



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 Harlech
Yr Hen Ysgol Gynradd
Harlech
Gwynedd
LL46 2YA**

Date of inspection: April 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 Harlech was originally established over thirty years ago to provide Welsh medium nursery education for the children of the town of Harlech. After being closed for a short period due to lack of money, it was reopened again in January 2011 with a new management committee and a new leader. 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, there were very few children with additional learning needs attending the setting.

Two and a half hour sessions are provided on four mornings a week for two and three year old children, although the number of sessions attended by individuals vary according to parental wishes. Currently, there are three three year old children registered at the setting and funded by the Gwynedd Young People and Children Partnership. Most of the children speak English at home.

The leader and two full time practitioners support children's education. All of them are appropriately qualified to teach the early years.

Accommodation includes two large playrooms, a small kitchen, a toilet and storeroom. Outside there is an enclosed play area.

When they have completed their time at the setting, most of the children transfer to Ysgol Gynradd Tan Y Castell.

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales last inspected the setting in December 2012 and by Estyn in June 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- all the children are happy when they come to the setting in the mornings;
- learning experiences meet children's needs and interests and enable them to make good progress;
- there is good provision to ensure that children acquire the necessary literacy, communication, number and information communication technology skills;
- the quality of teaching and assessment, including assessment for learning, are good;
- there are appropriate policies and arrangements to promote children's healthy living and well-being; and
- the setting is a happy and inclusive community where children have equal access to all areas of learning and activities provided for them.

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 Include the management committee in the setting's self-evaluation arrangements.
- R2 Evaluate the effect of implementing the development plan priorities in more detail.
Include information about the setting's safeguarding arrangements in the new
- R3 parents' booklet.

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

Through effective collaboration, the leader and 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 satisfying the Foundation Phase outcomes. The stimulating and flexible activities which are planned successfully promote every child's participation and ensure that children 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 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. The experiences provided indoors and outside provide children with good opportunities to develop their physical and creative skills and to acquire a better understanding of the world they live in.

Through careful and systematic planning, the setting ensures that children acquire the necessary literacy, communication, number and information communication technology skills to enable them to take advantage of all their learning experiences. Through challenging practical experiences, children have good opportunities to develop their thinking skills and to develop different strategies for solving problems that are important to them.

Children are continually encouraged by practitioners to use Welsh as much as possible in their learning and when communicating with everyone at the setting. Celebrating Welsh traditions and raising children's awareness of being Welsh, are strongly emphasised.

The curriculum helps children well to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and values associated with sustainable development and global citizenship. Children have a practical role in the setting's recycling arrangements and through stimulating activities, such as celebrating the Chinese New Year, they become aware of the wider world.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a secure understanding of Foundation Phase requirements and have up-to-date knowledge of child development and the impact of additional learning needs on development. They succeed in creating a stimulating, challenging and exciting environment indoors and outside and this stimulates the involvement, participation and enjoyment of all the children. A careful balance is maintained between activities chosen by the children themselves and practitioner led activities. The practice of following individual children by participating in their play is used effectively by practitioners to challenge and extend individual children's understanding and to move learning on. Practitioners expect much from every child and understand the importance of providing children with opportunities to learn through play and to follow their own interests. When rare examples of inappropriate behaviour arise, staff intervene in a quiet and firm manner.

There are effective arrangements for assessing children's progress. When they start at the setting, children are assessed and a systematic record kept of their development and progress in every area 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. They make appropriate use of assessment information to plan for the future.

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

Care, support and guidance: Good

All children are happy when they come to the setting in the morning and are comfortable when seeking help and guidance from practitioners. Practitioners know the children well, they keep careful records of their needs and ensure that those needs are met. When there are children with additional learning needs at the setting, practitioners work closely with the local authority and other specialist agencies to ensure appropriate provision.

The setting has appropriate policies and arrangements to promote children's healthy living and welfare. It succeeds well in helping every child to achieve good health and emotional welfare, to take full advantage of learning experiences provided and to participate fully in the life of the setting. Practitioners know how to respond appropriately if challenges arise relating to bullying, unacceptable behaviour or suspicion of abuse.

There is extensive provision for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Values such as honesty, fairness and respect towards other adults and children are regularly and effectively reinforced through every aspect of the setting's life and work.

Thorough induction arrangements, along with the close relationship with parents, ensure that new children settle down quickly at the setting. Practitioners take great care of every child and ensure their safety at all times.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children satisfy the requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is a happy and inclusive community where children have equal access to all areas of learning and activities provided for them. There is strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and on ensuring that children and members of staff are free from any harrasment. The setting has enough practitioners who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to teach every aspect of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The setting successfully creates a homely and stimulating environment where children can take full advantage of their learning experiences and develop positive values and attitudes.

There is a good supply of good quality resources in all areas of learning, including information communication technology. The resources are carefully matched to the development and learning needs of every individual. Resources outdoors are used effectively to stimulate creative play and children's personal and social skills. Practitioners make effective use of the local environment to enrich the curriculum and to support learning in the classroom. The accommodation is of good quality and fully utilised.

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

The leader has a clear vision for developing the setting. She conveys high expectations and supports and challenges everyone to do their very best. A very supportive ethos permeates the setting and staff and children feel valued. Practitioners work together very closely as a team, share common values about learning, behaviour and relationship and ensure that the Foundation Phase is delivered successfully. Their willingness to undertake national priorities and new ventures is a strength. Clear aims and policies have been established which focus on children's needs and these are implemented conscientiously. Relationships with parents and children are positive and contribute significantly towards creating a sense of community. There is an appropriate performance management system which helps staff to evaluate and improve their practice and to identify their professional needs.

The management committee provides strong support for the leader, and officers perform their responsibilities conscientiously. They ensure that any complaints are resolved promptly and that the setting conforms to legal requirements. However, they do not have an active role in the setting's self evaluation arrangements.

The setting is very successful in implementing national and local priorities linked to the Foundation Phase. This has given rise to a number of key initiatives and, particularly, implementing assessment for learning methods.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know the setting well, and encouraged by the leader, they consistently self evaluate and look for ways of improving. There are robust arrangements to maintain good practice and to implement change in areas which need improving. Self evaluation pays careful attention to parental views and benefits greatly from the advice of the local authority support teacher. Practitioners can show how they, through self evaluation, have ensured improvements in the provision, specifically in planning and assessment.

The setting's self evaluation report is of good quality and clearly notes the setting's strengths as well as aspects which need further improvement. Very effective use is made of self evaluation information to draw up a detailed development plan which notes how improvements are going to be implemented. However, there are no arrangements for evaluating the effect implementing the plan's priorities have had on standards and the quality of the provision.

Practitioners are strongly supported by a programme of continuous professional development provided mainly by the local authority and the Mudiad Meithrin. 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 learning community. Practitioners are very open to new ideas and are willing to try out different ways of working and share knowledge and ideas with each other.

Partnership working: Good

A wide range of partnership activities contributes strongly towards children's achievements and wellbeing. Strong links with a number of the town's establishments greatly enriches children's learning experiences. Practitioners take active steps to include parents in every aspect of the setting's work by informing them regularly about all the activities and encouraging them to participate in their children's education. Although the information booklet prepared for new parents includes much useful information, there is no reference in it to procedures for safeguarding the children in the setting.

Partnership with the school, especially arrangements for transferring children, are developing well.

Regular visits, reports and professional advice provided by the local authority link teacher have a very positive effect on the setting's development. The leader also receives good managerial support from the Mudiad Meithrin's development officer.

Practitioners work together well, share information about children and know whom to contact and when if children require additional support.

Resource management: Good

The setting is well staffed to teach the Foundation Phase curriculum. Members of staff are effectively used to make the best possible use of their time, expertise and

experience. The management committee has a detailed understanding of its budget and prioritises its expenditure according to the setting's developmental needs. Spending decisions are evaluated very carefully by the leader to ensure they have a positive impact on children's standards, 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 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	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)	<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>
Foundation Phase	<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>
Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
Local authority advisory teacher	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
Mudiad Meithrin	<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>

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.