



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 Twtil
Ysgol Santes Helen
Caernafon
Gwynedd
LL55 1PF**

Date of inspection: February 2013

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 Twil provides Welsh medium, pre-school education for the town of Caernarfon and the surrounding rural area. The setting meets in the old church hall which is next to Ysgol Gatholig Santes Helen. In the setting's view, the area it serves is neither prosperous nor economically or socially disadvantaged.

Children of all abilities and backgrounds are admitted to the setting. During the inspection, no child with additional learning needs or of ethnic origin was attending the setting.

Two and a half hour sessions are provided on four afternoons a week for children from two to four years old but the number of sessions attended varies according to parental wishes. Currently, there are sixteen children registered at the setting one of whom is funded by the local authority.

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

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

Almost all children continue with their education at Ysgol Gatholig Santes Helen when they have completed their time at the setting.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales in July 2011. 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:

- learning experiences fully meet the needs of the whole range of children and encourage them to learn effectively and make good progress;
- children receive valuable opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of learning;
- good teaching provides good opportunities for children to become fully engaged in their learning;
- assessment outcomes are used effectively to plan future activities;
- children feel happy and safe at the setting and are willing to ask for help and guidance; and
- there is an ample supply of good quality resources in the six areas of learning.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leadership provides a strong sense of direction for the setting's work;
- practitioners know the setting well and are continuously self-evaluating;
- the setting is developing well as a strong learning community;
- the quality of the provision is good and continuously improving;
- a wide range of partnership activities make a strong contribution to children's achievements and wellbeing; and
- the setting provides good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Review the impact of the action plan on children's progress and the quality of the provision.
- R2 Provide more information for new parents on the Foundation Phase areas of learning.
- R3 Create an outdoor learning area.

What happens next?

The setting will form 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

Learning experiences fully meet the learning needs and interests of the whole range of children. The curriculum encourages them to learn effectively and make good progress across all areas of learning. Appropriate curricular plans strongly reflect Foundation Phase principles and build systematically on children's current knowledge, understanding and skills. Practitioners use the indoor and outdoor environment, such as the local park, imaginatively to encourage children to experiment with new experiences and to develop skills effectively. The encouragement children receive to make personal choices and to follow their own learning pathways contributes well to their development as independent learners. Children visit places such as the supermarket in the local community regularly and learn much from visitors to the setting.

Through a wide range of activities such as role-play and listening to stories, children have valuable opportunities to develop their literacy skills across the six Foundation Phase areas of learning. Regular opportunities children have to listen to interesting stories in the town library and to use different media for mark-making, lay strong foundations towards developing their reading and writing skills. Through counting games, practical work and number rhymes, most children soon learn how to count independently. Effective use is made of electronic toys and computer games to develop information communication technology skills.

The wide range of open-ended learning experiences provided in the areas of learning promote children's thinking and problem solving skills very effectively.

Children are given an active role in the setting's activities for recycling materials and energy saving. The setting promotes Welsh culture, festivals and traditions successfully and provides children with good opportunities to learn about their role as global citizens.

Teaching: Good

The leader has a secure understanding of Foundation Phase principles and, through collaborative planning with other practitioners, successfully provides a wide range of interesting and exciting learning experiences. Although there are detailed plans for every session, these are often amended in response to children's ideas and suggestions. This flexibility is a prominent feature of teaching and provides valuable opportunities for children to participate actively in their learning. During sessions, an appropriate balance is maintained between activities selected by children and those led by adults.

When working with children on a specific task, practitioners' timely intervention and thoughtful questioning often challenge children's ideas and improve their understanding.

Practitioners generally are good language models themselves and encourage children to use Welsh as much as possible. They listen to children's views and expect much from each one of them.

Children are assessed regularly and comprehensively with practitioners recording their observations and assessments carefully to measure children's progress. Recent development of using assessment outcomes to plan future activities has enabled the setting to respond more appropriately to individual children's specific needs. There are thorough arrangements to include parents in their children's assessments. These ensure that they are well informed about their child's progress and what they can do to help them improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting has effective policies and arrangements to promote healthy living and children's welfare. Children are encouraged to eat healthily at snack time, to care for their personal hygiene and participate in physical activities. Learning experiences promote personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. During their daily contact with children, practitioners strongly emphasise the need to be kind to each other, to be honest and fair and to behave in a responsible manner. This greatly helps children to learn the difference between right and wrong. Regular opportunities provided for children to undertake responsibilities through 'Helpwr heddiw' and to make their own choices about their learning, make a substantial contribution towards their personal and social development.

Children feel happy and safe in the company of adults at the setting and are willing to seek help and guidance. Practitioners know how to respond appropriately to any challenges relating to poor behaviour and safeguarding. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Induction arrangements are good and ensure that children settle down quickly at the setting. Children's learning needs are noted early on when they join the setting and this ensures that those needs are fulfilled. When specific cases arise, practitioners are proactive in seeking support from specialist agencies.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where every child has equal rights to all areas of the curriculum. The strong emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity promotes values such as kindness and tolerance leads to effective learning. The setting has an adequate number of practitioners who possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach every aspect of the Foundation Phase. All practitioners succeed in creating a stimulating learning environment which enables every child to take full advantage of learning experiences and to develop positive values and attitudes.

The setting has a good supply of good quality resources in the six areas of learning which are carefully matched to every child's learning needs. Resources in the community and in the neighbouring school are used particularly well to enrich children's learning experiences. The building and accommodation are of good quality and used extensively to provide a pleasant learning environment. The leader has identified a small space outside the classroom which she intends developing as a learning area but, currently, the work has not commenced.

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

The leader has clear aims, positive objectives and appropriate policies which concentrate on providing learning experiences which satisfy children's needs. All sessions are carefully planned and organised for ensuring the best possible use is made of every practitioner's time. This results in a clear sense of purpose permeating all the setting's work and a strong emphasis on maintaining and promoting improvements. The leader conveys high expectations for ensuring improvement and supports and challenges every practitioner in a positive and effective manner. Practitioners have shared values for learning, teaching and behaviour. All staff ensure the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase, as well as other local and national priorities, such as assessment for learning.

Relationships with children, parents and the management committee are positive and contribute substantially towards a sense of community. Members of the management committee have an appropriate understanding of most of their responsibilities. The registered person and the leader fulfil their management role and that of appraising the performance of staff, effectively. The quality of the provision is good and improving strongly.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know the setting well and with the leader's encouragement, are continually self-evaluating looking for ways to improve. Secure arrangements have been established to maintain good practice and to implement change in areas which need improving. Self evaluation pays careful consideration 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 improved provision and raised children's standards of achievement and welfare.

The setting's self evaluation report is of good quality. The setting made very effective use of the information to draw up an action plan and to implement strategies for improvement. However, arrangements to evaluate what impact implementing the plan's priorities has had on children's progress and on the quality of the provision are not sufficiently clear.

A continuous professional development programme provided mainly by the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin lends strong support for practitioners. This has enabled them to acquire new knowledge and skills and to implement the Foundation Phase successfully. Training sessions also provide valuable opportunities for staff 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 are willing to try out different ways of working and to share information and ideas with one another.

Partnership working: Good

There is a wide range of partnership activities which make a strong contribution to children's achievements and welfare. The setting has close links with Ysgol Gatholig Santes Helen and there are clear procedures for transferring assessment information and sharing good practice. There is close co-operation between the setting and the local authority support teacher and this makes a very positive contribution towards improving provision and standards.

Parents are kept regularly informed about the setting's work and practitioners take steps to include them in all the activities that are arranged. However, the information pack parents receive when their children enter the setting does not provide sufficient information about the areas of learning in the Foundation Phase and there is no advice for them on how they can help their children.

The practitioners work together effectively, share information about children and know whom to contact and when if children need additional support. The close co-operation with the community substantially enriches the children's knowledge and learning experiences.

Resource management: Good

The setting is appropriately staffed to teach the Foundation Phase curriculum. Members of staff are used effectively to make the best use of their time, expertise and experience. The leader and the management committee treasurer have a detailed understanding of their budget and prioritise spending in line with the setting's development needs. Expenditure decisions are evaluated very carefully by the leader to ensure that they have a positive impact on children's standards, progress and welfare.

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 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.