



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 y Drenewydd
Y Caban
Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd
Park Street
Newtown
Powys
SY16 1EG**

Date of inspection: March 2012

By

Eifion R Morgan

Reporting Inspector

**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 school'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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About the setting

Cylch Meithrin y Drenewydd meets in a portacabin on the campus of Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd, located on the outskirts of the town. It is a Welsh medium Cylch and most of the children move to the Welsh medium Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd for the next stage of their education.

Children are able to attend the Cylch in the term in which they are 3 years old, having generally attended the Flying Start provision located in the room next door. They leave the Cylch and, in most instances, begin their school life in the term when they are 4 years old. Children attending the Cylch come from the town and the surrounding rural communities. A number of the children come from disadvantaged backgrounds. None of the current intake is from minority ethnic communities and none have been recognised as having additional learning needs (ALN). However, the Cylch has welcomed such children in the past.

Linguistically virtually all children come from English speaking homes. The area is an Anglicised community where little, if any, Welsh is heard in the town.

The portacabin has recently been upgraded by additional cladding on the outside and this has improved it substantially. The main room is approached via a small hallway. A notice board provides information for parents. The main room is suitably differentiated into activity areas with a small kitchen area suitably located so as not to be accessible to children. Outside the Cylch has access to the school's yard and play area. There are plans in place to relocate the school and the Cylch in the near future.

Currently there are 33 children on the register of whom 32 are funded. The Cylch is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 12 children in any one session.

The Cylch meets every weekday morning, 9 a.m. – 11.30 a.m. and on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 1.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m. during school term time. It has recently been inspected by CSSIW (2012) when no recommendations for improvement were highlighted. The previous Estyn inspection was in 2005. All recommendations have been addressed. The Cylch was also awarded the distinction of "Y Cylch Rhagorol" by the Mudiad Meithrin in 2010.

Summary

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

Current performance

Main evaluation

- All children make good progress in all areas of learning and achieve good standards.
- Nearly all children have good communication skills and make themselves understood. Whilst they are more confident using English, their Welsh speaking skills are developing well.
- All children have a positive attitude to learning and show interest in their work.
- Children's behaviour is very good; they are considerate, courteous and relate well to each other and to adults.
- Planning is well directed at encouraging children to progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes.
- Practitioners are good language models and have a good understanding of child development.
- Tasks are well matched to children's ability.
- Provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing, including child protection arrangements, are well established.
- The Cylch displays an outstanding ethos that is fully inclusive and encourages children to take responsibility.
- Staff work together very well with a sense of purpose. They have high expectations of the children and these are realised in practice.

Prospects for improvement

- Self-evaluation procedures are detailed and have been undertaken consistently.
- Staff have undertaken a good range of training courses and are receptive to change.
- Very good strategic partnerships are in place. This includes links with local organisations to improve and support children's learning and wellbeing.
- Highly effective links are in place with the school via the Reception teacher, with the LA advisory teacher and the Mudiad Meithrin development officer.
- The new recently established Management Committee is highly supportive of the Cylch.
- The Cylch is recognised as an example of good practice and has been visited by staff from other similar organisations.

Recommendations

The Cylch needs to:

- R1 continue to provide and maintain good quality educational provision;
- R2 further refine assessment procedures so as to identify skills individual children have acquired and to highlight the next steps in children's learning.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up a plan which shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

All children make good progress in all areas of learning and achieve good standards. All children persevere well on tasks and concentrate for sustained periods of time on activities that develop their learning.

Nearly all children have good communication skills. Whilst they are more confident using English, their Welsh vocabulary is developing well. They understand basic instructions and respond appropriately. All children understand more words than they can speak and are happy to repeat new words. All children enjoy listening to stories and many respond enthusiastically. They join in Welsh action songs and rhymes. A good and notable feature is children's interest in books. When encouraged they select their favourite stories and follow the text and pictures handling books appropriately and carefully.

Many children experiment with mark making using a variety of marking equipment including pencils, felt tip pens and chalk. They understand some of the functions of writing.

Many children use basic mathematical language such as "large" and "small". They recognise and name shapes such as "squares, triangles and circles". All children count together as when counting the number of children present at morning registration. A few children have a good understanding of patterns and can sequence objects based for example on different colours.

Many children enjoy using the computer and show good skills, such as using the "mouse" and moving images on the screen to create simple patterns. The children are also familiar with mobile phones and microphones.

Wellbeing: Good

All children enjoy learning and are eager to participate in all activities. They show interest in the work and sustain their concentration for significant amounts of time. All children, without exception, demonstrate good behaviour being considerate and courteous to each other and to adults and visitors.

Most children are developing an appropriate understanding of health issues in line with their age. They know the importance of cleaning their teeth and of healthy eating. All children feel safe in the Cylch and when walking outside.

Children also have ample opportunities to make decisions and have the self-confidence necessary to select favourite activities and to seek help when necessary.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Learning experiences are well designed to fully engage all children. Planning is flexible and done collaboratively taking good account of children's interests, and overall is well designed to ensure that children progress towards achieving the Foundation Phase outcomes. The curriculum and children's experiences build systematically on their existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Learning experiences encourage children to become independent learners but to work co-operatively when the occasion demands. Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their skills across all areas of learning, particularly their creative skills and their understanding of living things.

Good opportunities exist for children to develop their skills and this is facilitated by the cross-curricular approach used. The provision for developing the Welsh language is enhanced by staff being good role models, ensuring that Welsh is the language of the Cylch. This makes Welsh a living language and encourages children to use the language naturally. The traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales are also prominent as was obvious during the inspection on St. David's Day.

Children's ideas about sustainability are being developed through recycling such items as milk cartons and paper.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners are well qualified and experienced and have an up to date knowledge of child development and the philosophy of the Foundation Phase. All children, whatever their ability, are well supported and those able and talented benefit from extension activities.

The activities incorporate a good balance between child-selected and adult directed or led activities. There is a good balance of basic activities designed to consolidate learning and challenging work for the more able. Children's self-confidence enables them to work independently, and of critical importance is practitioner's ability to appreciate when to intervene. Practitioners are also active in evaluating and assessing children's achievement and progress. The positive behaviour strategy is also effective in maintaining the Cylch's very good learning atmosphere.

Practitioners assess children's achievement regularly and observations are recorded and dated. This gives a good indication of children's progress. Planning based on practitioners' knowledge of the children also ensures progression and continuity in the work. Extension activities are also prepared for the more able.

At best, observations of children's achievement indicate their skill level, such as their ability to recognise a particular shape in mathematics or their ability to count to a specific number. Overall, however, records of children's achievements tend to be descriptive. Whilst this is useful, they do not identifying the skills children have achieved and the next steps in their learning.

In discussion parents reported that they could always approach the Cylch staff for information about their child.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Cylch provides children with a calm, supportive learning environment that successfully fosters values, such as honesty, fairness and respect for each other. There is a well understood behaviour framework that helps children to take personal responsibility and to distinguish between right and wrong and what is acceptable behaviour. They learn to share and co-operate with each other.

Visits to the immediate environment enable children to develop a sense of wonder about the world around. Visits further afield into the locality and visitors to the Cylch introduce the children to people that care for them.

Specialist services are well used when required to support children with additional learning needs. In the past this has proved effective and beneficial to the individuals concerned. Children identified with ALN have full access to all areas of learning. They have been well supported (on a 1:1 basis when necessary) and external agencies are well used. Parents have been kept well informed and involved at each stage.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and the Cylch leader is the responsible person dealing with child protection issues. Policies and procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008). Staff have very recently received appropriate training.

Learning environment: Good

The Cylch is an inclusive community where each child is valued as an individual and his/her needs are recognised. All children whatever their needs or ability, have equal access to the curriculum and are well integrated into the community. Children are free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. There is a complaints procedure but has not needed to be used.

Practitioners are well qualified and experienced. There are sufficient suitable resources to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The accommodation has been recently improved and used effectively. The Cylch benefits from being able to use some of the school's facilities and has easy access to the local environment.

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

Leadership: Good

The leadership provides the Cylch with a clear direction for its work and a sense of purpose. It is well focused on providing children with the best possible educational experiences and developing their potential to the full. Staff work together very well and compliment each other in their roles and responsibilities. They share common values and create a positive ethos in the Cylch. They have high expectations of the children and these are realised in practice. Very good links have been established with parents and carers.

The recently established management committee are active in their support of the Cylch. They have quickly assumed their legal duties and are well informed about the performance of the setting. Overall, the indications are that the management committee will be highly efficient in developing and improving the Cylch where possible.

The Cylch has successfully implemented national priorities, such as implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum and taken on local priorities, such as “Healthy Teeth” initiative.

Improving quality: Good

The Cylch has consistently used self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This has ensured that changes have resulted in positive gains for the children. The views of parents and children have been incorporated where possible. Planning has been well focused in securing improvements. Planning documents identify clearly the targets for improvement, success criteria, training and support and identify the person with overall responsibility.

Practitioners have attended a number of relevant professional and training courses directly relevant to child care and safeguarding. Such courses have impacted well on children’s progress and wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has established good links with parents. Most children have attended the pre-nursery group which meets in an adjacent room so are familiar with the setting. However, all parents receive a useful pack of information outlining dates, available policy documents and expectations. Details of the children are also stored for future reference.

All parents are invited to the Annual General Meeting and to take an active role in supporting the Cylch’s activities. Parents also received circular letters detailing themes to be undertaken as part of the curriculum and activities arranged by the Cylch. They also have a record of their child’s work and achievement at the end of the academic year. In discussion with a sample of parents, they spoke of their complete satisfaction with the Cylch and its staff.

A good and notable feature is the close liaison that exists with the Reception year teacher in the school to which the children transfer. This, in particular, facilitates the transfer of children to the next phase of their education and provides the Cylch with a valuable source of advice.

Planning and quality assurance is also facilitated by the close collaboration with the Local Authority advisory teacher and with the Mudiad Meithrin Development Officer.

Resource management: Good

The Cylch is appropriately resourced to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Resources are well used to motivate children to learn. Planning includes discussion of future resources that may be required. The outdoor is well used to extend children's learning.

Overall, the Cylch provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

All parents/carers who answered the questionnaires, those who commented on the setting and the sample of parents spoken to during the inspection were very supportive of the setting.

The questionnaire results indicated that all respondents agreed with the following statements:

Overall I am satisfied with the setting.

*My child likes this setting.**

*My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the setting.**

*My child is making good progress at the setting.**

Children behave well in the setting.

*Teaching is good.**

*Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.**

*My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.**

*My child is safe at the setting.**

My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.

I am kept well informed about my child's progress.

*I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.**

My child is well prepared to moving on to school.

*The setting is well run.**

* The majority of parents and carers strongly agreed with the statements:

Responses to discussions with children

All children enjoy coming to the Cylch. They show a sense of anticipation for the day's activities and are soon actively involved in activities set out for them.

Nearly all children are sufficiently confident to work independently and several showed sufficient confidence to involve the Inspector in their activities.

The children work together happily in a calm, homely atmosphere free from any disputes or antisocial behaviour.

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)