



A Report on

**Cylch Meithrin Llanfyllin
Canolfan Ieuencid a Chymunedol
Llanfyllin
Powys
SY22 5BB**

Date of inspection: June 2012

by

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**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
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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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Context

Cylch Meithrin Llanfyllin is located in the Youth and Community Centre and behind the town library. Llanfyllin is a small rural town some 10 miles north west of Welshpool. The Cylch is a Welsh medium provision and currently there are 12 children on the register, seven aged 3 years of whom 5 are funded. All come from the town and the immediate rural community. Most children come from English speaking homes, although in several instances one parent is Welsh speaking and in some other instances parents are Welsh learners.

The Cylch reports that no child comes from homes that are socio-economically disadvantaged, neither is there a child from a minority ethnic background.

The Cylch occupies a large, pleasant, well-lit room with immediate access to a large outside play area. Entry is via the entrance to the community centre and the large hallway is a pleasant waiting area for parents and carers. The door to the room used by the Cylch is kept locked so no one can leave or enter unannounced. A notice board in the hallway provides useful information for parents and carers. Towards the end of each session the Cylch places a computer display in the hallway showing what the children have been doing in the preceding session. This is a facility appreciated by parents.

The main room has an attractive display of children's work and activity areas in keeping with the Foundation Phase philosophy. Unfortunately this is a multi-purpose room that is hired at some cost by the Cylch, necessitating clearing away all equipment at the end of the session. The outside area has a "soft play" surface and is sufficiently large to enable children to use moveable toys and play ball games.

Children attend from aged 2½ years and move on to the next phase of their education in the term in which they are four. There is no child currently with special educational needs. However, such children have been accommodated in the past.

The Cylch was previously inspected by Estyn in March 2006 and the recommendations addressed. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspected the Cylch in 2010. There were no recommendations. The Cylch is registered to accommodate 26 children.

Since the previous inspections there have been several changes of personnel and the Management Committee have worked hard to maintain the facility in the town. The current leader and her assistant have been in post since the end of May 2012.

Summary

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

Current performance

Good features

- All children achieve good standards and make realistic progress.
- Children are immersed in the Welsh language and are developing a good Welsh vocabulary.
- All children have a positive attitude to learning and are well behaved.
- All children enjoy their time at the Cylch, they are safe and well looked after.
- Day-to-day activities encourage children to form good relationships and to become confident learners.
- Staff work together very well and have a good understanding of when to intervene and when to allow children to work independently.
- Children are assessed regularly.
- The provision made for developing children's health and wellbeing is good.
- There are good relationships with parents and carers.

Satisfactory features

- Planning provides for activities that motivate children but is not sufficiently focused on building systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Assessment is insufficiently used when planning to ensure that future tasks and activities are well matched to children's needs and ability.

Prospects for improvement

Good features

- Whilst the leader and assistant have only recently been appointed, a sense of purpose is evident, well focused on promoting and sustaining improvement.
- The leader and assistant share values, aims and objectives and have high expectations.
- Staff fully understand their roles, accept their responsibilities and have identified as their main aim that of meeting children's needs and expectations.
- The curriculum, over the last month, has been broadened to include enhanced learning opportunities for the children.
- The management committee provides good effective support and has, over recent years, been very active in supporting the Cylch.
- The staff enjoy working with children.

- The staff indicate a willingness to extend their professional development.

Satisfactory features

- Whilst self-evaluation has been undertaken and identified strengths and possible areas for improvement, it is not strictly applicable to the current provision.

Recommendations

The Cylch needs to ensure:

- (i) that the curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.
- (ii) that the outcomes of assessment are used to plan future activities so that tasks are well matched to children's needs and interests.
- (iii) that self-evaluation is used to identify, prioritise and implement areas for improvement.

What happens next?

The Cylch will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the Cylch's progress.

Main findings

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

All children achieve good standards and make realistic progress across all areas of the curriculum. From the time they arrive at the Cylch, children are fully engaged in the activities set out for them. Older children are beginning to make choices, selecting their favourite activities and concentrating on their tasks for extended periods of time.

Children enjoy storytime showing their enjoyment in their willingness to participate. They listen attentively and show their developing language and communication skills when answering questions and when relating their experiences.

Children understand basic Welsh questions and phrases as spoken by the staff and follow instructions. Most children show an interest in books and several seek opportunities to look at books in their reading corner. Older and more able children hold books appropriately and follow the story. All children experiment with mark-making, more able children are beginning to overwrite their names and understand the purpose of writing.

All children match patterns to varying degrees and several count accurately to 10 in Welsh. Children are familiar with technology using their computer to play simple games and operate the computer mouse competently and confidently.

A notable and very good feature of the Cylch is the immersion of the children in the Welsh language. Children's understanding of basic words and phrases is developing well. They understand more words than they can speak but several Welsh words and phrases are becoming a natural part of their language. They particularly enjoy Welsh action songs and using percussion instruments. They are happy to suggest their favourite action songs e.g. "...fe welais Jac y do".

Wellbeing: Good

All children have a positive attitude to learning and an interest in tasks and activities set out for them. Older and more able engage in tasks for extended periods of time working independently or co-operatively.

Children's behaviour is good and most children are considerate and relate well to each other.

Children have a good attitude to keeping healthy and recognise that fruit and vegetables are part of their healthy diet. Children also take part enthusiastically in physical activity and show good hand-eye co-ordination. All children show that they feel safe and free from any form of abuse.

In their activities children are co-operative, such as during role play, and they enjoy life in the Cylch.

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

Planning is done co-operatively and successfully identifies activities that interest and motivate all children. Whilst the planning is based on the six areas of learning identified in the Foundation Phase, there is sufficient flexibility to take into account children's individual needs and interests. Children's literacy skills are given appropriate emphasis with particular attention to developing children's spoken Welsh. Good opportunities are sought to develop children's communication skills. Children's numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum and children have opportunities to use their computer.

Whilst the curriculum is planned around the Foundation Phase outcomes, insufficient emphasis is given to building systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Day-to-day activities encourage children to form relationships, to develop tolerance and to become independent, confident learners. Good opportunities are planned to develop children's numeracy, creative and physical skills.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales is given due emphasis, including celebrations of Santes Dwynwen and St. David's Day.

Recycling has recently been introduced for waste paper and plastic.

Teaching: Good

Staff have good up-to-date knowledge of child development and have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase. Both staff show clearly that they enjoy working with young children and this is reflected in the children's positive responses to the staff. Staff have high expectations of all children, whatever their background or ability.

Staff work together very efficiently and complement each other. They meet children's individual needs flexibly and there is a good balance between child-selected and adult-directed and led activities. There is also a good balance between indoor and outdoor activities. A good and notable feature is the staff's perception of when children are ready for new tasks and activities - they know when to intervene and when to allow children to work independently. Children's behaviour is managed effectively using positive behaviour strategies to good effect. Praise is well used to encourage children and to motivate them.

Children are fully immersed in the Welsh language and this is facilitated by both staff being fluent Welsh speakers. Staff use all opportunities to develop children's

competence in the language and to challenge children. Planning is done co-operatively and both staff know what is expected of them.

During the inspection an additional student on placement was used effectively.

Children are assessed regularly and observations recorded. Assessment is based on the six areas of learning as itemised in the Foundation Phase curriculum and results are noted on a termly basis. This allows children's progress to be measured and reported. Whilst staff are sensitive to children's progress the outcomes of assessment are not used sufficiently to identify the next steps in children's learning, particularly the development of skills. This would also enable tasks to be matched to their ability and interests. This would also be useful information for parents in making them aware of what they can do to help their child improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision made for developing children's health and wellbeing is good. This includes children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Day-to-day activities help foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect for each other. Activities involving sharing and working collaboratively help children to distinguish between right and wrong, to take responsibility and to show independence. Visits to the locality develop children's sense of curiosity and an appreciation of the world in which they live. Children come to appreciate the role other people play and those that help them in their community.

Staff at the Cylch display a caring, protective attitude and a sense of enjoyment of working with children. Children know they are valued as individuals, their views respected and that adults are there in a supportive capacity. This means that children approach adults confidently on issues that concern them. The Cylch also benefits from the attendance of the Health Visitor when necessary. This provides an effective link with other specialist agencies.

Appropriate policies and procedures based on information provided by the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place. The Cylch leader is the named member of staff with responsibility for dealing with child protection and both she and her assistant have attended training courses recently. Both are aware of the necessary procedures should cause arise. Both are also aware of the need to be kept up to date with developments. Overall, procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

Whilst no child currently in attendance has been identified as having additional learning needs, such children, in the past, have been appropriately supported. Such instances have involved the specialist services, regular consultation with the parents and teaching support. The Cylch reports that it is well able to provide quality support for such children when required.

Learning environment: Good

The Cylch provides children with an ethos that is warm, friendly, supportive and based on equality of access to all activities. This is reflected in children's outlook and their tolerant attitude.

All children are valued as individuals and are free of any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. Children's background and idiosyncrasies are respected and all children whatever their background have equal opportunity to partake in Cylch activities.

Staff are appropriately qualified and have experience of working with young children. The Cylch is adequately resourced and children have easy access to such resources. The staff ensure a good range of activities are set out for each session. Accommodation is well used and the local environment used to enhance children's learning.

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

The current leader and assistant have only been in post for one month and consequently have only begun to establish a leadership style. However, a sense of purpose is evident, well focused on promoting and sustaining improvement. The leader and assistant share values, aims and objectives, a positive ethos and high expectations. They fully understand their roles, take an active part in planning and co-operate well in the children's day-to-day activities. They fulfil their roles and responsibilities and have identified as their primary role that of focusing on children's needs and expectations. Whilst no programme of induction and appraisal has been implemented, staff are sensitive to the need to do this as a matter of priority.

There are several examples of improvement that have been undertaken recently. This includes broadening the curriculum to include a wider range of activities for the children. The displays of children's creative work enhance the learning environment and children show their enjoyment when singing the wide range of Welsh rhymes and action songs. Snack time focuses well on healthy eating and is a good social occasion for the children. Parents report on the recent increased enjoyment and participation by children and how this has positively impacted on children's learning.

A notable and good feature of the Cylch is the effective support provided by the management committee. The management committee has been very active in maintaining a Cylch in the town and particularly maintaining a Welsh medium provision staffed by fluent Welsh speakers. In this they have been successful. They are also active in obtaining finance. Members of the committee fully understand their roles and are well informed about the performance of the setting. They have made effective decisions and fully fulfil their legal duties.

The Cylch meets major national and local priorities such as introducing the Foundation Phase requirements and is fully committed to the Healthy Eating initiative.

Improving quality: Adequate

The Cylch had previously undertaken a self-evaluation exercise and identified the strengths and possible areas for improvement. The current staff use the previously prepared self-evaluation which is generally applicable but needs to be adapted to take into account current needs and plans.

Consultation with parents and carers bringing their children to the Cylch, indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the new staff. Parents and carers, without prompting, spoke of the commitment of the current staff in providing the best possible provision for the children. All parents and carers spoke of the warm, welcoming attitude of the staff and how quickly new children settled down. Children looked forward to time at the Cylch. In discussion, it was apparent that after a short time the staff were already discussing and have initiated improvement in the provision.

Staff have been involved in professional development such as courses on child protection procedures. One member of staff has completed her Level 2 in "Child Care" and is ready to proceed to Level 3.

Partnership working: Good

The Cylch works very well with parents who are appreciative of the contribution of the Cylch. Parents find the Cylch staff very approachable and welcoming for the children. Observation during the inspection confirmed this in that staff welcomed the children and ensured that they settled down quickly. In practically every instance children were keen to come to the Cylch and were soon engaged with their friends in interesting and absorbing activities. Parents also appreciate seeing the slide sequence on the computer in the hall of their children working during their session at the Cylch. This is a worthwhile provision. Effective communication with parents and carers is in place and a feeling of trust has been established.

There are links in place with the transfer primary school. Children visit the school prior to transfer and increased contact is planned.

The Cylch is collaborating with the LA advisory teacher and staff of the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin to improve the provision.

Resource management: Good

Staff work together very well, accepting their responsibilities and show sensitivity for the needs of the children. Resources are well used to motivate the children to learn. The outdoor area is adjacent to the main room and is well used. The locality is also used appropriately to extend children's experiences and to develop their skills across all areas of learning.

The Management Committee works hard to meet current financial demands and overall the Cylch provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of response received (less than 10).

Responses to discussions with children

Children, in conversation, expressed their enjoyment at coming to the Cylch and said they would like to come everyday! They enjoy meeting their friends.

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)