



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 Gromlech
11 Penrhiw
Dyffryn Ardudwy
Gwynedd
LL44 2DW**

Date of inspection: 14 March 2012

by

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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 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 Gromlech is located in a purpose built building in Dyffryn Ardudwy. Dyffryn Ardudwy is a small rural town on the mid-Wales coast about equi-distant between Barmouth and Harlech in Gwynedd. The setting is adjacent to the local primary school.

The Cylch was originally based in the local hall, but moved to the current location in 1997. Cylch Ti a Fi use the building on one afternoon a week. The setting is approached by a path leading from the main Barmouth to Harlech road. There are ample car parking facilities near by.

The outside door which is kept locked, leads to a small hallway which acts as a cloakroom which has good notice board facilities and a disabled toilet. Useful information is displayed for parents, including details of the week's activities.

The main teaching room comprises suitably differentiated activity areas well focused on the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Opening from the main room are children's toilets and a small suitably furnished kitchen. A door at the far end of the teaching room opens to a small, but well appointed, outside play area for the children. It is a safe, secure area for children.

Children attend the Cylch from aged 2½ years and leave for the next phase of their education in the September following their fourth birthday. Most children come from the immediate locality, although some come from further afield in order to benefit from Welsh language education. Children come from homes that are not particularly advantaged or disadvantaged socio-economically. Currently there are no children from a minority ethnic background but the Cylch welcomes children from all backgrounds and those with additional learning needs (ALN).

Currently there are 14 children on roll; 10 of whom are aged 3 years, of whom 7 are funded. The Cylch reports that a minority come from homes where the mother tongue is Welsh, otherwise they are from English speaking homes. Parents are very supportive of the Welsh language and several parents are actively learning the language.

The Cylch is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate up to 24 children. It operates every weekday morning between 9 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. during school term times. It was previously inspected by CSSIW in 2011. The previous Estyn inspection was in 2006 and the recommendations addressed. Since then the current Cylch leader has taken over responsibilities and the outside play area developed.

Summary

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

Current performance

Good aspects

- Children's progress and standards of achievement.
- Children's developing competence in the Welsh language.
- Children's wellbeing
- Relationships between staff and children.
- Provision for children's health and wellbeing.
- The inclusive ethos of the Cylch.

Adequate aspects

- Learning experiences which do not fully engage children all of the time.
- The behaviour of a small minority of children.
- Information provided for parents as to how they could support their children's learning.

Prospects for improvement

Good aspects

- Leadership gives clear direction and a sense of purpose to the work of the Cylch.
- The recently established management committee.
- Self-evaluation procedures to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Support provided by the local authority advisory teacher.
- Openness of staff to new ideas.

Adequate aspects

- Areas for improvement are not prioritised.
- Links with parents
- Links with the transfer primary school.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the Cylch needs to:

- R1 review the planning of morning activities so that tasks are well matched to children's differing abilities so as to ensure their active involvement.
- R2 extend assessment procedures so as to identify skills the children have acquired and to highlight the next steps in children's learning.
- R3 refine the developmental plan to prioritise targets for improvement.
- R4 seek more opportunities to involve parents/carers in supporting their child's educational development.
- R5 where possible, develop better links with the receiving primary school.

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

Most children make realistic progress in all areas of learning from their starting point and achieve good standards. When suitably challenged and when tasks are well matched to children's ability and interests, all children are fully engaged in thinking about the tasks and persevere for significant lengths of time. On these occasions children make particularly good effort and achieve well and in some instances very well. Where children are less involved they lose interest and show less commitment to their tasks and wander about the classroom.

Children from Welsh speaking homes have a good command of the language, speak freely and express themselves confidently and competently. The other children, to differing degrees depending largely on how long they have been attending the setting, have a developing understanding of the language. All understand more words than they can speak and show by their responses that, in the main, they understand basic instructions.

Most children have good listening skills, particularly when activities interest them. They repeat familiar words and phrases and enjoy Welsh songs and rhymes. All children enjoy listening to stories and most children respond to practitioner's questions. Many children enjoy looking at books and handle them appropriately. All children play with felt pens and writing equipment. A few children have well developed writing skills being able to follow accurately the outline of numbers and letters. These children know some of the purpose of writing, as was seen during the inspection when two children were noting on their writing pads what each of us would like for lunch. A few children are learning to write their names and these are recognisable. This is particularly good progress.

Most children are beginning to use appropriate mathematical language, such as "large", "small" and "more than". Many children are beginning to count, such as counting the number of children present each morning. More able children recognise number to 9 and can overwrite these numbers with felt tip pen. These more able children recognise shapes, such as a circle. In one instance a child outlined a circle on the palm of her hand responding to "I can make a cylch".

Children play with mobile phones and all children are developing good computer skills such as moving images on the screen.

Wellbeing: Good

All children, when interested in their tasks, have a positive attitude to learning. Children, in these instances show good behaviour and sustain their concentration. Most children are courteous and relate well to each other. In some instances when children are unsure of what to do, or when the tasks are not well matched to their ability, they lose interest and concentration. In some instances there are examples of

antisocial behaviour that affects other children. In the main, however, children co-operate and work together well.

All children benefit from healthy snacks and are learning about healthy eating. They have good opportunities to engage in physical activities and the Cylch provides them with a safe environment.

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

Practitioners plan collaboratively and tasks normally engage all children. Learning experiences encourage children to progress towards meeting Foundation Phase outcomes. The curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Children learn about people from different cultures and backgrounds such as during their study of "Divali, the Festival of Light" and the Chinese New Year. This helps them to understand the world. The planning incorporates activities to develop children's creative skills, such as when making music and in painting and their physical skills, such as playing outside.

They learn about caring for living things, such as when looking after "pet" lambs. Children's skills are developing across the curriculum and practitioners exploit opportunities to develop children's skills, such as their language skills when working in small groups. The skilful use of questioning and dialogue encourages children to use the Welsh language.

Good emphasis is also given to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales, including the celebration of St. David's Day.

Children are also introduced to the ideas of recycling, such as when any fruit left over at snack time is collected for recycling.

Teaching: Adequate

Staff understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase and have high expectations of all children, including the more able and those with additional learning needs (ALN). There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-directed activities. There are good examples of where the tasks and activities are well matched to children's abilities, such as in number work where children were suitably challenged. Similarly children responded well to reading and creative work. In some instances, however, there was a lack of pace and too much free time between a change of activities. In such instances there were examples of antisocial behaviour by a few children which affected other children.

Overall, staff are good language models and additional practitioners are used appropriately to support those children identified with ALN.

Children are regularly assessed and observations recorded. This is a good measure of children's progress. However, assessment records do not always indicate the child's skill level and neither are the next steps in children's learning identified so as to be useful in planning to meet children's needs. However, practitioners are aware of children's abilities and focus on activities to challenge children, as was observed when a child was challenged to sequence written numbers to 9.

Information concerning children's assessment is not regularly provided for parents so that they are made aware of their child's progress and what they can do to help them improve.

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 opportunities to learn about other people's lives and beliefs. Children know about Divali, the Indian Festival of Light and some of the customs associated with it. Similarly, they know about the Chinese New Year, Chinese dragons and Chinese foods. Values, such as honesty, fairness and truth are being developed through the Cylch's day-to-day activities and the children learn to distinguish between right and wrong.

Many children are beginning to accept responsibility and rules of behaviour. Some children however, have difficulty accepting the rules of behaviour and interfere with other children's enjoyment and commitment to the activities of the Cylch.

The Cylch has satisfactory contact with specialist services and children benefit from professional support available. Currently one child is receiving 1:1 support in the Cylch and this is proving effective, particularly in integrating the child into all activities. Children identified with ALN have full access to all areas of learning. The individual is well integrated into all aspects of the Cylch and his emotional and behavioural needs are well supported. Progress is regularly assessed and parents are regularly consulted and fully involved.

The Cylch has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of children. The Cylch leader is the person with responsibility for dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues and all staff have received recent training. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

Learning environment: Good

The Cylch displays an inclusive ethos giving all children full access to the curriculum. Staff have a very tolerant attitude and are very sympathetic towards children who find it difficult to conform. Such children are treated sympathetically, but there are occasions when such anti social behaviour affects other children. However, in the main, children display tolerant attitudes and children are free from harassment and oppressive behaviour.

Practitioners are experienced and well qualified and it is obvious that they enjoy working with young children. The Cylch is well resourced to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the specific needs of the children. A good feature is the range of Welsh story and reading books. This is effective in capturing children's interest and successfully introduced the children to reading.

The outside environment is also effectively used to develop children's physical skills and the local environment is well used to enhance children's knowledge of the world around them.

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

Staff work well together, they fully understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities. There is a sense of purpose and a commitment to provide the best possible experiences for the children. Strategic planning is a shared activity and both practitioners have high expectations of the children. A positive ethos is evident in the Cylch and this is reflected in the children's enjoyment.

New staff have undergone an induction, although as yet, staff appraisal is not undertaken systematically. Parents report that there are effective links in place.

The recently elected management committee fully meet their responsibilities. They have taken on their roles enthusiastically and are beginning to make an effective contribution to their work of the Cylch.

The Cylch has taken account of national priorities, such as implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum and is involved in local initiatives.

Improving quality: Good

The Cylch has recently undertaken a detailed self-evaluation based on the 3 Key Questions and 10 quality indicators highlighted in the Guidance for Inspections document. Strengths and areas for improvement have been identified. Such evaluations as have been undertaken in the past have resulted in positive gains for the children, such as the development of the outside facilities.

Information derived from the current self-evaluation has been used to identify areas for improvement but these have not been prioritised neither are the strategies for their implementation clearly set out.

Staff have been involved in professional training and this has had an impact on children's progress and wellbeing. Practitioners have not been involved in local developments beyond the setting.

Partnership working: Adequate

Parents are provided with a booklet containing useful information about the Cylch before their children start and parents are encouraged to settle their child at the

Cylch initially. Parents know the staff well and have opportunities to talk to them when bringing their child to the Cylch in the mornings. Information outlining the teaching themes is displayed in the hallway and children take examples of their work home. End of year reports are also provided.

Overall, however, parents are insufficiently involved and several reported that they would like greater involvement and more information as to how their child is progressing. They would also like to know what their child had been doing and what they can do to help them.

In the main, parents do not receive sufficient information concerning their child's progress and what they can do to help them improve.

The partnership with the transfer primary school is underdeveloped. Whilst children visit the school prior to their transfer and teachers visit the Cylch, there are insufficient opportunities for children to become familiar with their new arrangements, so that the transfer is undertaken with the minimum amount of stress.

The Cylch enjoys the active support of the Local Authority support teacher. She provides the Cylch with professional advice and encouragement. This is a very effective partnership. Similarly, the Cylch has benefited substantially from the support of the Mudiad Meithrin support officer.

Resource management: Good

Practitioners know their roles well and work together efficiently. Resources are well used to motivate children to learn and to support the teaching.

The resource provision has been regularly evaluated in the past to establish needs and the resources purchased have benefited the children and improved the educational provision.

Overall, the Cylch provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent's questionnaire due to the small number of responses received (less than 10).

Responses to discussions with children

Children enjoy coming to the Cylch. They very soon are involved in activities set out for them and work together sharing equipment and discussing what they are doing. Children particularly enjoy singing, particularly action songs.

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)