



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 Dolgellau
Festri Capel Tabernacl
Ffordd y Capel
Dolgellau
Gwynedd
LL40 1SD**

Date of inspection: June 2014

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 Dolgellau is a registered setting that meets in Tabernacl Chapel vesty in the town of Dolgellau. It provides pre-school education for the children of the town and the surrounding rural area.

The setting admits children of all abilities and backgrounds to the session. There were a few children with additional learning needs attending the setting during the inspection. There were no children from ethnic minority groups at the setting. Approximately 40% of the children speak Welsh as the main language at home.

The setting provides two and a half hour sessions during five morning of the week for children aged two and a half to four years. Of the 58 children registered at the setting, fourteen of three-year-old children are funded by the local authority.

Children are taught by two leaders and three practitioners who are appropriately qualified to teach the early years.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in July 2013 and by Estyn in October 2008.

Summary

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

Current performance

Performance is good because:

- many children are confident and questioning learners;
- most children have good literacy and numeracy skills;
- all children have very positive attitudes towards keeping healthy and safe;
- standards of behaviour are good with almost every child being courteous and considerate of other children's feelings;
- learning experiences meet the needs and interests of all children;
- skilful teaching ensures children are active learners;
- assessment information is used purposefully for future planning;
- clear principles and values are constantly promoted in the setting; and
- the setting is an inclusive community that ensures equal opportunities for all children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- leaders have a clear vision for the setting's development;
- practitioners work very effectively as a team;
- the management committee undertakes its responsibilities very conscientiously;
- self-evaluation is used effectively to improve standards and provision;
- a number of partners have a positive effect on children's standards and wellbeing;
- staff and learning resources are used effectively to further children's learning; and
- the setting provides good value for money.

Recommendations

1. Raise standards in information communications technology.
2. Provide better opportunities for children to learn more about other cultural traditions.
3. Ensure that the voice and opinions of children are regularly heard and valued.

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?

Good

Standards: Good

Most children make good progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes in line with their ability and level of maturity. Many are confident and questioning learners, who are looking for answers and respond positively to new experiences. During the continuous provision, nearly all children make choices about their learning and are willing to take risks when undertaking problem-solving tasks.

Children's communication skills are developing well with most conversing happily with their peers and familiar adults in the setting. During whole-class sessions, the more mature children listen to other children and adults and contribute purposefully to discussions. During role-play in the class shop or in the Wendy house, many children, and particularly girls, use language that is appropriate to the situation. Most turn to books on their own accord with many behaving as readers. Nearly all children can find their own name-card during self-registration and can recognise individual letters. By experimenting with different media for mark making, many children have an appropriate understanding of the different purposes of writing with a minority having started to write familiar letters independently.

Nearly all children respond enthusiastically to numeracy activities and join in with rhymes and simple number songs as part of the setting's daily routines. Most demonstrate an increasing awareness of number in their play. For example, when children are experimenting with balancing teddies on scales, many begin to understand that if they take one teddy off the scale the amount of teddies left behind will be less. Most children have a good awareness of mathematical concepts such as size, pattern and shape.

Most children's information and communications technology skills (ICT) are developing appropriately. Many use computer programs confidently and input commands into a floor turtle very skilfully. However, many children do not make sufficient progress in their ICT skills as they move through the setting.

Almost all children that are learning Welsh build on their language skills systematically. They understand much more than they can speak and respond positively to directions from adults.

Wellbeing: Good

All children have very positive attitudes towards keeping healthy and safe. They understand that eating healthily, such as when having snacks, and having regular physical exercise is beneficial to their health. They feel safe at the setting and know who to turn to if they are physically or verbally harassed by other children.

Almost every child participates positively and enjoys learning. Bearing in mind their age and personal needs, almost all children behave well. Many are polite and considerate of other children's feelings and act in a caring way towards each other. Without exception, children implicitly trust the adults' care and concern for them.

Most children have a positive attitude towards learning experiences. They are interested in the activities and demonstrate increasing concentration for appropriate periods.

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

Through effective collaboration, practitioners successfully plan a curriculum, which meets the needs and interests of children across the full ability range. This enables every individual to make good progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. Stimulating and flexible activities encourage every child's participation and ensure that all have an active role in their learning.

The practical and open-ended nature of the learning experiences provides 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, experiment with new experience and to investigate their environment confidently and become independent learners.

Through careful and systematic planning, the setting ensures that children acquire the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to take advantage of all their learning experiences. However, provision for ICT does not extend children's skills sufficiently.

Constant use of Welsh by practitioners increases children's understanding of the language and gives those who are learning the language the confidence to begin using Welsh themselves. There is strong provision for promoting the Welsh dimension, for example, through celebrating St David's Day and participating in the Mudiad Meithrin and Urdd activities.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and have a thorough understanding of Foundation Phase requirements. They expect much from children of all abilities and provide a variety of valuable opportunities for them to be active learners. Through detailed planning, practitioners succeed in creating a good balance between activities chosen by the child and those which adults instigate or lead. The wide range of teaching strategies used, for example group work or individual work, as well as the substantial emphasis placed on learning through play, ensure the involvement of every individual in the task. Practitioners' support and intervention has a clear focus. They know each child well and amend their teaching strategies appropriately. Practitioners are good language models themselves and use questioning skilfully to challenge children's ideas and to move learning on.

Practitioners assess children regularly and comprehensively and record observations and assessments carefully to measure every individual's progress throughout their time at the setting. They use assessment outcomes very effectively for identifying children's individual needs and for planning future activities. Through the 'treasure book' which contains photographs of their child working in the different learning

areas, parents have an interesting and full account of their child's progress in all six areas of learning.

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

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. These arrangements make a strong contribution to children's general development and support their learning effectively.

During their daily involvement with children, practitioners strongly emphasise the need for everyone to be kind to one another and to be honest and fair. This helps children to learn the difference between right and wrong. Regular opportunities for children to undertake responsibilities and to make their own choices about their learning make a significant contribution to their personal and social development.

Although the setting continuously promotes clear principles and values, opportunities for raising children's awareness of beliefs, attitudes, and social and cultural traditions found in Wales, are few.

There are effective arrangements for re-cycling and avoiding waste.

Effective induction arrangements help children settle down quickly and easily at the setting. The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Practitioners know the children well and provide them with clear guidance during sessions. Leaders have a thorough understanding about how to access professional help for children and parents. Children's learning and physical needs are identified in detail when they join the setting and practitioners ensure those needs are met. Consequently, the quality of provision for children with additional learning needs is of a high standard.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where every child has equal access to all areas of learning and activities provided. There is a strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and ensuring that children and members of staff are free from harassment. The setting has a sufficient number of practitioners who have the knowledge and expertise to teach every aspect of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The setting succeeds in creating a homely and stimulating environment in which children are able to take full advantage of their learning experiences and to foster positive values and attitudes towards each other

With the exception of information communications technology, there is a good supply of good quality resources in all areas of learning which are carefully matched to the development and learning needs of every individual. Practitioners use people and resources from the local community purposefully to enrich the curriculum and to support learning in the classroom.

Staff at the setting make the best possible use of the building and accommodation. Displays of children's work enrich the learning environment substantially and used skilfully by practitioners to stimulate children's interest and celebrate their achievements.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for the setting's development. They convey high expectations and supports and challenge everyone to do their best. The positive ethos, which permeates through the setting, ensures that children and staff feel appreciated. Leaders and practitioner work very closely as a team and have shared values about learning, behaviour and relationships. This ensures the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase and that all members of staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Their willingness to act upon local authority advice and to undertake national priorities and new ventures, such as assessment for learning, is a strength.

The day-to-day management of sessions is efficient. The setting has clear aims and policies which concentrate on children's needs. These are familiar to parents and are put into practice thoroughly by all practitioners. The positive relationships with children, parents and the primary school staff contribute substantially towards creating a sense of community.

The management committee undertakes its responsibilities very conscientiously and contribute purposefully to the setting's work. A noteworthy example of this is the chairperson's custom of leading acts of worship with the setting's children once a week. The committee shares Information with parents through newsletters and meetings and supports the leader in her work. Committee members ensure that any complaints are resolved immediately and that the setting complies with legal requirements.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and practitioners know the setting's strengths well and have a clear understanding of what they need to do to ensure improvement. They are constantly self-evaluating and looking for ways to improve provision and to raise standards. Although self-evaluation pays careful consideration to the views of parents there are no similar arrangements for listening to the voice and views of children. The setting benefits substantially from the professional advice of the local authority support teacher with the leader and staff acting appropriately on any recommendations, which arise out of her visits. This ensures there are effective arrangements for maintaining good practice and for implementing change in areas, which need improving.

Priorities that become apparent through self evaluation are effectively incorporated in a purposeful development plan which clearly notes how the setting intends to implement changes. This has led to improvements in a number of aspects such as the continuous provision and the setting's processes for curriculum planning and assessment.

Both the self-evaluation report and the improvement plan are of good quality and convey an honest and correct picture of the setting's strengths and the aspects it needs to improve.

Partnership working: Good

The productive relationship which the setting has with a good number of partners has a positive impact on children's standards and welfare. There is a sense of trust and clear communication between the setting and the parents and regular opportunities are provided for them to express views about the setting's work. Practitioners are available for them at the beginning and end of every session and the setting ensures that they have current information about its organisation and their children's development.

There is a strong partnership between the setting and the town's primary school. This eases transition arrangements for children and enables them to settle down quickly in the Foundation Phase class.

Members of the local community contribute well to the setting's work. A good example of this are the weekly visits by a member of the community who takes singing sessions with the children.

The setting collaborates effectively with a good number of the local authority's support services which co-ordinate and deliver learning experiences well and ensure that there is appropriate assistance available for children and parents. The support teacher's regular visits and professional advice enable the leader to update the setting's knowledge and professional understanding and to try out new ventures. The leaders implement diligently any recommendations which follow the visits.

Resource management: Good

Effective performance management systems contribute effectively towards enabling staff to identify their professional development needs. Regular training sessions provided by the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin, give staff valuable opportunities to update their knowledge and skills. These were of great benefit to the setting during the process of amending its assessment arrangements in order to meet new local authority requirements.

The setting is appropriately staffed to teach the curriculum effectively. Staff time and experience, as well as learning resources, are used effectively to ensure that high quality care and provision are available for every child,

The management committee keeps a detailed account of the setting's financial situation in order to ensure that expenditure is managed carefully in accordance with the setting's development needs. Spending decisions are constantly evaluated to ensure they have a direct effect on children's progress and wellbeing.

Bearing in mind the good outcomes and children's continuous progress, the setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholders' satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on parent 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

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

<p>Areas of Learning</p>	<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
<p>CSSIW</p>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<p>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Foundation Phase</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</p>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<p>Local authority advisory teacher</p>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<p>Mudiad Meithrin</p>	<p>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.</p>

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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.