Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

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

A report on

Cylch Meithrin Rhaeadr

c/o Ysgol Gynradd Rhaeadr
Bryntirion Lane
Rhayader
Powys
LD6 5LT

Date of inspection: April 2025

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Cylch Meithrin Rhaeadr

Name of setting	Cylch Meithrin Rhaeadr
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Claire Evans
Person in charge	Kelly Thompson
Number of places	24
Age range of children	2 – 5 year olds
Number of 3 and 4 year old children	12
Number of children funded for early education	12
Opening days / times	08:00 – 15:30 Monday to Friday
Flying Start service	No
Language of the setting	Welsh
Is this setting implementing the Child Care Offer?	Yes
Welsh Language Active Offer	This service anticipates, identifies and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.
Date of previous CIW inspection	26 September 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection	First inspection
Date(s) of this/these inspection visit(s)	01/04/2025
Very few children come from Welsh-speaking households.	

Summary

Theme	Rating
Well-being	**Excellent**
Learning **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Excellent**
Care and development	**Excellent**
Teaching and assessment **(only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting)**	**Excellent**
Environment	**Excellent**
Leadership and management	**Excellent**

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1. Further develop opportunities to promote children's awareness of various cultures and needs.

What happens next

CIW and Estyn will invite the setting to prepare two case studies on its work in relation to the use of the outdoor area as well as their partnerships with the community for dissemination on their websites.

Main findings

Well-being: Excellent

Nearly all children feel happy and very safe at the setting and know that every practitioner respects them. They have a very strong sense of belonging and a strong voice and feel confident expressing how they wish to use the environment. For example, they make extensive contributions about what they do in the outdoor area which develops a sense of pride. They select their resources independently and follow their own interests instinctively, for example, by creating a show in the performance area and collecting water from the outdoor area to experiment with pipes. Nearly all children manage to express their personal feelings and needs effectively. For example, when moving from one area to another, when collecting water and milk to drink and when washing their hands independently. Children make the most of the opportunities that have been planned for them and the resources that have been laid out, deciding where they wish to play and when they would like to do so. For example, children were seen sitting in the outdoor area for an extended period as they enjoyed looking at a book. Together, this contributes effectively to developing children's independence and welfare.

Children of all ages settle exceptionally quickly at the start of every session and feel very happy. Children were heard shouting 'goodbye' to their parents/guardians before immediately going to play with their friends enthusiastically. Nearly all children enjoy their play and are full of excitement. Laughter is heard throughout the setting, for example as they race on their bikes down the path towards the main entrance.

Children of all ages interact effectively with each other and with practitioners. As a result, they look out for each other and have formed close relationships. Nearly all children show exceptional kindness towards one another. For example, they are willing to support each other by working together in the role play area, by setting out chairs during snack time and by collecting fruit. Most of them have a keen interest in undertaking role play activities with their friends. For example, by pretending it's Christmas Eve and singing Christmas songs whilst they wait for Father Christmas in the sensory room. Nearly all children are confident in the presence of visitors, and they were eager to know everyone's names and discuss the tadpoles and guinea pigs at the setting.

Nearly all children are active and learn effectively through play. They enjoy excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills. They take full advantage of opportunities to climb ropes and trees, balancing on a rope as well as enjoying nature.

Nearly all children are developing independent learning skills very effectively. They pour their own drinks into real mugs and put them in an appropriate bowl after they have finished. They recycle any waste using appropriate bins. They also take regular responsibility for their personal hygiene, use the toilet independently and wash and dry their hands.

Learning (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Excellent

Nearly all children make very strong progress from their starting points, especially with regard to physical and social skills. They are adventurous, confident and curious learners. They develop excellent social relationships with others. Nearly all children take turns and their behaviour is excellent, resulting in a calm and efficient environment where everyone is busy with their learning.

Nearly all children make very strong progress whilst developing their communication skills. They listen carefully to the practitioners and other children and respond confidently when speaking to visitors. Nearly all children join in with songs and stories successfully during circle time sessions and a minority are beginning to repeat many songs whilst playing. For example, when placing candles on a cake made of play dough, they sing “Penblwydd hapus i bawb” (Happy birthday to everyone) and manage to engage the majority of children in the song.

Nearly all children enjoy stories and join in with familiar parts of the story. They know how to handle books as readers and understand that there is a meaning to the words and pictures. For example, they follow the print with their finger and point to the pictures whilst telling the story to a practitioner who was ill in bed. Around half the children are beginning to recognise the initial sounds of letters. Nearly all children use a wide range of equipment skilfully when experimenting and mark-making. A very small number of children are beginning to understand the function of writing by marking some letters from their name in the creative area.

Most children's numeracy skills are developing very well, with the majority able to count to ten successfully and recognise colours in both languages. Most children demonstrate a strong understanding of mathematical concepts when playing and exploring. They understand the concept of time when stating that the cake will take 5 minutes to cook and when announcing that the show will start in 10 minutes. They use appropriate vocabulary such as full, empty, one more or less when discussing how much coloured liquid they need to pour to make a tasty cup of tea and when filling large trucks with soil in the woodland.

Nearly all children develop their digital skills very effectively by using a wide variety of equipment. For example, they use cameras confidently to take photos of a practitioner after a make-up session, and use a laptop to order food online. Most children consider how to problem solve and persevere to complete tasks. For example, when chopping vegetables for lunch proves difficult, they persevere in a number of different ways before solving the problem by using a small knife.

Most children's creative skills are developing well. They make sensible decisions and choices about what to use when working creatively. Most children can express themselves very well when undertaking role-play activities in a real-life context. They play together imaginatively and are fully immersed for a period of time as they apply their skills to come up with games and enjoy nature in the outdoor area.

Nearly all children develop their physical skills far beyond what is expected. They use a range of outdoor equipment skilfully to improve their gross motor skills when

climbing a ladder onto trees, swinging on a tyre swing or crossing a cargo net confidently. Nearly all children make excellent progress with regard to fine motor skills as they hammer nails and use pipettes to move colourful water carefully to the china cup.

Care and development: Excellent

Practitioners ensure that children's health and well-being are a priority. They are very conscientious and effective when planning a good variety of activities which have a positive impact on children's development. All policies are current and are implemented throughout the setting. They have extensive knowledge and understanding of child safeguarding and know what to do should they have concerns about a child's safety. Leaders ensure that all practitioners have a current first aid certificate to ensure they are confident to deal with any accidents. Effective records are kept of any accidents, including the first aid provided. Practitioners pay excellent attention to each aspect of children's hygiene, reminding them to wash their hands after activities. They encourage children to eat and drink healthily and to take part in physical activities daily. They keep clear records of children's allergies and dietary needs and the information is displayed in the setting's kitchen. Practitioners keep records of children's daily activities and share the latest information with parents when they come to collect them. As a result, the setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet the requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Practitioners are a particular strength at the setting. They each have a special relationship with all the children. They always greet them in a happy and warm manner throughout the day. They go about their work very effectively, knowing when to intervene and when to allow children to develop their skills and abilities independently. Practitioners are gentle and relaxed in the children's presence. Very few examples were seen where they had to use behaviour management strategies, but this was done in a very gentle and caring manner. Practitioners support children very effectively and speak to them in a sensitive manner, praising them extensively during all activities. Due to the ethos of the setting, practitioners observe children but allow them to manage their own play without intervening unnecessarily. This is among the setting's exceptional strengths. For example, they allow children to prepare a show for the stage, listening to their discussions and ideas from afar.

Practitioners plan according to children's needs, ideas and events that impact them. As a result, they develop opportunities for children very effectively. They also provide them with real life experiences. Due to the death of the setting's goldfish, they discussed the circle of life with children and used public transport to go out to buy two new guinea pigs. The importance of animal care was emphasised by inviting a visitor to cut the guinea pigs' nails and encouraging children to brush their fur. Practitioners know all children exceptionally well and show pride when they succeed. They have a very productive partnership with parents. They discuss their children's needs and achievements regularly which has a very positive impact on their development.

Teaching and assessment (only applies to three and four year old children who do not receive education in a maintained setting): Excellent

Practitioners have an excellent understanding of child development and identify each child's individual needs and strengths. They have adopted the Curriculum for Wales successfully and take a responsive and purposeful approach when planning. They support children by leading their learning, using their interests to spark their curiosity and develop their skills across the curriculum.

Practitioners use an effective assessment procedure to highlight progress and plan next steps. Through regular observations, they adapt provision and share achievements with parents and carers. The information is reviewed consistently to ensure progress. Planning is meaningful to respond to individual needs, ensuring a balance between exploring new experiences and returning to familiar activities in order to keep children engaged.

Practitioners provide rich opportunities for children to explore resources freely, with no specific outcome expected. This develops children's imagination and creative skills very successfully. The careful planning and indoor and outdoor environments give children the freedom to choose where to explore.

Practitioners make the most of opportunities to extend children's experiences through visits to the local community and by welcoming visitors regularly. These valuable experiences develop children's understanding of the world around them, creating meaningful links with the community. For example, children are full of excitement when a member of the community visits to show how to take care of the guinea pigs. They also visit a care home where they sing Welsh songs which develops inter-generational links and a sense of pride in their culture.

Practitioners promote literacy effectively by providing opportunities for children to develop verbal and listening skills and opportunities to use the Welsh language in meaningful contexts. They develop children's early understanding of the Welsh language very successfully and use Welsh phrases effectively when communicating. Welsh language songs are used consistently to reinforce the language as part of the daily routine.

Practitioners foster a love for reading by creating an atmosphere where reading is a natural part of children's daily lives. Books are available everywhere, including in a shelter or under trees in the woodland, which encourages reading for pleasure. Practitioners also provide wide-ranging opportunities to develop early mark-making skills by using a variety of media and practical methods.

Practitioners are excellent language role models, using questions effectively to encourage children to express themselves, solve problems and learn from their mistakes. One of the provision's excellent aspects is the quality of interactions between practitioners and children. They know when to step back and observe and when to intervene skilfully.

There is a wide range of resources in the mud kitchen and home corner which support the development of numeracy skills successfully and practitioners encourage

children to count as they play in the environment. Children use authentic equipment to explore mathematical concepts such as full, empty, small, big, heavy, light in everyday life contexts. As a result, they develop an understanding and confidence with regard to mathematical concepts.

Practitioners provide purposeful opportunities for children to use digital equipment when playing, integrating real life resources into a variety of contexts. For example, a microwave is used in the play dough area for children to 'cook' their play dough cakes, before selling them and using a digital till to exchange money. The home corner is full of contemporary resources which enable children to emulate real life situations and develop an understanding of the digital world.

Practitioners provide opportunities that support children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills well. They encourage their curiosity through nature-based activities, such as growing bean plants and building a frame for them to grow around. Practitioners provide excellent opportunities to raise children's awareness of their Welsh identity by providing a range of meaningful Welsh resources within the environment.

One excellent aspect of the setting is the variety of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, especially gross motor skills and risk-taking. They are given opportunities to climb large tyres, cross rope nets and swing on a tyre swing which hangs from the trees. Practitioners promote adventurous play, enabling children to climb a high frame or climb trees confidently. The balance between providing physical opportunities and the positive attitude towards risk ensures effective development and promotes independence and adventurous play.

Environment: Excellent

Leaders have extensive and highly effective measures and procedures in place to ensure that both the indoor and outdoor environments are safe and well-maintained. Hygiene practices are consistently good and children are given independent access to wash their hands. This practice is embedded at the setting which reduces risks to everyone's health. Practitioners ensure that children are safe through their understanding of their role, comprehensive risk assessments and fire risk assessments. They consider the risks associated with all activities, such as within the forest school, but are very eager to ensure that children are given opportunities to take risks safely. The setting is located within the grounds of the local school and the indoor and outdoor areas are very secure. The provision ensures an excellent cross-section of play areas for children, including sheltered areas when needed. As some of the doors are always open to children, and as they can move between areas freely, leaders ensure that there are high levels of supervision and communication to keep everyone safe.

Managers ensure that the environment is safe, clean and of good quality. A variety of high quality furniture and resources are within children's reach and both the indoor and outdoor resources are of the same standard. Equality and cultural awareness are promoted purposefully and managers have identified this as an area to be developed further. The indoor areas are clean and are decorated with posters and displays of the children's work. The environments are laid out very effectively, providing a wide range of purposeful and rich opportunities for children to explore and experiment instinctively.

The setting has a wonderful outdoor area which provides excellent opportunities for children to take risks and develop various skills. Within the area there are climbing ropes, trees which children are encouraged to climb, bug hotels, quiet areas and an experimental play area in the mud kitchen. Managers and practitioners consider the safety of the area very carefully to ensure rich experiences are provided which promote children's skills and abilities to take purposeful risks successfully.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The leader leads the setting very effectively, and child welfare is at the heart of every aspect of work. She has a clear vision for the setting and shares it effectively with practitioners, parents and the community. The setting’s statement of purpose provides an accurate picture of the service provided. The leader has high expectations for herself, the practitioners and the children, ensuring that everyone is given the necessary support to realise their potential. She is committed to meeting the needs of every family, and works closely with parents to ensure their children are given the best provision. For example, she arranges parents evenings either face to face or over the phone, works with them to improve the content of packed lunches and runs cooking sessions for parents and children. Stay and play sessions give parents the opportunity to experience the setting's ethos. There is a very strong relationship between the leader, practitioners and parents.

The leader has created a warm, caring and homely atmosphere where all practitioners feel valued. The leader, responsible individual and practitioner work together very effectively. The responsible individual plays a key role and is very knowledgeable with regards to procedures, strengths and areas for development. Professional development is supported well, and the leader provides opportunities for practitioners to develop their skills and their knowledge. She plans effectively to promote the Welsh language, for example, monthly sessions are held for parents to improve their Welsh skills through fun activities such as cooking, games and role-play activities.

The leader and practitioners evaluate the work of the setting effectively and plan improvements together. They use regular observations to focus on areas such as the effectiveness of the environment, practitioner professional development and children's social skills. They use funding wisely, including the deprivation grant, to

buy high quality resources and to create meaningful experiences. For example, family cooking sessions were held and cooking bags were prepared to encourage parents to cook healthy meals with their children and spend valuable time in their company. The leader and committee work continuously to raise money for additional experiences. Activities such as car washing, litter picking and cake stalls have enabled children to buy guinea pigs and learn about the value of money and community responsibility.

There are robust induction processes in place, including a list of mandatory and optional training in accordance with the needs of practitioners and children. Regular supervision and evaluation sessions are held and practitioners support each other's development through collaborative observations. Weekly meetings include a clear agenda, where priorities, good practice and progress are discussed.

The setting is an excellent example of strong partnerships with parents, local businesses, the community and external organisations to support children's well-being and development. The leader has established meaningful links, creating practical learning opportunities, such as working with local shops to help children to learn about money and healthy choices. Experiences such as visits to a pet shop, swimming and the park extend children's cultural and language experiences. By fundraising for the food bank, children develop a sense of social responsibility. The leader also mentors leaders from nearby settings and collaborates effectively with local schools to facilitate transition arrangements and ensure the continuity of Welsh-medium education. There are strong relationships with the local authority and other agencies, creating a supportive network around each child.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the setting and from CIW and Estyn's websites (http://careinspectorate.wales) (www.estyn.gov.wales)

CIW and Estyn evaluate a provider's effectiveness using a four-point rating scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh weaknesses but improvements are required
Poor	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and significant improvements are required

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Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

CIW has no areas for improvement identified following this inspection.

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

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