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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Ynys y Plant
Riverside Community Centre
Castle Street
Builth Wells
Powys
LD2 3BN**

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
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 Ynys y Plant was established in 2003 and until recently was housed in the Scout and Guide Hall in the centre of Builth Wells. In April 2006, following the closure of the English medium playgroup, the setting moved to the town's Riverside Community centre.

It is a thriving, registered setting accommodating children between the ages of two and a half and four years old. The setting is open for seven sessions a week, for 38 weeks of the year. At present there are 42 children on the register, these include 17 two year olds and 25 three year olds that are in receipt of funded educational provision. A maximum of 18 children can be accommodated at any one session. Cylch Ti a Fi meet at the setting for one session a week.

All the three year old children come from families where English is the main language of the home. The area is described as being neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged and the children come from a range of socio economic backgrounds. There are no children of minority ethnic backgrounds. At present there are no children that have been identified as having additional learning needs, although the setting accepts such children and has done so in the past.

The accommodation consists of an entrance hall, kitchen, toilet facilities, a spacious playroom with good storage space. The community hall adjacent to the playroom is also available on specific days. The setting does have access to a large and safe grassed play area at the rear of the community centre.

The leader and two assistants have attained the National Vocational Qualification, Level 3 in Childcare and Education and another member of staff who is currently working towards her NVQ Level 3. The Nursery is committed to providing a safe and stimulating learning environment for the children in their care. The playgroup's Management Committee is supportive and actively involved in the running of the setting. All the assistants are making good progress in improving their Welsh oral skills.

The setting relies heavily on fundraising and other funds/grants from Local authority and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

Being housed in a shared local community centre has impact on the displays, furniture, resource storage and also affects certain activities that are not permitted indoors, therefore have to be taken outdoors.

The playgroup is part of Powys' Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Cylch Meithrin Ynys y Plant was last inspected by the Care & Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in May 2011. There were no major recommendations. The setting has been previously inspected by Estyn in November 2006. Recommendations have been successfully addressed.

Summary

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

Current performance

Excellent features

- * Planning for children's learning experiences.

Good features

- * Children's standards of achievement and progress.
- * The provision for ensuring children's wellbeing.
- * The range and quality of teaching, particularly to develop children's Welsh language.
- * The use of assessment in planning.
- * The provision for children's care, support and guidance, including children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- * The quality of management and self-evaluation.
- * Partnership with parents and professional organisations.

Prospects for improvement

Good features

- * The quality of leadership and the team spirit shown by the staff.
- * The well-established record of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.
- * The openness of the Nursery to new ideas.
- * The track record of improvement by the LA.
- * Recognition that the Nursery is an exemplar of good practice.

Recommendations

The Nursery needs to:

- (i) Maintain the current emphasis in developing children's competence in the Welsh language.
- (ii) Extend the well developed assessment procedures so as to identify the next steps in individual children's learning and to plan accordingly.
- (iii) Develop the outside to provide a covered area for children*

* This is recognised by the Nursery in its developmental plan.

What happens next?

The Cylch will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn will invite the Cylch to prepare a written case study describing the excellent practice identified in the inspection.

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 in all areas of learning. Children work diligently and are engaged in activities set out for them for sustained periods of time. Children are confident in the setting and this enables them to move confidently from one play station to another, choosing their favourite activity. Overall, the children show perseverance and the ability to play independently or in groups. Adult led activities are very worthwhile in that questions and conversation develop children's vocabulary and competence in the Welsh language.

All children acquire new skills systematically across all areas of learning. Practically all children have good listening skills. Through the persistence of staff, children's competence in the Welsh language is improving rapidly. Children respond to adults showing that they understand more words than they can speak. All enjoy Welsh songs, particularly action songs and are happy to take part.

Most children handle books carefully and turn pages appropriately. Many know the stories. Most children recognise their names and have begun to mark and scribble their names. They know some of the functions of writing.

Children's numerical skills are developing well. They recognise numbers to 5 and join in with rote counting to 15. They enjoy singing number rhymes, such as "One banana, two bananas...". Most children can name two dimensional shapes and are beginning to use mathematical language, such as small/large and smaller/larger. Some children understand the concept of measuring, such as "measuring teddy" and have produced histograms following investigation of how they come to school.

All children are developing their ICT skills such as using the computer. They produce "pictures" using computer icons and show good control of the computer mouse. Children are familiar with digital cameras and telephones.

Wellbeing: Good

Children show that they enjoy learning and taking part in the setting's activities. All children are well motivated and well behaved. They have the confidence to work independently but are equally happy to work in pairs or small groups. They show tolerance and respect for each other.

Children understand the need to keep clean and to wash their hands before snack-time. Snack time is a worthwhile social occasion where children help each other, are content to sit at the table and to enjoy the healthy food set out for them.

Children are respected as individuals and encouraged to take responsibility, such as setting out place mats for the morning snack.

Overall, the ethos in the setting is very good with a spirit of co-existence and co-operation for mutual benefit.

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

The quality of planning for children's learning experiences is excellent and ensures a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum based on the Framework for Children's learning. Planning is done collaboratively and provides for continuous provision, enhanced provision and focused tasks. Each week the leader collates the views of the staff and uses this information to plan the next week's curriculum. Planning is based around the Foundation Phase six areas of learning and provides details of the skills to be incorporated. The staff's assessment of individual children's skills forms the basis of the planned programme of skills and this ensures that skills are developed progressively.

Planning incorporates support activities and extended learning so as to provide for the different abilities. Each member of staff know their roles and assume responsibility for two areas of learning in terms of assessing children's achievement. These comments inform the following week's planning. Whilst this method of planning requires the staff to be vigilant in assessing children's development and considerable input in terms of time by the leader it ensures continuity, progression and work that is well matched to children's ability and prior attainment. Careful note ensures that all areas of learning are covered with due emphasis to children's skills, particularly their language development. A good balance is planned between child-initiated and adult-directed learning, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility to incorporate children's ideas and interests. Overall, this is excellent practice.

Excellent provision is made for developing children's oracy skills in the Welsh language. Speaking and listening experiences are well planned, but a particularly good feature is the promotion of children's talking skills. Adults are very good role models and through their questioning and interaction, the children are immersed in the language. Planning places a strong emphasis on oral work. Children enjoy singing Welsh songs, especially action songs and have good opportunities to listen to Welsh stories. Welsh traditions and celebrations are given emphasis in the planning.

Children come to know some of the functions of writing – they recognise their names and are beginning to scribble their own names. Number skills are developed well through planning to use number across the curriculum, such as number games and counting by rote. Planned daily activities ensure that children have regular access to the computer and other digital equipment.

Children are familiar with recycling materials, such as paper, plastic and foods for composting. They use the appropriate receptacles without prompting. Cultural diversity is promoted through consideration of other peoples and cultures and celebrating different festivals, such as Divali.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and through experience and training have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of child development. An outstanding element of the teaching is the relationships that have been established which allows the children to be relaxed and confident individuals, able to make the most of opportunities provided for them. Children are happy to work independently for considerable periods of time knowing there is help available should they need support. Tasks fully engage all children. Practitioners know their children well and questioning is well focused to develop children's thinking skills. At times, more emphasis could be given to ensure that tasks are sufficiently differentiated and matched to children's age and ability.

Sessions proceed at a lively pace and there is a good balance between child-selected and adult-directed activities. Both indoor and outdoor activities provide children with challenging activities.

Staff themselves are good language models and children are immersed in the Welsh language throughout their time at the nursery.

All staff are actively involved in assessing children and their observations and ideas fully incorporated in future planning. They are fully briefed as to what they are expected to do and work well as a team.

All children are regularly assessed and the results recorded. This gives an accurate measure of children's progress. A notable and very good feature of assessment is the use made of the outcomes. These records of children's achievement are used weekly in planning next week's work and this ensures that future activities show continuity and progression and incorporate both support and enhanced provision. It also ensures that tasks meet children's needs and interests.

Whilst assessment procedures are highly commendable and identify what individual children have achieved, it does not sufficiently identify the next steps in learning for individual or small groups of children so that appropriate tasks can be planned for, such as in language or mathematics. This would also enable parents to play a more active role in their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with very good aspects.

Activities are well focused on maintaining children's interests and all children are actively involved throughout the sessions. This, together with the positive behaviour strategies employed by the staff, maintains good behaviour and a positive work environment. Children are encouraged to be co-operative and to interact with each other. Overall, the nursery is very effective in developing children's personal and social skills.

The day-to-day activities successfully foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect for truth. All children distinguish between right and wrong and act accordingly. Children show that they are part of the nursery community and are beginning to make decisions that affect their life in the nursery.

The Nursery has good links with specialist services including social services and health visitors. Professional support has been, and is being employed to support children as necessary.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children. The leader is the person with responsibility for dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues, but all staff are aware of procedures. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008. Staff have received appropriate training.

The arrangements in place to support children with additional learning needs are very good. Whilst no child in the present cohort has been identified with ALN, the Nursery's documentation shows very good attention to detail and support for such children in the past. Children's needs were clearly identified. Individual Educational Plans were detailed and identified targets for improvement. Professional support was well used and parents consulted regularly. Such children had full access to all areas of learning.

Learning environment: Good

The setting radiates a caring, supportive ethos, where all children, whatever their background, are valued and respected. All children have equal access to the curriculum and are well supported by adults.

There is a tolerant attitude in the nursery and staff and children are free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. Complaints procedures are in place but there have been no instances where they have been used.

There are sufficient well qualified and experienced practitioners. Resources are well matched to the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum. Accommodation, although used by other organisations, is suitable with a large outside area approached directly from the main hall. There is no covered outside area or sufficient hard standing.

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

The setting displays a strong sense of purpose, well focused on providing the children with the best possible educational provision. Staff fully understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities. The leader provides the nursery with a clear sense of purpose based on excellent planning and a positive ethos set on high expectations. All activities are focused on children's needs and high expectations are realised in practice. There are appropriate induction opportunities and appraisal is well used as an evaluation tool. Very good links have been established with parents and carers.

The management committee is very supportive of the Nursery. Several members have been on the committee for some time and understand their roles and fulfil their legal duties. Committee members are well informed about the performance of the setting and have been actively involved in decision making.

The setting takes good account of National and Local authority priorities, such as implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum as well as healthy eating initiatives.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation and planning for improvement is well established and has successfully ensured that the provision for children has been consistently improved. Records show that self-evaluation has, over the years, identified needs, established timetables for improvement and evaluated outcomes against aims and objectives. This has been an on-going process and has resulted in a good quality of provision for the children. Currently plans are in place to provide an outside covered area with hard standing for the children. This will be worthwhile, enabling more choice for the children in their daily activities. A good feature is the involvement of the community in these developments.

All practitioners have been active in individual professional development and in this they are fully supported by the leader and management committee. The impact of training is evaluated in terms of the impact on children's progress and wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

Effective links exist with parents, carers and the community. The open door policy enables parents, where necessary, to settle their children. However, this is rarely necessary as staff are on hand to welcome the children and greet them affectionately.

The setting reports very good links with the receiving primary school. The Foundation Phase teacher visits the Nursery and children have an opportunity to visit the school prior to transfer.

The setting has received valuable support from the Local Authority advisory teacher and the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

The setting has also provided advice on planning to other settings and is recognised by the Local Authority as an exemplar of good practice.

Resource management: Good

The setting makes the best possible use of its resources and all practitioners are deployed effectively. Training is used appropriately to update staff and funds have been well used to improve facilities. Outdoors is well used.

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

Children show by their enthusiasm that they enjoy coming to the Nursery. In conversation they said they enjoyed the different activities, especially using shapes and glue to make rockets. They play well together and make 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)

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

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

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.