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Care Inspectorate Wales

A report on

Cylch Meithrin Carreg Hirfaen CIO

Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen
Cwmann
Carmarthenshire SA48
8ET

Date of inspection: February 2025 by

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Cylch Meithrin Carreg Hirfaen CIO

Name of setting	Cylch Meithrin Carreg Hirfaen CIO
Category of care provided	Full day care
Registered person(s)	
Responsible individual (if applicable)	Fiona Davies and Siwan Davies
Person in charge	Wendy Evans
Number of places	19
Age range of children	2-4 years old
Number of 3 and 4-year-old children	14
Number of children who receive funding for early education	10
Opening days / times	8.30am – 12.00pm Monday – 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 provides the Welsh Language Active Offer and makes every effort to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture.
Date of previous CIW inspection	This is the first inspection since re-registration.
Date of previous Estyn inspection	November 2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	11/02/2025
The setting is on a school site. Twenty-three children attend the setting with a few coming from Welsh-speaking homes.	

Summary

Theme	Judgement
Wellbeing	**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. Expand opportunities for children to play and learn more independently

R2. Develop practitioners' use of open-ended questions to extend children's thinking skills

R3. Use observations more purposefully to plan the next steps for each child

What happens next

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

Main findings

Well-being: Good

Most children feel happy and at home and enjoy the company of their friends and practitioners as they socialise with each other. They are given opportunities to make choices regularly and help themselves to resources confidently, knowing that they have the freedom to do so. Children have a voice to express themselves confidently. For example, as they think of ideas, they ask for resources such as glue and stickers. Many children are comfortable asking questions or asking for support, making comments and expressing their opinions. For example, they enjoy the obstacle course in the outdoor area and, inside, many play toether with light boards and small world resources. They are comfortable and confident asking for support, for example when putting on an apron, opening pots of paints or using the water fountain.

Most children are enthusiastic on arrival and settle quickly. They are familiar with the morning routine and carry out independent tasks skilfully, such as hanging up their coats and bags and self-registering before going to play happily. They call the practitioners' names confidently when necessary and show that they have a sense of belonging. Nearly all children listen to instructions and respond happily. They gain satisfaction from developing their understanding of their environment and their friends. For example, during snack time, children like to count the individuals around each table and ensure that there are enough pancakes for everyone. A majority of children are comfortable with visitors and include them in their play.

Most children interact well and develop close and warm relationships. They develop their social skills by talking, observing and participating in their play. They respect the feelings and interests of others and learn to work together and take turns. For example, they experiment with dough and talk enthusiastically about its cherry scent when working together to make cakes. Children enjoy role-playing when preparing breakfast for visitors and when working together to use the large scales and helping each other with the heavy buckets.

Nearly all children are energetic, enthusiastic and enjoy taking part. They are active in their play and benefit greatly during their free sessions to explore, experiment and discover without being under time pressure. For example, when discovering loose pieces and without adult intervention, they work together to create a pizza and decorate it with stones, and describe the tomato, lettuce and cheese. A few children offer support to others confidently, such as showing their skills when making colourful shapes on a large digital board.

Most children develop good independent skills, for example when going to the toilet, washing and drying their hands without support and eating their snack, including pouring their drinks.

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

Nearly all children make good progress from their starting points and develop their skills effectively while playing and learning. They listen attentively to instructions and respond positively to adults. They get to know the setting's procedures successfully, for example when helping diligently during tidying up time. Many children make suitable progress in their oral skills. They increase their vocabulary consistently and use it correctly in relevant contexts, for example when taking orders for the café in the play corner. Many children enjoy singing and join in energetically during sessions. They sing songs and nursery rhymes, which has a positive effect on their oral skills and development. However, only a few children speak Welsh spontaneously. A majority of the children begin to use simple signs to communicate when responding to a practitioner signing with them. Nearly all children express their feelings and emotions clearly and confidently to practitioners. A few children know their colours well and state this clearly orally, for example when describing 2D shapes on the interactive whiteboard. A majority of children develop early reading skills appropriately. They choose books voluntarily from the reading corner and discuss the content with practitioners. They enjoy following a story and respond appropriately to questions about the characters. Many children develop their early writing skills effectively in line with their stage of development. They begin to make marks successfully and begin to realise that writing has a purpose when communicating with a reader.

A majority of children develop sound numeracy skills and use correct mathematical language, for example when counting the farm animals. They apply their mathematical knowledge effectively when playing in the different areas and discuss simple patterns and objects that are bigger and smaller than each other. Most children's physical skills develop effectively. They handle small objects skilfully, for example when handling balls of clay by rolling, kneading and shaping them carefully. Most children develop their gross motor skills appropriately when they are given an opportunity to do so, by balancing and travelling along wooden planks laid out as a path.

Nearly all children develop their digital skills successfully and understand that digital equipment has an effect on their everyday lives. They use their hands to create pictures on a large interactive board and use digital cameras confidently. Many children develop their creative skills skilfully, for example when making a get well soon card. They use wet glue carefully and pour glitter with precise control. Many children work well together and develop problem-solving skills. For example, they consider how to pour sand through spinners in the sand pit and decide on the most suitable equipment. Many persevere when they face challenges and keep trying to complete a task.

Care and development: Good

Practitioners understand their responsibilities to keep children safe and prioritise their health and safety successfully. They implement robust policies and procedures effectively. They understand their responsibilities to safeguard children, have completed appropriate training and demonstrate a sound understanding of the policy. They have attended appropriate first aid training and keep accurate records of accidents and incidents. They ensure that robust procedures are followed during snack times and encourage children to wash their hands regularly. Practitioners understand their responsibilities to support children with additional learning needs and have effective networks and purposeful procedures. Practitioners have a thorough and well-organised registration system and have consent records in place. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concerns.

Practitioners have a kind and warm relationship with the children and they treat them with care and respect. They model natural and positive interactions consistently and teach children to be considerate, share and take turns. For example, when children ask for help, practitioners are on hand to step in and offer support when necessary. Practitioners talk to the children constantly, offering praise and encouraging them to try activities. Similarly, they sit at the table with the children during snack times and remind them to be kind. This promotes children's social skills successfully.

Practitioners know the children very well and have an understanding of their individual needs and wishes. Practitioners work continuously to develop a variety of experiences to motivate children to learn by doing. They start each theme by talking to the children and encouraging them to suggest ideas. They use the children's interests by providing purposeful opportunities for them.

A majority of practitioners support children's language development effectively during their play and learning activities. On the whole, they provide effective language models that promote children's understanding and encourage them to use the language while playing.

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

Practitioners plan learning experiences that succeed in engaging the interest and meeting the needs of nearly all children. They consider children's opinions and interests seriously and create a weekly focus that concentrates on the children's ideas successfully. They use Curriculum for Wales effectively to plan experiences for children. They are aware of important aspects of pedagogy and have a good understanding of child development and the way they learn through play and experimentation. All practitioners work well together to play interesting experiences for children.

All practitioners have a wonderful relationship with the children. Children enjoy interacting with practitioners regularly and practitioners encourage the children to develop a wide range of skills successfully. In the best practice, practitioners support learning extremely effectively while ensuring purposeful opportunities for children to choose their own learning pathways. They promote children's play effectively and provide opportunities for them to take risks and experiment with new experiences. As a result, many begin to develop as confident explorers and independent learners. However, practitioners tend to over-direct activities, which limits the children's independence, at times.

Practitioners prepare attractive and stimulating areas both inside and outside the setting. There are extensive opportunities for children to develop their skills continuously. They provide a reading corner that celebrates books and is welcoming and homely to attract children to sit and develop their early reading skills with enjoyment. Practitioners provide a wide range of digital resources across the areas which enable children to use them confidently and purposefully. Practitioners ensure that resources are available to create artwork. Many children use them to practise making marks, to paint or create a simple collage. Practitioners celebrate children's efforts to create art by displaying their work prominently throughout the setting. They ensure that resources to promote children's fine motor skills are accessible to them, for example with equipment to knead, cut and roll clay as a prompt to make cakes for the café. Provision to promote children's gross motor skills are more limited. Practitioners apply children's understanding of mathematical language effectively. They discuss concepts such as big and small or long and short while playing alongside the children, for example when making earrings out of clay. In the best practice, practitioners question children purposefully and ask them open-ended question, which develops their thinking skills and deepens their understanding. However, questioning usually tends to be superficial and closed, which limits opportunities for children to think carefully about their answers.

Practitioners use the area around the setting effectively to ensure that children notice and marvel at nature. Practitioners organise interesting trips for the children each term, such as their visit to the botanical gardens or a pumpkin farm. This strengthens children's awareness of their local area and enriches their work back at the setting.

Provision for developing children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual skills is effective. Practitioners deal with any disagreements sensitively and promptly and teach children about the difference between right and wrong and the importance of respecting others. They promote simple rules, such as taking turns and sharing, successfully. They encourage children to take responsibility and children respond particularly well when they need to tidy up or prepare to go outside. They promote Welsh culture well and raise children's awareness of significant traditions and celebrations, such as Welsh Language Music Day. They provide suitable opportunities for children to learn about the main celebrations of other cultures by celebrating their important days and ensuring that resources, such as relevant toys and books, are available to children.

Practitioners keep useful notes about children's progress. However, they do not use this information purposefully enough to plan the next steps in the development of individual children.

Environment: Good

Leaders ensure a safe and clean environment and have robust arrangements to ensure safe access to the site. They have clear procedures that ensure that visitors sign in promptly and leaders keep all records relating to the service safe on site. The building's maintenance records are kept up-to-date and leaders ensure that fire drills take place regularly. Leaders ensure that the setting and environment protection equipment, such as fire extinguishers, electrical equipment and first aid equipment, are serviced regularly.
Leaders conduct effective and targeted risk assessments. These are reviewed and used promptly and effectively. Leaders keep a register of children and practitioners and ensure that the ratios of practitioners to children are correct at all times. They have an information board which displays appropriate safeguarding policies, certificates and procedures and confidential documents are kept on site under lock and key.

Leaders provide a good quality, self-contained environment that is welcoming and warm. They ensure safety, privacy and space for the number of children who attend on a daily basis. Leaders provide suitable toilets and dedicated nappy changing facilities. In addition to the internal setting, they also make effective use of the school environment and its facilities. In the main room, leaders and practitioners provide stimulating and interesting learning areas that have been prepared and set out in an accessible manner to invite children to discover, explore and learn. On the whole, they provide children with the freedom to move around their environment independently in line with their interests.
Leaders have also invested significantly in the outdoor area provision, which is enclosed and secure.

Children have easy access to a wide range of resources of a high standard, which enable them to choose and pursue their interests. Indoors, children are given extensive opportunities to develop their skills through touch, exploration and discovery. Similarly, there are beneficial opportunities for children to use authentic resources and develop their imagination, confidence and social skills. The environment is enriched further through the use of resources such as lamps and plants, which add to the setting's relaxed atmosphere. Leaders and practitioners encourage the children's personal and social development effectively by offering them resources to learn about their community, diversity and different cultures.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have a clear vision for the setting, which is conveyed clearly in the statement of purpose. They are passionate about creating a welcoming and homely ethos where children can develop their skills successfully in a supportive and warm environment. They realise this vision successfully with the loyal support of the practitioners. They are very dedicated to their work and the whole team works together effectively for the benefit of the children in their care. The setting complies with regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

Leaders have a strong working relationship with the new committee. They share information about the setting's progress with them effectively and the committee is very supportive of the practitioners as they plan improvement. However, the person in charge is not always involved in important decisions relating to the setting, such as appointing new practitioners. This means that the expertise of the person in charge is not always part of the setting's long-term planning. Leaders are aware of the setting's strengths and aspects that could be strengthened. They raise money regularly and prioritise expenditure sensibly, putting the children first when making decisions. Leaders create a positive ethos where children and practitioners feel that they are valued greatly. They implement thorough and effective self-evaluation processes. They consider the views of parents, local

authority education officers and wider partners. They have established robust procedures to respond to their priorities and develop the service.

Leaders produce appropriate policies, which are implemented effectively. They follow safe and robust recruitment policies and all practitioners have an appropriate qualification and relevant experience of working with children.

Leaders forge beneficial links with a range of partners to improve children's health, learning and well-being. They address concerns effectively and make purposeful referrals to the correct agencies to support individuals. The setting has a very close partnership with the school in which it is located. Leaders make good use of the school grounds. They maintain successful transition arrangements, by inviting the reception class teacher to the setting regularly and by providing opportunities for children to visit the Reception class in the weeks before transition. Leaders value the mature relationship they have with the local authority's education officer. This supports them to consider the development of provision and the effect on children's progress successfully. They also have a practical working relationships with the officers of the umbrella organisation, who work with them. This ensures a range of beneficial policies, procedures and training that support the provision effectively. The leader and practitioners have a close and supportive relationship with parents and carers. They are available at the beginning and end of each day as parents collect their children and organise beneficial opportunities for parents to visit the setting. They communicate with them regularly to discuss their children's well-being and progress.

Leaders ensure that robust steps are implemented to manage staff. Leaders' development priorities intertwine effectively with the development needs of the setting. Leaders use the budget and grants, including the early years pupil development grant, sensibly to prioritise expenditure against the setting's targets.

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

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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.

Mae’r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

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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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