



*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 Pontsenni  
Youth Wing  
Sennybridge School  
Sennybridge  
Brecon  
Powys  
LD3 8SL**

**Date of inspection: October 2012**

**by**

**Eifion R Morgan**

**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
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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## Context

Cylch Meithrin Pontsenni is a registered playgroup that meets in the Youth Wing of Sennybridge Primary School on two mornings a week (Monday and Wednesday), between 9.30 a.m. and 12 noon over a period of 38 weeks. Pontsenni is a small village located in a rural community, some nine miles west of Brecon on the A40. English is the predominant language spoken in the community. Children come from homes that are not particularly advantaged or disadvantaged and none of the present children are from ethnic backgrounds or have been identified as having special educational needs.

The accommodation comprises a hall, part of which has been designated as a kitchen area. The hall is adjacent to the primary school and the nursery uses the school's toilet facilities that are located close by. The hall is used by the school's breakfast club and the local youth groups for differing activities and consequently play and other equipment has to be set out each morning and cleared away at the end of the session. However, the playgroup benefits from its proximity to the primary school, both in terms of using some of the school's resources and in making use of the professional expertise of the primary school staff. The children become familiar with the receiving primary school and the Foundation Phase Welsh teacher often visits the nursery. This facilitates the transfer of those children who choose to attend Pontsenni Primary School.

The setting provides learning based on Foundation Phase ethos but display areas are limited because of the hall being used for other activities. The playgroup uses the school's play areas when available, have access to computer facilities in the Foundation Phase classroom. The Nursery uses the playground for outside play with large toys and this provides children with a large secure area. Children also benefit from visits to a woodland adjacent to the school and to the village shops, café and have strong community links.

The setting is registered to accommodate a maximum of 12 children. The playgroup accepts children at any time following their second birthday and the children move on to their primary education at the beginning of term in which they are four. Currently there are nine 3 year old children who are funded.

A playgroup was initially established in the village in the 1970's and the current leader has been in post for four years. She has been joined recently by her assistant. The play leader has an NVQ Level 3 qualification and has attended numerous relevant courses. She also has substantial experience of working with children. Her assistant is a trained teacher.

The playgroup benefits from the support provided by the Powys Foundation Phase support teacher and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. The nursery was inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in 2010. There were no major recommendations.

The setting was previously inspected by Estyn in 2006 and all recommendations have been addressed. There have not been any significant changes since the last inspection.

## Summary

<b>The Setting's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The Setting's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

#### Good features

- The quality of planning to meet children's needs and to develop their skills.
- Standards achieved and the progress made by all children.
- The range and quality of teaching and the interesting curriculum provided for the children.
- The provision for ensuring children's wellbeing.
- The provision for children's care, support and guidance.
- Partnership with the school, parents and other professional organisations.

#### Adequate Features

- Children's linguistic ability in the Welsh language.

### Prospects for improvement

#### Good features

- The co-operative working of the staff and its impact on children's progress and achievement.
- Openness to new ideas and the ability to evaluate new ideas.
- Partnership with the receiving primary school and parents.
- Support provided by the local authority advisory teacher.
- Clear and accurate self-evaluation, realistic and achievable development plans.
- Practitioners regular attendance at relevant professional training courses.

#### Adequate features

- The limited opportunities provided for developing children's competence in the Welsh language.

## Recommendations

### What happens next?

To improve the setting needs to:

- (i) Seek ways to improve children's competence in the Welsh language\*
- (ii) further develop assessment procedures so as to identify the next steps in individual children's learning.

Note \* Identified by the setting in its development plans.

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### Standards: Good

All children achieve good standards and are making good progress overall towards meeting the appropriate Foundation Phase outcomes in line with their ability. They have a good recall of previous learning and apply their key skills in different contexts and across all areas of learning. Children show perseverance and are constantly engaged in tasks making commendable effort.

All children acquire a good range of skills across all areas of learning. They happily converse with their friends and with adults. They are capable of listening, answering adult's questions, such as what kind of day it is. All children enjoy partaking in Welsh songs and nursery rhymes. Overall, children understand an increasing Welsh vocabulary and most understand basic Welsh words and simple instructions. However, all children by preference converse in English and have to be encouraged by adults to use Welsh words and phrases. Overall, the Welsh vocabulary of these children is limited and this results from insufficient opportunities for them to hear and to practice their Welsh.

All children show an interest in their work. They engage in different activities, showing a good degree of independence and several talk about their preferences. More able children enjoy stories, listen well, and answer questions set by adults. Children sit quietly and attentively and follow stories in the Welsh language and most understand the main thrust of the story. Several are able to answer questions based on such stories. All children enjoy looking at Welsh books and are familiar with some of the words in the story.

All children experiment with mark-making using chalk and crayons and are beginning to understand some of the functions of writing, such as making shopping lists.

The setting's daily activities include such activities as rote counting in Welsh, for example counting the number of children having snacks. They join in simple number rhymes and songs and demonstrate an awareness of number in their play. Children are able to match shapes and sort objects according to colour and shape. Many children showed a developing awareness of mathematical concepts, such as size when comparing large and small.

All children are developing their information and communication skills. They are familiar with digital equipment including digital cameras and telephones and have regular opportunities to use computers, such as to produce coloured patterns. They are becoming increasingly competent users of the computer mouse and icons.

## **Wellbeing: Good**

All children have a positive attitude to learning and show that they enjoy their time at the Cylch. They are eager to come to the setting in the morning and a noticeable feature is their enjoyment in meeting their friends. Children are soon involved in activities set out for them. They are happy to work independently or in small groups. Children share willingly and they are well motivated and behave responsibly. They are capable when given opportunities to select their play activities and to work independently for appropriate periods of time. However, they enjoy group activities such as listening to stories and recounting their experiences.

All children are developing an understanding of the importance of keeping clean, such as handwashing and of eating healthy foods.

Adults are sensitive to the views of children and listen to their ideas. Children are respected as individuals and encouraged to show concern for others.

An outstanding aspect is the way children are prepared to moving into the next stage of their education. They know the Foundation Phase teacher well; she often visits the Cylch and children visit her class for a range of activities, such as using the computers. Excellent links with the school facilitates the transfer of the children.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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## **Learning experiences: Good**

Planning is based on the Framework for Children's Learning and children's experiences are well focused on ensuring that children progress towards meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. The quality of planning is good with appropriate time given to the 6 areas of learning. Planning successfully engages children's interest in what is a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.

The planning incorporates continuous provision across a wide range of activity areas. It provides for support activities where necessary as well as enhanced provision for the more able. Overall, the planning ensures that the needs of all children are met whatever their ability and prior achievement.

Good opportunities are provided for children to work out of doors although these are specific times as children do not have free access to the outside.

Staff plan co-operatively with a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated learning. Relationships are excellent and children show tolerance and respect towards each other. Good opportunities are provided for independent

learning and for children to develop their creative and physical skills and an understanding of the world around them.

There is a strong emphasis on oral work and speaking and listening activities provide for the main focus of all activities during the two weekly sessions. Parents are provided with a vocabulary of words and phrases used in the Cylch. However, this is an Anglicised community and children rarely hear Welsh spoken outside the Cylch.

Children learn about recycling – waste paper and plastics are collected and any foodstuffs are collected separately for recycling.

The Cylch actively promotes the traditions and customs of Wales, such as the celebration of St. David's Day when children dress accordingly, sample traditional Welsh foods and draw and paint Welsh icons.

### **Teaching: Good**

Both practitioners have considerable experience of working with young children and their thorough understanding of child development enables them to provide a calm supportive learning environment. Both practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and work together very effectively. They have high expectations of the children in terms of their social and academic development and this is realised in practice.

A good and notable feature is at appropriate times, such as story telling, activities are differentiated and well matched to children's age and ability. There is particularly good interaction between the staff and children and staff are well aware when to intervene or when to leave children work independently.

There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-directed or led activities, both when working indoors and outside. The positive behaviour strategies employed by the staff is highly successful and both adults are good language models.

Children benefit from outdoor visits both to the village and to the adjacent woodland. This provides challenging and exciting experiences for the children.

Children are assessed regularly and comprehensively and the results recorded. Staff are well aware of children's achievements and abilities and plan both supportive work and enhanced provision as required. This shows that staff are clear about what children have achieved but does not clearly identify the next steps in individual children's learning. Children are observed during their daily activities and staff share their observations. Overall, this is an effective system that ensures that activities meet the needs and interest of all children.

Good pictorial records are kept of children's achievements but these are not annotated in terms of the skills children display.



### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Effective arrangements are in place to support children's health and wellbeing. This is facilitated by the close working relationship between the Cylch and the feeder primary school, whose deputy headteacher is the Cylch's Responsible Person. They work closely together and with specialist services provided by the local authority. This ensures effective links with the specialist agencies and children benefit from professional support available. Practitioners know how to respond appropriately if situations arise in relation to safeguarding, antisocial behaviour or mental or physical health.

The Cylch uses policies adapted from those provided by the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in respect of safeguarding children and the leader is the person with responsibility initially in dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues. Both staff have attended courses recently and are fully aware of their responsibilities. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

The Cylch identifies children's learning needs when they begin at the Cylch, and any child with additional needs is well supported.

Induction arrangements are effective and ensure that children settle quickly into the setting. Parents are encouraged to remain with their children initially to familiarise their children with the activities set out for them.

Learning experiences promote children's personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Visits, including woodland walks and further afield, give children good opportunities to develop an awareness of the world around them. The very good atmosphere in the Cylch fosters very good, caring relationships where all children are valued and treated with respect. The Cylch fosters values, such as honesty and enables children to distinguish between right and wrong. The children learn to share and become part of the local community.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The setting is an inclusive community where all children have equal access to all activities. All children are respected as individuals and staff are well aware of their differing expectations. A stimulating learning environment exists which successfully engages all children. Staff are vigilant in supporting children needing help but conscious of allowing children time to choose their favourite activities and to work independently.

Children enjoy an atmosphere free of harassment or any form of oppressive behaviour. The Cylch has an adequate supply of resources and uses those in the

adjacent primary school when necessary. This includes computer facilities and outside play areas.

Accommodation is a shared facility and as such the room has to be set out each morning and subsequently cleared at the end of each session. This necessitates a considerable amount of work for the practitioners. Neither does it allow for large display materials to be left from one session to another. This is unsatisfactory. However, the accommodation is safe and secure with toilets available in the school.

Staff are well qualified and experienced in working with young children. Resources are suitable and sufficient to address the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and to meet the needs of the children.

The local environment is used well to extend children's experiences

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Leadership: Good**

The setting has a clear vision based on providing the best learning experiences for all children.

A notable and good feature of the setting is the way the two staff work together. They complement each other very well and the division of labour ensures that children receive a broad and balanced curriculum and very worth while learning experiences. Parents are fully supportive and are well aware of the staff's commitment to provide their children with good learning experiences that develop their academic and social skills.

Pratitioners meet regularly to plan the work for the children and to assess the work undertaken. Staff have high expectations of the children and these are achieved in practice. Planning incorporates support work as well as extended provision for the more able. The differentiated activities allows for children to be taught at their own level of ability. This ensures that children's needs are well managed. Very good links are in place with parents.

The management committee is very supportive of the Cylch and is effective. The committee understand their roles and are well informed about the performance of the setting. They take account of relevant legislation and guidance. They fully fulfil their legal duties.

The Cylch successfully meets National and local priorities, including establishing the Foundation Phase curriculum and responding to healthy eating initiatives.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The setting has undertaken a detailed self-evaluation which has clearly identified its strengths and areas for development. Practitioners are self-critical and vigilant and seek ways to improve the provision. Both work hard before each session to set out a range of activities for the children. Activities are well focused on the Foundation Phase curriculum and successfully motivate the children.

Staff value the children as individuals and respond positively to their individual needs. Children's opinions are valued. The setting's open door policy means that parents and carers are welcomed and well aware of the work their children are doing. Parents are fully supportive and well aware of their children's progress.

Areas for improvement have been prioritised – these are realistic and achievable. The setting's development plan itemises clearly how improvements have been planned.

Both practitioners have attended relevant courses of professional development. Attendance on such courses has impacted positively on children's progress and wellbeing.

### **Partnership working: Good**

A good and notable feature of the setting is the partnership arrangements in place. The adjacent primary school provides many facilities that enhance the provision for the children. Children use the purpose built facilities provided for the Foundation Phase children for play and other activities. The setting uses the school hall and playground for physical activities, including play with large toys. Older children also have access to the computers in the Foundation Phase classroom.

Pratitioners also benefit from professional advice provided by the Foundation Phase teacher and her regular visits to the nursery means that she is well known to the children.

The Cylch's Responsible Person is also a member of the school staff and subsequently always available. Overall, the partnership with the school is highly effective and worthwhile and allows children to transfer with the minimum of disruption.

Parents are highly supportive and are well informed of their children's progress. In discussion with a representative sample, parents expressed their complete satisfaction with the Cylch, the caring staff and the good progress their children were making.

The Cylch benefits from the support provided by the Local Authority advisory teacher as well as the support of the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

**Resource management: Good**

Practitioners work together very effectively complementing each other in the roles they perform. The Cylch is suitably resourced and resources are well used to motivate children to learn. A particularly good feature is the use made of the outdoors to develop children's skills across all areas of learning. This includes the outdoor facilities provided by the school, visits to the adjacent woodland and to the village and further afield.

Overall, the setting provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Parents

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

### Children

In discussion, children said they enjoyed coming to the Nursery. They enjoyed meeting their friends and playing. They particularly enjoyed playing with large toys in the yard and going for walks in the woodland.

## 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](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

If available, the data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

## Glossary of terms

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<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"> <li>• personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity</li> <li>• language, literacy and communications skills</li> <li>• mathematical development</li> <li>• Welsh language development</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• physical development</li> <li>• creative development</li> </ul>
<b>CSSIW</b>	<p>Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) is a division of the Department of Public Services and Performance in the Welsh Government.</p>
<b>Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<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>
<b>Foundation Phase child development assessment profile (CDAP)</b>	<p>Foundation Phase on-entry assessment profile; a statutory requirement in schools from September 2011 and settings from September 2012.</p>
<b>Local authority advisory teacher</b>	<p>These teachers provide regular support, guidance and training to non-maintained settings which provide education for three and four year olds.</p>
<b>Mudiad Meithrin</b>	<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>

<b>National Childminding Association (NCMA)</b>	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
<b>National (NDNA)</b>	This organisation which aims to improve the development and education of children in their early years, by providing support services to members.
<b>Wales Pre-school Providers Association (WPPA)</b>	An independent voluntary organisation providing community based pre-school childcare and education.