

A report on
Bobl Bach y Bannau

Ysgol Y Bannau
Penlan
Brecon
LD3 OYB

Date of inspection: January 2011

by

Eifion R Morgan

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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Bobl Bach y Bannau is located in a purpose built building in the grounds of and adjacent to Ysgol y Bannau situated on the outskirts of Brecon. The group meets on five mornings a week during term time from 9.10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Overall, these are excellent facilities comprising well resourced spacious accommodation, well maintained easily accessible outside areas and with added advantage of using some of the school's facilities.

Access to the setting is via an entrance hallway which is used as a cloakroom and there are facilities for parents and carers to shelter when waiting for their children.

The main room is suitably differentiated into activity areas well matched to the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. There are adjoining areas including a kitchen area and a room for role play and computer activities. There are toilets incorporating washing facilities and a disabled toilet. This room has appropriately sized tables and chairs.

To the outside are two areas under cover, a flat hard surface for toys and bicycle play, and a grassed area. The outside area is fenced and safe and accessed through doors from the main room.

Children attending the setting come from Brecon and the surrounding area. Whilst this is a largely English speaking community, in that no child comes from a home where the predominant language spoken is Welsh, parents select the setting to enable their children to be educated in Welsh and move to the adjacent Welsh medium primary school.

No child is from a particularly advantaged or disadvantaged background and currently none have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN), although such children would be welcomed. The setting is ideally placed to cater for any child with a physical disability. No children are from an ethnic background and all are English speaking.

All children, including those with SEN, attend in the term following their third birthday. Children attend for 3 or more mornings a week and move onto the next stage of their education in the term before their fourth birthday. Currently there are 11 children on the register and all are funded. The setting is registered to accommodate up to 24 children.

The setting was inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) this January (2011). There were no important recommendations. The setting has not previously been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

The setting's current performance	Good
The setting's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Excellent features

- The setting provides children with an outstandingly good learning environment augmented by highly effective links with the primary school.

Good features

- All children progress and achieve well in all areas of learning.
- All children enjoy learning, have very good attitudes to learning and behave responsibly.
- Learning experiences are well planned and provide children with a well balanced curriculum.
- Teaching is effective and well directed towards the Foundation Phase desirable outcomes.
- The calm, supportive ethos evident in the setting ensures that children are well supported and guided.
- Adults are good role models and their good command of the Welsh language has a positive effect on children learning the language.
- The setting is well led and managed. Staff work well together and resources are well used to support the learning.

Prospects for improvement

- The rearranged activity areas are well directed at achieving the Foundation Phase targets and improving educational standards.
- Staff have a positive attitude to change.
- Staff are fully involved in staff development initiatives in the school.
- Leadership has provided a clear direction for the work of the setting.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the setting needs to:

- R1 continue to develop the planning to incorporate more opportunities for children to work and play independently, both inside and outside the setting.
- R2 further refine assessment procedures so as to identify the next steps in individual children's learning and to plan accordingly.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

All children achieve good standards and make realistic progress in all areas of learning. They persevere well and show a great deal of enjoyment and commitment to their tasks.

All children have very good communication skills. Bearing in mind that some children have only been at the setting for a comparatively short period of time their knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language is very good. All children have a basic Welsh vocabulary which enables them to make themselves understood.

All children have well developed listening skills and carry out instructions promptly and willingly. They express their preferences for stories and recognise and name the main characters in stories such as "Mrs Wishi Washi".

All children, to various degrees, converse in the Welsh language when playing together and sing Welsh songs and nursery rhymes enthusiastically.

All children, without exception, show interest in books. The majority hold books appropriately, turn pages and follow stories in their books.

Most children practice their writing skills both on paper and chalk boards. A few children can overwrite their names and all know the functions and purpose of writing.

Most children are beginning to count and the more able children count accurately to 10. These more able children recognise number to 10 and write number in a

recognisable form. These children recognise inaccuracies in number sequences to 10.

All children recognise pattern and can match objects, such as different patterns of socks. They can group objects by colour. Children have regular opportunities to use the computers in the school and are competent users of the computer mouse. They recognise and use basic computer icons, such as when making coloured sketches for display.

All children show an active interest and a willingness to partake in activities across the curriculum. Their visits to the locality have enabled them to examine the wildlife and changes that occur in winter. They have grown seeds and know that plants need water and soil in order to grow.

Children's creative ability is enhanced through drawing and painting and using a variety of materials, such as silver foil, paper and textiles, to illustrate their work, such as "living in cold lands". Such activities also enhance their motor skills, such as when marking and cutting shapes.

Wellbeing: Good

All children have an appropriate understanding in line with their age of how they can keep healthy. They know, for example, when they need to wash their hands and do so with little prompting. Most children have a basic understanding of the importance of fruit in the diet.

All children have ample opportunities to take part in physical activities, including playing out of doors. Children undertaking such physical activities do so safely and free from physical danger.

All children show enjoyment in learning. They arrive eagerly in the morning and display good positive attitudes to their learning. Behaviour is invariably good and children relate well to each other and to adults.

In the main, they work together co-operatively but are not always given sufficient opportunity to choose activities and to co-operate on tasks.

People from the community have visited the setting, for example fire fighters, and this enables children to know of people in the community who help them.

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

Planning is done collaboratively and provides the children with innovating and suitably challenging activities. It meets children's needs and successfully maintains their interest. The curriculum is well designed to meet the philosophy of the Foundation Phase and to achieve the identified outcomes for children's learning.

Overall, the curriculum builds on children's previous experiences and incorporates good opportunities for skill development across the curriculum. Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their basic and key skills in literacy and numeracy, to develop an understanding of the world and to develop their physical and creative skills.

A notable and good aspect of children's learning experiences is the provision made for children to acquire their Welsh language. Welsh is the natural language of the setting with a minimal input in English and only when new words are introduced. Welsh is seen as the natural language of communication and the children, whatever their background, find this totally acceptable. There is also appropriate reference to the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales, such as the celebration of Santes Dwynwen and St. David's Day.

The setting, through its day-to-day activities enables the children to learn about recycling. Appropriate waste bins are provided for waste paper, plastic, and remains of fruits and the children were observed selecting appropriate disposable bins. Children are beginning to understand the idea of sustainability.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching indicates that staff have a working knowledge of child development and an understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase for children's learning. The staff have high expectations of the children and these expectations are realised in practice.

Activities are suitably challenging and meet children's needs. Activities are well used by staff to develop children's thinking skills. Questioning is well used to develop their language and communications skills. Staff are very good language models.

Overall, staff are actively involved in planning activities and consequently know their role. They intervene appropriately in children's play and other activities. On occasions however, children are not given sufficient encouragement and opportunities to choose activities and to work independently or in small groups and so develop their decision making and interpersonal skills.

Assessment procedures and records show that children are assessed regularly, and there are comprehensive records of children's progress and achievements. These are dated and illustrate the development children have made. Reports to parents show children's achievement in the six areas of learning.

The results of assessment are well used in instances as a basis for planning the next steps in children's learning. This is well illustrated in the planning to develop children's numeracy skills. However, in other instances the planning is not sufficiently detailed to enable the next steps in children's learning to be identified and planned for.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing is good, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good with some very good aspects.

All children enjoy their time at the setting – they are keen to get involved and partake enthusiastically in the activities set out for them. They show a sense of curiosity and interest in the world around them, as when on visits to the locality and in the follow up work, such as leaf printing and drawing.

A notable and very good feature of the setting is its success in developing moral values such as respect, honesty and fairness and in developing children's understanding of what is right and wrong.

All children are valued and this is apparent in the very good inter-personal relationships evident in the setting. Staff are vigilant in ensuring children's active participation in their work and give very good support whatever children are doing. This is facilitated by the favourable staff/children ratio. During the inspection there were good instances of individual children being given responsibility such as "helpwr y dydd" having specific responsibilities during snack time. This is good practice. Behaviour is very good as are the relationships between children and adults.

Children's art work is often linked to their thematic work, such as their study of "Eskimos" (Inuit) and children have opportunities to join in with the pupils at the primary school for cultural activities.

Links with organisations in the community are well designed to foster greater understanding of people that help them. This includes a specific focus in the setting on "hospital activities" since the local hospital is nearby.

The setting is a safe and secure environment. It enjoys the security provided by being within the confines of the school grounds. No child can leave unaccompanied nor can anyone enter the building unannounced. Good care is taken when children are being collected at the end of the morning to ensure that they are in the care of their parents or carers.

The setting has well established procedures to provide support for children who require specialist help. Although no child currently present requires specialist help the setting is well able to accommodate any children with special needs, particularly any form of physical disability. Staff are vigilant in reviewing children's progress and in assessing any child that might have additional needs. There are good links in place with specialist services.

There is a designated person responsible for dealing with child protection issues and staff are familiar with safe guarding issues and what to look for. Procedures in place follow the "All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008)", and staff have regular training. Risk assessment is routinely undertaken.

Learning environment: Excellent

The friendly inclusive nature of the setting promotes an outstanding ethos, where children's individuality is recognised. Staff know the children very well and are sensitive to their needs and parental aspirations and act accordingly.

All children have equal access to a high quality curriculum which is enhanced by close association with the primary school. This involved joint planning of the Foundation Phase curriculum to ensure progression and continuity and making use of the school's professional expertise. Children also use the school's facilities including the school fields and the computer suite as well as attending school functions, such as morning collective worship when appropriate.

Another outstanding feature that impacts very well on children's development is that staff working in the setting also support them in class when they move onto the next stage in their education.

The Early Years teacher in the school also has regular contact with children in the setting as was seen during the inspection. The teacher was familiar with the children and as they were with her.

Overall this arrangement ensures exceptional support for all children, promoting the wellbeing of all and eliminating any antisocial or oppressive behaviour. It also provides for children a high quality of continuous provision in their learning.

Should there be, in the future, children with any form of disability, either physical or otherwise, this arrangement would provide them with potentially very good care and support, including making use of outside specialists through the school support services. From a parental point of view this arrangement provides them with continuity and a clear point of contact should they require additional help or information.

Staff have relevant and appropriate qualifications and are well experienced of working with young children. They have kept up to date with relevant training and benefit through being involved with the school's professional training arrangements.

The setting benefits from having outstanding resources that are suitable and well matched to the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the specific needs of the children. The accommodation is used very effectively and the local environment is very well used to enhance children's learning.

Overall, the learning environment is outstanding and highly effective in supporting children's development.

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

Staff work together well and compliment each other efficiently. The current leadership gives the setting a clear direction and a sense of purpose that has promoted improvement. The staff share values, aims and objectives and are both involved in strategic planning. They successfully promote a positive ethos and have high expectations of the children that are realised in practice.

A very good and notable feature of the leadership is the close and effective links with the school and the setting is seen very much as part of the educational provision offered to young children in the Welsh language in this somewhat Anglicised community.

Leadership is clearly well focused on children's needs and recent developments in particular have successfully accomplished this. Children are well managed to successfully develop their self-esteem and links to parents and carers are well established.

The weekly/daily curriculum and activities are displayed for parents to see and this encourages them to support their children's learning. Several, in discussion, are taking the opportunity provided by their children being at the setting to learn the Welsh language.

The setting is well managed, taking good account of relevant legislation and guidance. The management group is well informed about the work and performance of the setting and fulfil their legal responsibilities.

The setting meets national and local priorities.

Improving quality: Good

The setting is self-evaluative and recently has identified areas for improvement and implemented them for the benefit of the children. This has included making better use of the resources in providing attractive and purposeful activity areas in the classroom and also developing the outside. The outside now is well used, such as to provide areas, for example for physical development, chalk board for initial writing skills, a sound area where children can use kitchen utensils for percussion work and water activities.

Parents are regularly consulted and have access to the setting on a daily basis.

The staff benefit from the school's professional development training. Planning is also done in conjunction with the Early Years teacher so benefiting from her expertise and creating a holistic programme for the children.

Staff have also attended professional training, such as on Food Hygiene which ensures children's wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

The close, effective professional partnership with the school to which children transfer is an outstandingly good feature. This makes a significant and valuable contribution, not only to children's educational development but also in terms of their wellbeing.

Parents, in the questionnaire replies, and in discussion, expressed their total satisfaction with the setting and are highly appreciative of the facilities available for their children. They appreciate the open door policy and the opportunities they have daily to meet the staff. Parents value the care and attention their children receive and the ease of transfer to the next stage of their education.

The setting also benefits from the support provided by the Local Authority staff who visit regularly. The setting values their advice and suggestions which have contributed well to developing the facilities. Discussion with local authority staff has also been beneficial in evaluating the provision and setting targets for development.

Resource management: Good

Staff work together very effectively. Planning is done collaboratively hence maximising each others contribution. Planning also involves the school's Early Years teacher.

Resources are very well used to motivate children and to stimulate and challenge them. They have a highly positive impact on their learning and are well used in the teaching. Overall, the setting is very well resourced and where there are needs (such as providing IT resources), these are provided by the school.

The setting is well located to provide outdoor experiences for the children and overall resources are well focused on developing children's skills across all areas of learning.

Overall, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Four questionnaires were returned.

The results of the questionnaires and discussion with many parents during the inspection indicated their strong support for the setting. Responses to the statements in the questionnaire were all positive and this was confirmed in discussion.

Response to discussions with children

All children are happy at the setting. Their enthusiasm is evident when they arrive and they show a great deal of self-confidence from knowing that they are well supported and have interesting experiences at the setting.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Eifion R Morgan	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.uk)

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.