 in the afternoon. The local authority funds 27 of them.

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

The leader began her post in November 2005. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) last inspected the setting in July 2015. Estyn last inspected the setting in May 2010.

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 achieve positive standards from their starting points
- Children's behaviour is very respectful
- The quality of teaching is consistently effective and supports learning successfully
- The provision for caring, supporting and guiding children is efficient and diligent
- Purposeful use of all staff, which supports the children
- The safe and caring community, which values all children equally
- The learning environment within the building, which is used creatively to improve children's outcomes

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The leader, the staff and the management committee give a clear direction to the setting's work
- The trusted leadership's history of managing improvements over time are effective
- Improvements are successfully targeted
- The self-evaluation results in beneficial improvements through the development plan
- Staff are actively involved in professional development and training, which has a positive impact on children's learning
- Beneficial partnerships exist with the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin that improve provision

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for children to develop their information and communication technology skills (ICT)
- R2 Refine planning to ensure that focus tasks challenge more able children
- R3 Improve the provision of the areas of learning in the outdoor area, especially literacy and numeracy

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most children achieve good standards by the end of their time in the setting, given their starting points. They make steady progress in what they can do on a daily basis, and in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Most express their feelings and emotions through role-play, mime and maintaining sensible discussions with adults and each other. Nearly all children speak clearly and make sure that others understand them in tasks. They listen to instructions from adults and peers and implement them effectively. Many children use appropriate language in spontaneous and structured play. They show interest in books and enjoy their content when discussing characters and events confidently with adults and other children. Many handle the books as natural readers. Most follow stories read to them well. They respond sensibly to the content of the story and discuss the winter and bad weather meaningfully.

Many children experiment with mark making effectively. They enjoy the writing experiences through using a variety of media such as paint, chalk and glitter. Many of the older children form letters and numbers appropriately. They understand some of the functions of writing by remembering each other's names, arranging letters, and sharing ideas about what they are trying to note on paper or a whiteboard. A minority of the older children begin to form letters of the alphabet and numbers independently and in a recognisable form when painting, handling pencils, colouring with crayons and addressing gifts to specific people.

Most children choose and use ideas, mathematical tools and materials to solve practical problems effectively. They use mathematical language purposefully and in relevant contexts. Most count, recognise and name numbers to ten confidently and a few count to 20. The majority of children understand clearly how to list numbers in order from first to fifth.

Nearly all children use a good range of mathematical language when playing together. For example, they describe toys and objects as 'small' and 'big' when discussing vehicles in the outside area and when measuring blocks in the construction area. They also use numbers practically and successfully when discussing 'less than' and 'greater than' when comparing two and three dimensional shapes. Nearly all children group different types of objects by colour, size and shape correctly. They discuss different shapes sensibly while playing with dough and cutting out animal shapes with scissors.

Most children listen to music with enjoyment and respond enthusiastically to nursery rhymes. They use technology as they role-play confidently in the kitchen and in everyday activities such as using mobile phones. They use buttons skilfully to start a compact disc player to listen to familiar songs and nursery rhymes. Most of them

have developed good thinking skills and this is having a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve. For example, they work with others intelligently when melting ice in water to discover different numbers. Many children use the computer and information technology equipment, such as cameras and electronic toys effectively.

Nearly all children understand what to do when directed in Welsh and many use Welsh without prompting.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all children are very well behaved. They are polite and respond respectfully to adults and peers. Most children show high levels of self-esteem, they are highly motivated and show interest in their learning. They enjoy the activities in the areas of learning and share and work sensibly with peers. Nearly all of the children relate well to adults and visitors.

Most of them develop positive attitudes to new experiences and learning and they are aware of the needs of others and show them respect. According to their ability and stage of development, many children are confident and independent learners. Most children enjoy their time at the setting and they are eager to discuss their favourite activities. They understand that they have rights as individuals and that they have the right to express opinions. Most children make sensible decisions for themselves. As a result, nearly all children show strong levels of motivation, engagement and focus.

Nearly all of them, in relation to their age, have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy. Nearly all of the children wash their hands thoroughly before eating their snacks and drinking. They do this without much encouragement. They have a good understanding that a healthy diet includes fruits and vegetables and that exercise keeps you fit.

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

The setting provides a wide range of interesting activities for children across all areas of learning. The planning meets the philosophy of the Foundation Phase effectively. Valuable time is set aside weekly for staff to meet and plan the curriculum. The curriculum builds purposefully on most children's previous knowledge and experiences. However, the planning does not target the needs of the minority of gifted children's needs effectively. They are not challenged appropriately to achieve their best. Therefore, the planning of focus tasks does not provide continuity, progression and challenge for these children during their time at the setting.

The overall provision for pupils' literacy, communication and numeracy is coherent and embedded firmly into many children's experiences. The provision for ICT is not as robust and the opportunities for children to use the computer and technological equipment are inconsistent.

The staff use the indoor environment imaginatively to encourage children to experiment with new experiences and develop their thinking skills effectively and independently. This is done through interesting activities such as painting and experimenting with sand, ice and water. The use of the outdoor area is not as creative and there is not enough challenge for children outside to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. However, they have good opportunities to drive boisterously around the outer area on vehicles.

Children visit places outside the setting regularly. For example, visits to local shops, Lake Tegid, the library and the town's park add interest to the curriculum. This develops and extends children's experiences effectively and creates a clear understanding of their local area. They also learn purposefully from people who visit the setting, such as storytellers, fire officials and the police.

Opportunities are provided for children to develop strong personal and cultural identity. They celebrate and learn meaningfully about Welsh festivals such as Saint David's Day and Saint Dwynwen's day and other cultures' festivals such as Chinese New Year. All adults communicate effectively with children in Welsh.

Teaching: Good

All staff have up to date information about child development and they are knowledgeable of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. They expect much from most children, apart from a minority of older, more able children, who are not challenged enough. The leader and staff plan balanced activities sensibly between those that are initiated by the child and those guided by adults. The adults intervene purposefully in children's activities. They are very positive as children arrive and they continue with this enthusiasm throughout the sessions.

The system of sharing duties is well established, which means that staff work effectively together and share information about children regularly. All staff are active and understand the importance of providing opportunities to learn through play and practical involvement. Staff manage children's behaviour positively, safely and effectively. They are good language models themselves and provide a stimulating and exciting environment inside the building. This encourages children's participation and enjoyment successfully. They use effective questioning to develop children's thinking and communication skills.

The staff include children in assessing their own learning and they discuss sensibly with the children what they need to do to improve their work. They assess children regularly and conscientiously. They record observations and assessments to measure children's progress in personal books and in each child's progress record. Parents and carers are informed appropriately about their children's achievements. The information is available to them at any time.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Effective arrangements exist to support the health and wellbeing of children. These arrangements contribute well to the development and general welfare of children and support their learning effectively. The setting offers positive opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children. The staff foster values

such as honesty, fairness and respect sensibly. For example, there are practical opportunities available for children to reflect, discuss feelings, say thank you and pray. This is evident as they take turns politely while eating snacks and drinking around the dining table. The setting has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The children are actively involved in environmental projects. They recycle paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and compost food in the outdoor area. This is beginning to develop their understanding of sustainability effectively.

The setting uses positive and consistent behaviour strategies and, which eliminates any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. Children are happy and safe in the company of adults at the setting and they are ready to ask for help and support. All staff have suitable qualifications and broad experience and the ratio of adults to children is favourable. Staff expertise is used well in the teaching and supervision of activities.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The setting is safe, the doors locked and only opened by a staff member. No one can come in and a child cannot leave unaccompanied. The staff take care when children are collected and staff ensure that children are under the care of their parents or familiar carer at the end of each session.

The setting records effectively the learning needs of children when they join. Regular reviews of children's progress ensure that individuals who are suspected of being in need of additional support are supported purposefully. The staff discuss these with the appropriate agencies. The leader is additional learning needs co-ordinator. She is very familiar with the procedures necessary to support children with special needs.

Learning environment: Good

Through daily activities and the approach adopted by staff, the setting promotes a positive ethos. It places a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity through the use of specific stories and different characters. The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all areas of learning and equipment. Staff know the children well and their individuality is recognised. Every child has equal access to an interesting and varied curriculum.

The setting uses its resources successfully in the building to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase and children's needs. Children are encouraged constantly to move freely around the rooms and participate in activities in all areas of learning. The resources are accessible to children, which promotes children's sense of responsibility successfully. Continuous activities, focused tasks and opportunities to enrich learning share resources effectively.

The outdoor area is arranged appropriately. Currently, the staff do not use the outdoor area effectively to target the literacy and numeracy skills of children. There are purposeful opportunities available for children to grow plants in specific planting areas. The quality of the building is appropriate, safe and is maintained well.

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

The leader has a sense of purpose, which promotes and sustains improvement. The teaching and learning are managed well, and generally, expectations are sound. The leader and the management committee ensure that staff understand their roles fully and work together well as a team. They use the guidance of outside agencies such as the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin sensibly. This practice ensures the best use of staff expertise and it challenges the staff to improve in positive, sensible and supportive ways.

The leader, staff and management committee plan purposefully to provide interesting experiences for the children. Relationships with children, parents and carers and the management committee are positive. This contributes significantly to the sense of community that belongs to the setting.

The leader and the management committee use relevant information about the setting consistently and they have a sustainable focus on ensuring progress against the setting's priorities. The development plan is a useful document. There are clear priorities for improvement identified through sound self-evaluation procedures. There are good processes in place to ensure that resources are available to meet the improvement objectives.

The staff receive relevant and appropriate training, which has a strong impact on the quality of provision. The leadership ensures that outcomes for the children are good. The leadership implements the policies and initiatives efficiently, including those that meet local and national priorities such as the implementation of the Foundation Phase and the framework for literacy and numeracy.

Improving quality: Good

All staff know their setting well. The leader and the management committee have established sound arrangements to monitor children's standards and the provision. Working daily together effectively, conscientious assessment, sharing ideas and using funds sensibly for useful resources ensure this. Therefore, strengths and areas for development are recognised consistently well. As a result, steps are taken to maintain effective practices and implement change successfully. There are clear links between the self-evaluation and the development plan's targets, which drive improvements in the setting.

A positive culture of self-evaluation pervades all the work in the setting. Staff are open to new ideas and willing to experiment with different ways of working. For example, they have just adopted a new literacy plan in order to raise children's standards and to support the process of transferring to the local schools. They are eager to share their knowledge with other partners such as the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin.

The staff are very receptive to new ideas, suggested by the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin's advisory teachers. For example, the local authority's

recommendations on how to improve the self-evaluation and assessment have affected the quality of teaching and learning experiences positively. This has a purposeful effect on the learning and wellbeing of children.

The self-evaluation considers the views of children, their parents and carers, the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin intentionally. This is beneficial to the development of the setting. The management committee and leader demonstrate clearly how they have improved the provision over time, by adopting different strategies and receiving advice from others.

Partnership working: Good

A wide range of partnerships contributes strongly to good achievements and children's wellbeing. Staff take active steps to involve parents and carers in the life of the setting. Parents are informed regularly about all aspects of the setting's work and events. Parents and carers, in the answers to the questionnaires and in discussions, express their satisfaction with the setting. They appreciate the standards of care and quality of education available. They appreciate the open door policy and the opportunities to meet staff on a daily basis.

Links with local schools are established appropriately. Effective arrangements exist for transferring assessment information. The support provided by the Mudiad Meithrin benefits the setting greatly, through implementing policies and advising the management committee. The ready co-operation between the setting and the local authority benefits the development of the setting. A positive relationship exists with the local authority's advisory teacher. The advice and suggestions help move the setting forward and contribute to the purposeful provision and effective leadership.

Staff work diligently together, share information about children and know whom to contact and when if additional support is required. Community links are used effectively to support children's learning.

Resource management: Good

The leadership is strong and is constantly aiming to improve all aspects of the setting's work. An established professional learning community exists within the setting. This enables staff to develop and share their professional knowledge effectively. The strategic planning supports good quality teaching across the setting.

Resources are managed and used purposefully to support learning and to bring about improvements in the setting. The leader and the management committee have a sound understanding of their budget. They prioritise their spending in line with their proposed actions for improvement. Financial decisions evaluated by the management committee ensure a direct and positive impact on outcomes, such as children's achievements and wellbeing. The leader and the management committee ensure that the setting has enough staff with appropriate qualifications and training.

Due to the steady progress of the children, the diligent staff's impact on children's standards and wellbeing, the support of the management committee and purposeful leadership, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

The number of responses received was fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Appendix 2

The Reporting inspector

Mr Nicholas Jones	Reporting inspector
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Copies of the report

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