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Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

A report on

Cylch Meithrin Caban Hirael

Site of Ysgol Hirael
Ffordd y Gogarth
Hirael
Bangor
LL57 1BA

Date of inspection: June 2026

by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

and

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

About Cylch Meithrin Caban Hirael

Name of setting	Cylch Meithrin Caban Hirael
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	Tracey Jones
Responsible individual (if applicable)	
Person in charge	Rebecca Stant
Number of places	32
Age range of children	2-4 years old
Number of 3- and 4-year-old children	21
Number of children who receive funding for early education	7
Opening days / times	Monday – Friday, 8:30-15:00
Flying start service	Yes
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	This is the first inspection since registration.
Date of previous Estyn inspection	22/01/2018
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	16/06/2026

Summary

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

Non-compliance

No non-compliance was identified during this inspection.

Recommendations

R1 Develop consistency in teaching to ensure that practitioners challenge and support pupils appropriately to make sound progress.

R2 Continue to develop the strategic role of leaders, including the role of the committee.

R3 Develop more robust self-evaluation processes that use a wide range of evidence and perspectives to identify strategic priorities for improvement.

What happens next

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

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Children have a strong voice and make independent choices confidently. They choose how to spend their time appropriately and engage immediately with the wide range of play experiences available on arrival. Many children are confident in asking for support or attention from practitioners because they know that their wishes will be considered and valued.

Nearly all children are happy on arrival and are ready to play and learn. They separate from their parents or carers willingly, going comfortably to practitioners. Most children settle quickly as they are familiar with the setting's daily routines. They feel safe and enjoy the sense of comfort and warmth of being in the company of others, such as sitting on a practitioner's lap during circle time or when listening to stories. Many children begin to manage their emotions appropriately, for example by asking for support when necessary.

A majority of children interact positively and develop important social skills well when discussing what to put in a mixture in the mud kitchen. They play together or alongside each other smoothly. Many children begin to share resources happily and show an interest in the work and successes of their friends. For example, they are enthusiastic when sharing tools to free animals from blocks of ice and show excitement when they succeed. Many work together effectively to complete tasks and communicate well when trying to build the highest tower possible.

Nearly all children enjoy playing and learning. They concentrate and persevere well when taking part in play experiences and enjoy experimenting and discovering with a variety of equipment and materials. They use their imagination and feel confident to move resources between areas. For example, they collect water from the tray and flour from a mark-making activity to make a magic potion in the mud kitchen, enjoying purposeful role-play.

Most children develop good independent skills in their daily activities. They complete personal tasks confidently, such as putting their coats and bags away on arrival and using tongs to transfer fruit to their plate during snack time, taking pride in their successes.

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

Many children make sound progress from their starting points and show a keen interest in their learning. They respond positively to hands-on experiences, showing natural curiosity when exploring the world around them, for example when observing the movement of a ladybird and handling it carefully. Most children respond appropriately to daily arrangements, such as helping to tidy up at the end of activities. Nearly all children explore the learning environments confidently and immerse themselves fully in their play, by recreating meaningful experiences.

Many children's communication skills develop appropriately. With support, they repeat words and simple phrases in Welsh with increasing confidence, particularly when taking part

in singing songs and familiar rhymes. Many children make appropriate progress in their early writing skills and choose to make marks in a variety of contexts, demonstrating increasing control of writing tools. A few children develop appropriate reading skills. They respond positively to interactive books, show interest in the pictures and imitate characters to support their understanding.

Many children develop numeracy and problem-solving skills effectively through practical experiences. They count to five with support and explore concepts such as capacity by pouring and experimenting with water. Many children apply their skills purposefully when solving practical problems, for example when making the well work, showing perseverance and co-operation to ensure a successful outcome. Most children's digital skills develop appropriately, with many controlling electrical toys confidently and beginning to understand the effect of pressing buttons on movement.

Most children's physical development is strong. They use gross and fine motor skills skilfully, controlling bikes and scooters confidently and using hammers and woodwork tools skilfully. Many children develop their creative skills effectively, using their imagination to use materials of their choice to create a volcano.

Many children's personal, social and emotional skills develop soundly. They play together happily, begin to share resources and work together kindly to collect and pour water in the mud kitchen.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners prioritise children's safety and have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that children are kept safe and healthy. They have completed appropriate child safeguarding training and are confident about the correct procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a child. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. An appropriate number of practitioners have completed full paediatric first aid training and practitioners keep a detailed record of accidents and ensure that parents and carers are informed about any incidents.

Practitioners follow rigorous hygiene procedures and these practices have been incorporated purposefully into the children's activities. For example, they encourage children to wash their hands regularly and ensure that surfaces, such as tables, are disinfected before and after mealtimes. Practitioners promote healthy eating and physical activity effectively. They encourage children to eat fruit and provide valuable opportunities for them to develop their physical skills and spend time outdoors on a daily basis.

Practitioners form meaningful relationships with the children. They speak clearly and lovingly to the children and treat them with care and respect. Practitioners use consistent and effective strategies to promote positive behaviour, in line with the setting's policy. For example, they remind children gently and praise expected behaviour and efforts continuously. Practitioners encourage children to move carefully around the environment and provide comfort, when necessary, by responding to their needs promptly and sensitively. They act as positive role models and interact with the children in a supportive

manner. They support children to wait their turn, for example when preparing for mealtimes.

Practitioners follow purposeful arrangements to identify and support the individual needs of children, including those with additional learning needs. They gather relevant information about each child's preferences, needs and background before they start at the setting. This ensures that they know the children well and understand their needs and wishes clearly. Effective procedures are in place to refer children for additional advice and support from external agencies in a timely manner. Practitioners undertake additional training, where necessary, to strengthen their ability to support each child effectively.

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

Practitioners demonstrate a sound understanding of the importance of play in child development and have a clear understanding of their role as enabling adults. They use their knowledge effectively to plan purposeful learning experiences. Practitioners play with children sensitively and respond appropriately to their interests, by extending learning effectively at times.

Practitioners use the Welsh language consistently, by modelling language skilfully and repeating familiar phrases. On the whole, they converse naturally during play, using commentary and questions that support language development appropriately. They sing Welsh songs and nursery rhymes regularly, which supports the development of children's vocabulary and listening skills successfully. However, story sessions do not always engage children's interest fully, which limits their participation. Practitioners provide purposeful experiences to promote communication by using devices such as radio communication toys and signing.

The setting provides a well-organised environment that enables children's independent learning successfully, with clearly defined areas and resources that are accessible for free choice. Practitioners provide purposeful activities to develop early numeracy and marking skills effectively. Provision for developing digital skills is sound. The use of resources such as the light board, scales and electronic cars nurtures curiosity and enables children to handle equipment confidently. However, practitioners do not take advantage of children's spontaneous interests effectively enough to develop their learning further.

Practitioners develop effective assessment and observation processes that contribute positively to children's progress. They use regular observations to identify needs and to adapt provision on the spot. Detailed assessment records provide a clear picture of each child's progress over time and enable practitioners to identify their next steps effectively. However, these practices are not implemented consistently enough by all practitioners and, as a result, they do not develop children's skills purposefully enough and move their learning forward effectively enough.

Practitioners have sound relationships with parents and strengthen this connection by sending the setting's teddy bear home with children at weekends. They encourage families to record their experiences together, which provides meaningful opportunities for children to share and discuss their personal experiences. This supports the development of children's

spoken language and boosts their confidence to communicate effectively in a familiar context effectively. This practice fosters a strong sense of belonging and enables families to contribute actively to their children's learning and development.

Environment: Good

Leaders ensure a safe and clean environment. They have robust arrangements for controlling access to the site, along with clear procedures which ensure that visitors sign in promptly. Leaders ensure that appropriate processes are in place to monitor and manage any hazards effectively. Comprehensive risk assessments outline potential dangers and the steps to reduce or eliminate the risks to children. Leaders ensure that fire drills are conducted regularly and that safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers, is serviced regularly. They display relevant information about practitioners, policies and safeguarding procedures in key areas around the setting. All records relating to the service are kept securely.

Leaders provide a good quality, self-contained environment which is welcoming and homely. They provide suitable facilities that enable children to use the toilets and wash their hands independently, in addition to a nappy-changing area which ensures privacy. Leaders organise the environment carefully to provide a good variety of suitable play and learning opportunities for children, with plenty of space for them to move around freely. Areas are also provided where children can enjoy listening to a story, reading or relaxing. Leaders ensure beneficial daily opportunities for children to use the outdoor area, encouraging them to enjoy activities such as building, creating sounds or gardening. They succeed in fostering a sense of belonging among the children by displaying pictures of them taking part in different activities, along with photographs of them with their families.

Leaders provide resources of a high standard that are appropriate for the children's age and stage and development. Resources are placed at low levels, ensuring that children have easy access to them. This enables children to choose independently and pursue their interests. Leaders provide good opportunities for children to learn about the world around them. Reused resources and natural materials are used effectively to encourage children to experiment and discover. For example, they provide reused cardboard for children to create a bug hotel. Similarly, household items are available for children to use in their play, which foster their curiosity of imagination effectively. They provide a range of valuable resources that promote children's awareness of the needs of different people and various cultures, such as books, toys and musical instruments from different countries.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders provide appropriate leadership which establishes a positive ethos and ensures that the children's well-being, safety and development are at the heart of the setting's work. They convey a clear vision for the development of the setting and work together appropriately to realise this vision. Leaders understand their regulatory responsibilities and support each other well. As a result, administrative and safeguarding arrangements are sound and ensure a safe and well-organised environment for children and staff.

Leaders develop appropriate self-evaluation processes and are beginning to foster a culture of continuous improvement. They work effectively with other agencies to identify areas for

development. The committee is beginning to build on its skills to fulfil its strategic role in monitoring and evaluating provision. This is beginning to have a positive effect on developing a more systematic approach to planning for improvement. However, self-evaluation processes do not consider a wide enough range of views to identify their priorities firmly enough and plan for improvement.

Leaders manage staff and resources effectively, ensuring that relevant professional learning opportunities are available to staff which have a positive and direct influence on the quality of provision. For example, following recent training, practitioners have developed rich areas that spark children's curiosity and encourage them to explore more independently. On the whole, there are robust supervision and evaluation processes in place which ensure regular support for practitioners. Leaders use grants effectively to improve resources, which has a positive effect on children's learning experiences.

Leaders foster beneficial partnerships that support children's progress and well-being effectively. They use digital platforms skilfully to share information with parents and carers. Leaders ensure that suitable opportunities are available for parents to receive clear and appropriate information about their children's experiences and progress, and this supports their awareness of the setting's activities. Leaders have suitable transition arrangements which ensure that children are confident and ready for the next stage in their education. Leaders are beginning to develop valuable opportunities to engage with the community. For example, regular visits to the local shop and park enrich children's experiences, developing their understanding of their local area and their social skills through real-life experiences.

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 judgement 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

This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).

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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.

Mae’r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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