



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 Talhaiarn
Ysgol Talhairan
Stryd Yr Eglwys
Llanfair Talhaiarn
Sir Conwy
LL22 8SD**

Date of inspection: July 2012

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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Publication date: 07/08/2012

Context

Cylch Meithrin Talhaiarn was established over six years ago and is situated in a portacabin on the local primary school's premises. The Cylch is part of the provision of the Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership and provides Welsh medium, pre-school education for the children of Llanfair Talhaiarn village and the surrounding rural area. The area served by the setting is generally neither prosperous nor economically and socially disadvantaged.

Children of all abilities and backgrounds are admitted to the setting. During the inspection, no children with additional learning needs or children of ethnic origin were attending the setting.

The setting provides two and a half hour sessions on five mornings a week for children aged three to four years of age, although the number of sessions attended by individuals varies according to parental wishes. Currently, two three year old children are registered at the setting and are funded by the Partnership.

Almost every child speaks English at home. No child is learning English as an additional language. The setting's main medium of teaching and learning is Welsh.

Two full time practitioners and one additional part-time practitioner support the children's education. The leader is appropriately qualified to teach the early years.

When children have completed their time at the setting, they continue with their education at Ysgol Gynradd Talhaiarn.

The setting was last inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in January 2012. This is its first inspection by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- the Welsh language is very successfully promoted;
- a wide range of learning experiences engage children's interest and enable them to make good progress in learning;
- children are encouraged to take risks, to experiment with new ideas and become independent learners;
- planning for developing communication, numeracy and information communications technology skills is effective;
- the quality of teaching and assessment is secure, and
- children are happy at the setting and receive high quality care, support and guidance.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leader has a clear vision for the setting's development and conveys high expectations;
- practitioners are willing to undertake national priorities and new initiatives;
- the management committee provides the leader with strong support and officers fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously;
- there are firm arrangements to maintain good practice and implement change;
- self evaluation is developing well, and
- the setting benefits substantially from the productive partnership between it and the primary school.

Recommendations

In order to further improve, the setting needs to:

R1 continue to develop self evaluation arrangements, and

R2 ensure there are opportunities for the management committee to contribute to self evaluation.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the setting's progress.

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 careful collaborative planning, practitioners successfully provide a wide range of interesting and stimulating learning experiences which engage children's interest and enable them to make good progress across all areas of learning in the Foundation Phase. The curriculum builds systematically on children's current knowledge, understanding and skills and caters for the needs of children across the whole ability range, including the more able and talented.

The wide range of learning opportunities that practitioners provide encourage children to form positive relationships with other people and to show respect and tolerance towards people of different cultural backgrounds. All children are encouraged to take risks, experiment with new experiences and to investigate their environment confidently and become independent learners. By observing eggs hatching and other exciting activities, children have valuable opportunities to learn how to handle and respect living things.

The setting plans effectively for developing literacy, numeracy, information communications technology and thinking skills across areas of learning. Strong emphasis is placed on ensuring that children across the ability range acquire the necessary literacy and communication skills to enable them to take advantage of the full curriculum. Children are constantly encouraged to talk about their work, take an interest in stories and books and to use a range of media for mark making.

Through constant encouragement, practitioners promote Welsh very successfully and encourage children to use the language as much as possible in their learning. By celebrating occasions, such as St David's Day, the setting is very successful in promoting children's awareness of the traditions and celebrations of Welsh culture.

The curriculum helps children to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and values of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Children play an active role in the setting's recycling arrangements and through stimulating activities, such as celebrating the Chinese New Year, they begin to become more aware of the wider world.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and a thorough understanding of Foundation Phase requirements. The activities planned both indoor and outdoor, contain appropriate levels of challenge and cater for the individual needs of all children. The setting places strong emphasis on providing opportunities

for children to learn through play and to be active in their learning. Practitioners expect much from every child and succeed in maintaining a good balance between activities chosen by children and those instigated by adults. Children's behaviour is managed in a quiet but firm manner and every individual encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

All practitioners are skilled in their work and make a substantial contribution to the quality of children's learning. Imaginative use is made of a variety of resources to engage children's attention and improve learning. Practitioners are good language models themselves and during sessions, place strong emphasis on developing children's speaking and listening skills. Skilled questioning techniques, as well as timely intervention in children's play, successfully challenging children's ideas and extend their learning.

All staff assess children regularly and comprehensively and keep detailed records of every child's progress and wellbeing across the areas of learning. Recently, assessment information has been used more purposefully to plan the next steps in children's learning. Parents are given an interesting portfolio of their child's work which provides them with useful information about her/his achievement, welfare and development. They also receive guidance on how to help their child to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

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

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

The thorough induction arrangements, as well as the close relationship with parents, ensure that new children settle down quickly at the setting. Practitioners take great care of all children and ensure their safety at all times.

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

The setting has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where every child has equal access to all areas of learning and the activities provided. There is strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and on ensuring that children and members of staff are free from

harrassment. The setting has enough practitioners who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to teach every aspect of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The setting is successful in creating a homely but challenging environment where children are able to take full advantage of their learning experiences and develop positive values and attitudes.

The setting has a good supply of good quality resources in every area of learning, including information communications technology. They are carefully matched to the development and learning needs of every individual. Resources in the outdoor area are used particularly effectively to instigate imaginative play and children's personal and social skills. By using the primary school's playground regularly, the setting substantially enhances children's physical development. Practitioners make effective use of the local environment to enrich the curriculum and to support learning in the classroom. The building and accomodation are of good quality and are utilised fully.

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

The leader has a clear vision for the setting's development. She conveys high expectations and supports and challenges everyone to do their best. A positive ethos pervades the setting where children and staff feel appreciated. Practitioners work very closely as a team, they share agreed values about learning, behaviour and relationship and ensure that the Foundation Phase is successfully implemented. Their willingness to undertake national priorities and new initiatives is a strength. Clear aims and policies that focus on children's needs have been established and are implemented conscientiously. Relationships with children and parents are positive and make a significant contribution towards creating a sense of community.

The management committee provides strong support for the leader with officers undertaking their responsibility conscientiously. They ensure that any complaints are solved promptly and that the setting complies with legal requirements. Although actively involved in staff appraisal, committee officers do not have an opportunity to contribute directly to the setting's self evaluation. This has been identified as a priority in the setting's improvement plan.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know the setting's strengths and areas for development . With the leader's encouragement, practitioners self evaluate continuously and investigate ways of improving. Firm arrangements have been established for maintaining good practice and implementing change in areas which need to be improved. The setting carefully considers parents' views during self-evaluation and benefits substantially from the professional advice provided by the local authority support teacher. Practitioners are able to demonstrate clearly how, through self evaluation, they have improved provision and raised children's standards of achievement and welfare.

The recent self evaluation report, as well as the improvement plan, are of good quality and provide a clear direction for the setting's development. Priorities identified are implemented systematically and thoroughly by the leader and the practitioners.

However, as a recent development, self-evaluation has not yet become firmly embedded in the setting's procedures for planning for improvement.

Practitioners are given strong support through a programme of continuous professional development, provided mainly by the local authority and 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 to share their practice with practitioners from other settings.

The setting is developing well as a strong learning community. Practitioners are open to new ideas and are ready to try different ways of working and to share information and ideas amongst themselves. The practice of visiting other settings in order to observe good practice has led to discernable improvements in standards and provision.

Partnership working: Good

There is a wide range of partnership activities which contribute strongly to children's achievements and wellbeing. The productive partnership with the primary school substantially facilitates transition arrangements. The setting benefits greatly from its use of the school's resources and amenities and from joining in special events, such as sports day. There are strong links with a number of the establishments in the village. Practitioners take active steps to include parents in all aspects of the setting's work by keeping them regularly informed about activities and encouraging them to participate in their children's education.

The visits, reports and professional advice of the local authority support teacher have a very positive effect on the setting's development. The leader is also given good managerial support by the Mudiad Meithrin development officer.

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

Resource management: Good

The setting is well staffed to teach the Foundation Phase curriculum. Staff are effectively used to make the best possible use of their time, expertise and experience. The leader and the management committee have a detailed understanding of their budget and prioritise spending in line with the setting's development needs. Spending decisions are evaluated extremely carefully by the leader to ensure that they have a positive impact on children's standards, progress and welfare. 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	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.