Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Cylch Meithrin Y Gurnos

Gurnos Nursery, Cedar Way, Merthyr Tudful, CF47 9PA

07507690863

The inspection visit took place on 08/07/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Cylch Meithrin Y Gurnos
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	19
Main language(s):	Welsh
Flying Start service:	Yes
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	No
Promotion of Welsh language and culture:	The provider promotes, anticipates, identifies, and meets the Welsh language and culture needs of people.

Ratings:

Well-being	Excellent
Care & Development	Excellent
Environment	Excellent
Leadership & Management	Excellent

Summary:

Children experience outstanding well-being outcomes. They confidently lead their own learning, make meaningful choices and influence their play experiences. Children are happy, secure and highly independent, forming positive relationships with peers and adults. They show high levels of curiosity, engagement and enjoyment, while making very strong progress in confidence, resilience and independence.

Staff provide outstanding care and development. Robust safeguarding and health and safety procedures keep children safe. Highly skilled interactions promote children's language, communication and emotional development. Staff know children exceptionally well, use observations effectively and provide highly individualised support, including for children with additional learning needs, resulting in very strong progress and inclusion.

Leaders provide an outstanding environment that is safe, highly inclusive and exceptionally well

designed to support children's wellbeing, independence and development. Robust safety arrangements, effective risk management and continuous improvement ensure children can explore confidently. High-quality, authentic resources, stimulating learning spaces and strong community involvement create rich, meaningful experiences for children.

Leaders provide outstanding leadership and have established a strong culture of inclusion, continuous improvement and high expectations. They successfully promote Welsh-medium education, invest in staff development and contribute to sector-leading practice. Highly effective self-evaluation, strong staff support and exceptional partnerships with families, professionals and the community have a significant positive impact on children's outcomes and wellbeing.

Findings:

Well-being — Excellent

Children experience outstanding well-being outcomes and are highly effective in directing their own learning. They move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments and confidently make choices about their play. Their interests and fascinations shape learning experiences. For example, children's curiosity about a local community member's journey from Merthyr to Istanbul led them to explore different countries, cultures, foods and traditions through meaningful, real-life experiences. Children communicate confidently using speech, gestures and sounds to express themselves. We observed children initiating imaginative play, exploring creative activities and choosing whether to participate in circle time or continue with self-directed play. Children confidently share their ideas, invite adults and peers into their play and use resources creatively to extend their learning. They have genuine choice and control over their play experiences.

Children are exceptionally settled, secure and happy. They arrive confidently, separate from their families with ease and quickly become absorbed in play. Children demonstrate a strong sense of belonging and are comfortable within their surroundings. They confidently access facilities and resources independently, including pouring water from the sink, feeding the fish and helping to set tables for snack time. They move around the environment with confidence and make independent choices about the spaces they use. Children are familiar with daily routines whilst benefiting from a flexible approach that responds to their individual needs and preferences.

Children develop very positive relationships with one another and enjoy spending time together. Friendships are developing well and children show pleasure when their friends arrive at the setting. We observed children chatting together during circle time and mealtimes, sharing experiences and responding positively to one another. They are developing an understanding of their emotions and are becoming increasingly aware of the feelings of others. Children cooperate, share and take turns successfully and understand the importance of being kind to others.

Children thoroughly enjoy their play and learning. They become deeply engaged in activities and sustain concentration for extended periods. They follow their own interests, particularly outdoors, where their ideas drive play experiences. Children explore resources creatively, become fully immersed in their chosen activities and enthusiastically invite others to join them. They demonstrate high levels of curiosity, motivation and enjoyment.

Children make excellent progress in developing confidence, independence and a broad range of skills. They independently wash their hands, use the toilet, select resources and make decisions about activities and play spaces. Children help prepare snacks by cutting fruit and vegetables, setting tables and clearing away plates. They confidently access resources and make choices about their learning. Children, including those with additional learning needs, make very strong progress and demonstrate increasing confidence, resilience and independence.

Care & Development — Excellent

Staff promote children's safety, health and well-being to a very high standard. Robust procedures are embedded throughout daily practice and implemented consistently. Staff wear appropriate personal protective equipment when preparing food and carrying out personal care routines. We observed good hygiene practices throughout the session, including children washing their hands before eating and after activities. Staff offer a range of healthy and nutritious snacks and see that children have continuous access to fresh drinking water. They use snack times as valuable learning opportunities, discussing healthy foods with children, encouraging them to try new tastes and helping them understand the importance of nutrition. Staff ensure that children enjoy extensive opportunities for fresh air, outdoor play and physical development, including access to the music and movement room, which supports physical and emotional regulation. Staff ensure that children's privacy and dignity are respected during nappy changing through the use of privacy screens, well-organised resources and sensitive one-to-one interactions. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Staff demonstrate a very strong understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and are confident in recognising concerns, following reporting procedures and escalating concerns when necessary. Accurate records, robust risk management and regular audits contribute to a strong culture of safety.

Staff manage interactions exceptionally well and create a calm, nurturing and language-rich environment. They are fully engaged in children's play and learning and act as excellent role models. Interactions are warm, respectful and responsive. Staff consistently remind children to be kind and support them to develop positive social skills. They recognise that behaviour is communication and focus on identifying and responding to underlying needs. We observed staff skilfully extending children's learning through meaningful conversations, questioning and commentary. For example, staff explored children's ideas during discussions about other countries and cultures and used rich Welsh language patterns naturally throughout the session.

Staff know children extremely well and promote their play, learning and development highly effectively. A strong key worker system supports secure relationships and ensures children's individual needs are understood. In-the-moment observations, children's schemas and ongoing assessments are used successfully to plan meaningful experiences that reflect children's interests and next steps. Support for children with additional learning needs is a significant strength. Staff work closely with external agencies, including speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, physiotherapists and Flying Start professionals. We saw comprehensive plans and interventions in place for children requiring additional support. Staff use a number of resources and approaches successfully to promote inclusion such as now and next boards and visual supports. They also promote Welsh language development exceptionally well, modelling Welsh naturally throughout the day and helping children develop confidence in their language skills and sense of Welsh identity.

Environment — Excellent

Leaders provide an outstanding environment that promotes children's safety, wellbeing, curiosity and independence. The premises are highly secure, benefiting from locked entrance doors, fob-operated access systems and enclosed outdoor areas. Leaders maintain robust oversight of health and safety through regular risk assessments, daily safety checks and comprehensive building maintenance records. Fire safety systems, emergency lighting, electrical testing, and regular fire drills are all completed and monitored effectively. Leaders use audits and reviews well to identify and manage emerging risks. For example, when a monthly audit identified that an outdoor bridge could become slippery, leaders immediately strengthened monitoring arrangements and added the area to daily safety checks. Children benefit from an exceptional environment where risks are managed effectively while still having opportunities to develop confidence and resilience through exploration, physical play and challenge.

The suitability of the environment is a significant strength. Leaders have created a highly welcoming and inclusive setting where children develop a strong sense of belonging. The environment reflects leaders' belief that it should continually evolve to meet children's changing needs. Children benefit from a range of carefully planned spaces including the main playroom, outdoor learning area, Jabadao movement and physical regulation space and Y Nyth (The Nest), a dedicated sensory and emotional regulation space. Family photographs, children's artwork and the "Dwi'n Perthyn" (I Belong) display contribute to a homely atmosphere. Leaders have designed the environment to promote independence, with child-sized sinks, accessible resources and well-equipped toilet facilities. The outdoor area is particularly stimulating and includes a water pump, planting areas, bug hotel, bird feeder, and large-scale creative opportunities. Children recently grew beetroot and strawberries and enjoyed tasting the produce they had grown themselves.

Leaders provide an excellent range of high-quality resources that support children's development and reflect their interests and needs. Resources are well maintained, accessible and thoughtfully selected. Leaders place a strong emphasis on authentic, real-life materials which create a welcoming and meaningful learning environment. For example, children use real crockery, glass vases containing fresh flowers, china tea sets, dressers, scales, pots and pans and an old house telephone within the home corner. Natural resources such as pinecones, wooden slices, plants, raffia and loose parts further enhance opportunities for exploration and creativity. Leaders actively promote diversity and awareness of the wider world through resources including African masks, musical instruments from different cultures and learning materials linked to children's exploration of countries and cultures through current projects. Leaders' commitment to continuous improvement and innovation results in an exceptionally rich environment that makes a significant contribution to children's wellbeing and development.

Leadership & Management — Excellent

Leaders provide highly effective and inspirational leadership. They have established a clear vision centred on inclusion, Welsh-medium education, children's wellbeing and strong community relationships. Leaders ensure the setting operates in line with regulations and national minimum standards and communicate their vision effectively through the Statement of Purpose, welcome information, parent meetings and regular communication with families. Their ambition to provide the very best outcomes for children is evident in all aspects of the service. Awards and recognition at local and national level demonstrates the impact of this approach. Leaders also contribute to sector improvement through conference presentations, pilot projects and sharing effective practice with other providers. The setting actively promotes the Welsh language and has become an important part of the local community, with families choosing Welsh-medium education because of the positive experiences provided.

Leaders have created a strong culture of reflection and continuous improvement. They actively seek and respond to the views of children, families, staff and partner agencies. Self-evaluation leads to meaningful change and improvements that directly benefit children. For example, observations of children's emotional wellbeing needs led to the development of Y Nyth, an emotional regulation space, and the movement and physical regulation room. Training undertaken by leaders and staff has influenced improvements throughout the environment, including the welcoming entrance area and transition arrangements. Leaders identify strengths and areas for development honestly and use improvement plans effectively to drive progress.

The management of staff and resources is a significant strength. Leaders implement robust recruitment procedures and ensure staff are suitably qualified, trained and supported. Extensive professional learning opportunities include training in additional learning needs, speech and language development, and anti-racist practice. Leaders value staff wellbeing and have created a highly positive culture where staff feel respected, supported and appreciated. Staff described the team as having "Great teamwork", "Amazing and supportive."

Partnership working is outstanding and has a significant impact on children's outcomes. Leaders establish trusting relationships with families from the outset and tailor settling-in arrangements to meet individual needs. Communication is open and responsive; parents feel listened to and supported. Parents told us, *“The service puts our children's needs first. Nothing is too much trouble".* Another parent described the setting as *“an absolute asset to the community."* Leaders work exceptionally well with schools, the local authority, external professionals and the wider community. Innovative initiatives such as the skill-sharing board encourage families to share their talents, resulting in worthwhile contributions. Community fundraising projects have generated valuable resources whilst creating meaningful learning experiences for children.

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.

National Minimum Standards

Where we find the provider is not meeting the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care but there is no immediate or significant risk for people using the service, we highlight these as Recommendations to Meet National Minimum Standards.

We expect the provider to take action to address these and we will follow these up at the next inspection.

Standard	Recommendation(s)
	No NMS Recommendations were identified at this inspection

Mae’r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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