



*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 Machynlleth  
Tŷ Melfed  
Craigfryn  
Machynlleth  
Powys  
SY20 8JB**

**Date of inspection: June 2012**

**by**

**Mr W 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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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## Context

Cylch Meithrin Machynlleth was opened over forty years ago in a cabin on the primary school site. It now meets in a new integrated centre on a site close by and shares the building's facilities with other pre-school organisations. The setting is part of the Powys Children and Young People's Partnership; it provides pre-school Welsh medium education for the town of Machynlleth and the surrounding rural area.

The area served by the setting has been designated as a 'Communities First' area. Most of the children who attend the group come from the town itself and villages close by. Children of all abilities and backgrounds are admitted at the setting. During the inspection, no children with special educational needs or of ethnic origin were attending the setting.

Three hour sessions are provided on five mornings a week and one two hour afternoon session. The number of sessions attended by individuals varies in line with parental wishes. Currently, 16 three year old children are registered at the setting and are funded by the Partnership.

Most children speak English at home and the remainder have at least one Welsh speaking parent. The setting's main medium of teaching and learning is Welsh.

The setting has three members of staff, namely the leader and two practitioners. All members of staff are appropriately qualified to teach the early years.

Almost all children transfer to Ysgol Gynradd Machynlleth at the beginning of the term of their fourth birthday.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in October 2011

## Summary

<b>The Setting's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The Setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- standards of communication and literacy skills are good;
- most children make good progress in learning and display high levels of independence and perseverance;
- standards of behaviour are good with children showing consideration towards other children's feelings and working harmoniously together;
- the range of interesting and exciting learning experiences motivate children;
- the quality of the teaching is high and the assessment is thorough, and there is
- comprehensive provision to promote children's health and wellbeing.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the setting is well lead and members of staff work effectively as a team;
- members of the management committee fulfil their responsibilities very thoroughly;
- practitioners are continually self evaluating and investigating ways of improving;
- practitioners are open to new ideas and are willing to try out new ways of working;
- a robust learning community has been established at the setting, and there is
- a wide range of partnership activities which make a strong contribution to children's good achievements and wellbeing.

## Recommendations

In order to improve further, the setting needs to:

R1. plan Welsh language development in more detail;

R2. provide more guidance for parents on how they can help their children.

### What happens next?

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

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Standards: Good**

Most children make good progress in learning from the time they start at the setting and achieve good standards in the Foundation Phase areas of learning. When participating in a wide range of activities, almost every child recalls previous learning quickly and develops good thinking and problem solving skills. Most children show an interest in activities and learning opportunities and are usually keen to participate in them. During activities where they are given freedom of choice, the most mature children experiment and investigate confidently, are willing to take risks and make good progress towards becoming independent learners.

Through daily routines such as registration, snack time and role play activities, most children are starting to develop good communication and literacy skills. They communicate what they want clearly and during group discussions, they convey their feelings and ideas clearly and confidently. All children enjoy learning and join in various songs and rhymes very enthusiastically. During story time, most listen intently and discuss the main events and their favourite character quite confidently. Many can select books independently for a specific reason whilst a few have started to use strategies for recognising familiar words and letters.

As they experiment with different media for mark making, most children start to develop an understanding of some of the functions of writing, such as sending a letter or creating a shopping list.

All children have positive attitudes towards learning Welsh. Most children respond quickly to practitioners' basic instructions and understand far more words than they are able to use themselves. During whole group sessions, many children repeat some familiar words and phrases correctly. However, only a few children are sufficiently confident to respond in Welsh and to use the language.

### **Well-being: Good**

All children enjoy their time at the setting and have formed close relationships with other children and practitioners. The good behaviour of most children and the care they show towards each other is a prominent feature of the setting. Many children consider other children's feelings. When they are engaged in specific activities or in tasks that they themselves have selected, they work together harmoniously. According to their ability and stage of development, the majority of children display high levels of independence and perseverance.

All children possess good understanding of how they can become healthy through what they eat and the physical activity they undertake. They all benefit substantially from tasting a variety of healthy snacks and they respond positively to physical sessions such as 'traed bach sionc.' (lively little feet). When they chat to a visitor,

children say that they feel safe in the setting and that they are free from physical and verbal abuse.

Almost every child is willing to undertake responsibilities such as self registration, and as they become more mature, they learn how to make more informed decisions about their learning.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Good**

The Foundation Phase Framework is used purposefully by practitioners to recognise the most appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure that there is progress and progression in children's learning. Through detailed and flexible collaborative planning, the setting successfully provides a wide range of interesting and exciting activities across all areas of learning which stimulates the interest of all children. The practice of following children's interests adds substantially to the quality of children's learning.

There is cohesive provision to develop literacy, numeracy and information communications technology skills which are firmly embedded in every child's learning experiences. The setting creates an extremely imaginative environment indoors which encourages children to experiment with new experiences and to develop key skills effectively. The outdoor area enriches children's learning substantially. Learning experiences are further enhanced through visits to places in the community and by the contributions of a number of visitors to the setting.

The opportunities provided for children to develop their personal identity and to raise their awareness of Welsh culture, festivals and traditions are of high quality. Through role play and following the story of a child's life in a foreign country, as well as through raising money for charities, children become increasingly aware of their role as global citizens. There are good opportunities for them to learn about sustainability and to play an active role in the setting's recycling arrangements

### **Teaching: Good**

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase and have high expectations for children's learning. The stimulating, challenging and exciting environment, both indoors and out, promotes children's engagement, participation and enjoyment effectively. Through thoughtful collaborative planning, focus tasks are used purposefully for introducing specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Learning experiences are skilfully adapted to meet the needs of all children, including the more able and talented. Practitioners know when it is appropriate to intervene in children's learning and do so sensitively and skilfully in order to challenge children's ideas and extend their learning. The setting successfully maintains an effective balance between activities chosen by children and those directed by practitioners. Imaginative use is made of a variety of resources to appeal to children's interests and improve learning. Support provided by adults is clearly focussed and they make a significant contribution to the quality of children's learning.

Children's progress and learning are assessed and recorded thoroughly across every area of learning and this information is used purposefully to plan the next stage in

learning. The annual reports to parents provide useful information about their children's achievements, welfare and development. However, parents have few opportunities to contribute to their child's assessment.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Provision to promote children's health and welfare, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The experience children get on a daily basis of working in the outdoor area has a beneficial effect on their spiritual and physical development and raises their awareness of the wonders of the natural world around them. Children are strongly urged to be kind to each other, to be honest and fair and to behave in a responsible manner. This greatly assists children in learning to differentiate between right and wrong. The regular opportunities children have to undertake responsibility and to make their own choices about their learning contribute significantly to their personal and social development.

Practitioners know children well and provide them with clear guidance during sessions. The setting supports parents and families well and ensures that there is professional help available for them should the need arise.

Through close co-operation with the primary school staff, practitioners ensure that there are very effective arrangements for transferring children from one establishment to the other and that children settle down quickly in their new class.

The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Children's learning needs are noted in detail when they join the setting and practitioners ensure that those needs are met. Practitioners are familiar with the requirements of the policy for referring children with additional learning needs to the attention of professional agencies.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is an inclusive community where every child is given equal right to all areas of learning and activities provided. There is a strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and on ensuring that children and members of staff are free from any harassment. The setting has enough practitioners who possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach every aspect of the Foundation Phase curriculum. A distinct feature of the setting is the particularly interesting learning environment which is created and the opportunities every child has to develop positive values and attitudes.

There is an extensive supply of good quality resources in every area of learning, including information communications technology. These are carefully matched to every individual's development and learning needs. The resources in the outside area, on school premises and in the community are used appropriately to enrich the curriculum and to support learning in the classroom. The building and the accommodation are of good quality and are used effectively.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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**Leadership: Good**

Through the dedication and enthusiasm of the leader, the setting successfully ceates a positive ethos where children and staff feel appreciated. Practitioners share common values about learning, behaviour and relationships and work together very effectively to ensure that the Foundation Phase and other national priorities are implemented successfully. The leader's strong sense of purpose promotes and maintains improvement effectively. Learning and teaching are well managed, and the setting's policies are implemented effectively. Members of staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities which they fulfil conscientiously. Relationships with children, parents and the primary school are positive and contribute significantly towards creating a sense of community.

Expectations for ensuring improvement are high with the leader supporting and challenging staff to do their best. There are effective procedures for managing and apprising staff performance.

Members of the management committee fulfil their responsibilities extremely thoroughly and provide very strong support for the setting's staff. They have a very good understanding of their roles and are an influential voice in the setting's development.

**Improving quality: Good**

Practitioners know their setting well and through the leader's purposeful management they continually self evaluate and explore ways of improving. Robust procedures have been established to maintain good practice and implement changes in areas which need to be improved. Self-evaluation pays careful attention to the views of the management committee and parents and benefits substantially from the advice of the local authority support teacher.

Information gleaned from self-evaluation is used purposefully in a detailed action plan which prioritises aspects that the setting wishes to improve. The steps taken to improve standards have given rise to positive outcomes.

The long established culture of collaboration, as well as the staff's willingness to undertake responsibilities, enables the setting to develop as a strong learning community. Practitioners are very open to new ideas and willing to experiment with new ways of working and to share information with others at the setting. They are supported by effective continuous professional development which ensures that practitioners have current knowledge of developments in the Foundation Phase.

**Partnership working: Good**

There is a wide range of partnership activities which make a strong contribution to children's good achievements and welfare. Parents are regularly informed of every aspect of the setting's work and practitioners take active steps to include them in all the activities arranged. Although the parents' handbook provides useful information about the setting's policies and procedures, it does not provide advice for parents on



how they can help their children. There are very close links with the primary school nearby and there are clear arrangements for sharing assessment information and good practice.

The setting works closely with the local authority support teacher and this makes a very positive contribution towards improving the quality of provision and standards. Practitioners work together very effectively, share information about children and know whom to contact and when if a child needs extra support. Very productive partnerships have been formed with a number of establishments in the local community.

**Resource management: Good**

Arrangements for managing staff and resources are effective. There are enough good quality resources to support children's learning and the setting is appropriately staffed. The leader and the management committee have a thorough understanding of the budget and prioritise spending in line with the setting's development needs. With the help of other parents, the committee arranges very many fund raising activities. Spending decisions are carefully evaluated to ensure that they have a direct impact on children's standards of achievement, progress and welfare. The setting provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

Sixteen parental questionnaires were returned and almost all the responses were positive. This compares very well with national percentages.

Every parent says that his or her child enjoys attending the setting and is making good progress. They believe that the setting is well run, that there is a good range of activities and that their children have been well prepared to move on to primary school.

### 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 guidance.

## 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](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

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

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	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.
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	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.
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	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.

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