



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Dolgarrog
Ysgol Dolgarrog,
Ffordd Conwy,
Dolgarrog,
Conwy,
LL32 8QE**

Date of inspection: November 2012

by

Wil Williams

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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Context

Cylch Meithrin Dolgarrog was established approximately 36 years ago in the village of Dolgarrog in the Conway Valley. The setting provides Welsh medium pre-school education for the children of Dolgarrog village and parts of the surrounding rural area. The area is described as being neither prosperous nor socially or economically disadvantaged.

The setting meets in a designated classroom at Ysgol Dolgarrog. Children of all abilities and backgrounds are admitted to the setting. During the inspection, no children with additional learning needs or from an ethnic origin attended the setting.

Two hours and ten minute sessions are provided on five days a week for children between two and a half and four years of age, although the number of sessions attended by individuals varies according to parental wishes. Currently, there are three four year old children and four three year old children registered at the setting. One three year old child is funded by the Partnership.

Almost all children speak English at home. No child is learning English as an additional language. The main medium of teaching and learning is Welsh.

The two practitioners who support children's learning are appropriately qualified to teach the early years.

When children have completed their time at the setting, almost all continue with their education at Ysgol Dolgarrog.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in January 2012. This is its first Estyn inspection.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- the curriculum fulfills the needs and interests of children across the whole ability range enabling them to make good progress;
- provision for developing literacy, number and information communications technology skills is effective;
- skilful teaching creates a stimulating, challenging and exciting environment which encourages the involvement of all children;
- assessment information is used effectively for future planning;
- there are effective arrangements for supporting children's health and wellbeing; and
- the setting is an inclusive community where every child has equal access to all areas of learning and activities.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leader has a clear vision and strategic objectives for developing the setting;
- there are robust arrangements for maintaining good practice and implementing improvements;
- the setting is developing well as a strong learning community;
- a good range of partnership activities contribute strongly to children's achievements and welfare; and
- practitioners are very open to new ideas and are willing to try out different ways of working.

Recommendations

In order to further improve, the setting needs to:

R1 further develop the management committee's role as a critical friend to the setting: and to

R2 promote children's awareness of the traditions of other cultures in Wales.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

There is no report on children's progress, standards in their skills development, Welsh language and wellbeing. This is because the number of relevant children present at the time of the inspection was too few to report on without identifying individual children.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Through effective collaboration, the leader and practitioner successfully plan a curriculum which fulfills the needs and interests of children across the ability range. This enables all individuals to make good progress towards fulfilling the Foundation Phase outcomes. The stimulating and flexible activities planned successfully promote the engagement of all children ensuring they have an active role in their learning. Through systematic long term planning, the setting ensures that as children progress through the Foundation Phase, the curriculum builds systematically on current knowledge, understanding and skills

The practical and open ended nature of the learning experiences offered provide valuable opportunities for children to form positive relationships with each other and to nurture a sense of respect and tolerance towards others. Children are encouraged to take risks and experiment with new experiences and to investigate their environment confidently and to become independent learners. The experiences provided indoors and outdoors provide good opportunities for children to develop their physical and creative skills and to acquire a better understanding of the world in which they live.

Through careful and systematic planning, the setting ensures that children acquire the necessary communication, numeracy and information communications technology skills to enable them to benefit from all their learning experiences. Through first hand experiences, children are given good opportunities to develop their thinking skills and to develop different strategies for solving problems which are important to them.

Children are constantly encouraged by practitioners to use Welsh as much as possible in their learning and when communicating with everyone else at the setting. Celebrating Welsh traditions and raising children's awareness of their Welsh roots are highly valued.

The setting acts in a sustainable manner and ensures that children have an active role in its recycling and energy saving arrangements. Although the setting celebrates the practices of some other cultures in Wales, such as the Chinese New Year, this aspect has not been fully developed.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a thorough understanding of Foundation Phase requirements and have up-to-date knowledge about child development and the effect of additional learning needs on development. The stimulating, challenging and exciting environment indoors and outside which is successfully created, encourages all children's engagement, participation and enjoyment. A careful balance is maintained between activities chosen by the child and practitioner led activities. Practitioners effectively use the practice of following individual children by participating in their play, to challenge and extend the individual child's understanding and to move the learning on. Practitioners expect much from every child and understand the importance of giving children the opportunities to learn through play and following their own interests. As a result, individuals are often completely engrossed in their task and use their imagination in a creative and extremely interesting way when they create imaginary situations. When rare instances of inappropriate behaviour arise, staff intervene in an unobtrusive and robust manner.

There are comprehensive arrangements for assessing children's progress. Children are assessed when they enter the setting and a systematic record is kept of their development and progress in all areas of learning throughout their nursery education. Practitioners make increasing use of assessment for learning strategies when they observe children on task and record their progress in learning. Assessment information is recorded and used purposefully for future planning and setting improvement targets for individual children.

The practice of including parents in the assessment processes ensures that they are aware of their children's progress and of what they can do to help them improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has appropriate policies and arrangements for promoting children's healthy living and welfare. Healthy snacks are provided for the children every day and the setting is involved in a teeth brushing initiative which promotes health and wellbeing. Every child is given an opportunity on a daily basis to participate in physical activity either in the school hall or in the outside area. Practitioners are very careful of every child's safety and ensure that there is no threat to their health or welfare. Every child is confident when he or she seeks support or guidance from an adult and practitioners ensure that they are free from any harassment or bullying from other children. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children satisfies requirements and gives no cause for concern.

The setting has comprehensive provision for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During their daily contact with children, practitioners place strong emphasis on the need for everyone to be kind to each other, to be honest and fair and to behave in a responsible manner. This greatly helps children to differentiate between right and wrong. Regular opportunities for children through 'Helpwr Heddiw' to undertake responsibility and to make their own decisions about their learning contribute significantly to their development. Effective induction arrangements, together with the close relationship with parents, ensure that children settle down quickly at the setting.

If it became necessary, there are effective arrangements for ensuring that children with additional learning needs receive appropriate support and guidance from the setting and specialist services. The leader is very familiar with the arrangements for seeking professional support for children and parents.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where every child has equal access to all areas of learning and to the activities provided for them. There is a strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and ensuring that children and staff are free from harrassment. The setting has enough practitioners with sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach all aspects of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating environment where every child can take full advantage of the learning experience and develop positive values and attitudes.

There is a plentiful supply of good quality resources for every area of learning which are carefully matched to every individual’s developmental and learning needs. Resources in the community are used very effectively to support learning in the classroom

Although being relatively small, the classroom is adequate for the number of children attending the setting. It’s of good quality and fully utilised by children and practitioners. The use made by the setting of the school hall and the outside play area adds substantially to children’s learning experiences.

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

The leader has a clear vision and strategic objectives for developing the setting and through close colaboration with the practitioner, explores how to implement them. Both staff members perform their roles effectively and have high expectations as regards performance. The ethos created at the setting challenges all to perform to the best of their ability in order to enable every child to work to his full potential in a safe an supportive environment. Every session is carefully planned to ensure that children and staff use their time effectively. There are appropriate procedures for performance management which help practitioners to evaluate and improve their practice and to identify their professional needs. The extremely positive relationship the setting’s staff has with children and parents contributes substantially to creating a sense of community.

The management committee has an appropriate understanding of its role and works hard to support the setting’s priorities. Committee officers visit the setting regularly and ensure that any complaints are resolved and that the setting complies with legal requirements. However, members are not actively involved in the self-evaluation processes and their role as critical friend to the setting is underdeveloped.

The setting is very successful in satisfying national and local priorities linked to the Foundation Phase. This has resulted in a number of key initiatives and, in particular, the implementation of assessment for learning procedures.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know the setting thoroughly and, with the leader's encouragement, self evaluate and are constantly looking for ways to improve. There are robust arrangements for promoting good practice and for implementing changes in areas in need of improvement. Self evaluation pays careful attention to parents' views and benefits substantially from the professional advice of the local authority support teacher. Practitioners are able to demonstrate how, through self evaluation, they have instigated visible improvements in provision and particularly, in planning and assessment.

The setting's self evaluation report is of good quality and clearly identifies its strengths as well as aspects which need to be further improved. The setting has made very effective use of information from self evaluation to draw up a detailed development plan which notes how improvements are to be implemented.

Practitioners receive strong support through a programme of continuous professional development provided mainly by the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin. This has enabled staff to acquire new knowledge and skills and to deliver the Foundation Phase successfully. Training sessions also provide staff with valuable opportunities to share their practice with practitioners from other settings.

The setting is developing well as a strong learning community. Practitioners are very open to new ideas and willing to try out different ways of working and to share knowledge and ideas with one another.

Partnership working: Good

The setting undertakes a prominent role in the development of collaborative practices and has established a good range of partnership activities which make a strong contribution to children's achievements and welfare and reinforce the provision.

Practitioners take active steps to involve parents in the setting. Parents are regularly informed of the setting's activities and receive a comprehensive information pack when their children enter the setting. The advice and resources they receive to help their children learn Welsh is a notable feature.

There are strong links between the setting and the primary school with the setting benefiting substantially from its use of the school's outdoor play area and hall and also learning resources, such as books, with the setting. There are clear arrangements for transferring assessment information with the children when they start school.

The close co-operation between the setting and the local authority support teacher makes a very positive contribution towards improving the quality of the provision and standards. Practitioners work together effectively, share information about children and plan the setting's development collaboratively. There are appropriate links with the community and with individuals, such as the nurse, who comes to the setting to share her experiences with children. These links make an important contribution towards enriching children's knowledge and learning experiences.

Resource management: Good

There are sufficient good quality resources to support children's learning and the setting is appropriately staffed. Members of staff are well managed to make the best use of their time and expertise. The comprehensive arrangements which exist to satisfy practitioners' development needs ensure that they possess current knowledge about recent developments in the Foundation Phase.

The leader and the management committee have a very detailed understanding of the setting's finances and are particularly industrious arranging fund raising activities in order to maintain and develop the setting. Spending decisions are evaluated carefully to ensure that they have a direct impact on standards of achievements and children's progress and wellbeing. The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholders' satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on parental questionnaires as only a small number of responses (fewer than 10) were received

Responses to discussions with children

Children say that they are happy in the setting and are confident to turn to any adult to ask for advice and support.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mr Wil Williams	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)

Glossary of terms

Areas of Learning	<p>These are the seven areas that make up the Foundation Phase curriculum in English-medium settings. (Welsh-medium settings are not required to teach Welsh language development as this is already the language of the setting.) The Areas of Learning are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity • language, literacy and communications skills • mathematical development • Welsh language development • knowledge and understanding of the world • physical development • creative development
CSSIW	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	This local authority partnership approves settings as providers of education. It also has the power to withdraw funding from settings which do not comply with the partnership's conditions of registration.
Foundation Phase	The Welsh Government initiative that aims to provide a balanced and varied curriculum to meet the different developmental needs of young children from 3 to 7 years of age.
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
Local authority advisory teacher	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
Mudiad Meithrin	A voluntary organisation, which aims to give every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh.

National Childminding Association (NCMA)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National (NDNA)	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.