



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 Chwarae Treffynnon
Ysgol Gwenffrwd
Whitford Street
Holywell
Flintshire
CH8 7NJ**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

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Reporting Inspector**

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 Chwarae Treffynnon occupies a classroom in Ysgol Gymraeg Gwenffrwd in Treffynnon, Flintshire. The Cylch moved to the present location in 2004 and the current leader has worked in the Cylch since 2006 and taking over her present role in January 2009. She has the support of 3 assistants and a student on work placement.

Treffynnon is an Anglicised town and virtually all children come from homes that are predominantly English speaking. In a few instances one parent is Welsh speaking. All parents are very supportive of the Welsh language and support their children's language development. No child is from an ethnic minority background. Most children come from homes that are neither substantially advantaged nor disadvantaged with a few living in areas of some deprivation. Each year a few children are identified with additional learning needs (ALN), the Cylch is happy to accommodate such children and obtain support for them.

Children attend the Cylch from aged 2½ years and move on to the next stage of their education in the September following their third birthday.

Currently there are 29 children on the register, 23 are aged 3 years of whom 21 are funded.

The Cylch operates on 3 afternoons a week in the autumn term (September to December) and for every afternoon a week from January to July.

The main room used by the Cylch is warm and welcoming benefiting from good natural lighting. It is well resourced to meet the needs of the children and the requirements of the Foundation Phase outcomes. The Cylch has sole use of this room so activity areas can be left out from one day to the next. Sand and water play areas are set out in a corridor outside the main room. Children make use of the school's toilet and hand washing facilities.

The Cylch has its own entrance and the use of an outside play area. The outside play area is not immediately accessible so children have to be taken there. Parents, bringing their children to the Cylch can see notices and information put on the windows adjacent to the entrance.

The Cylch benefits from the close association with Ysgol Gwenffrwd and most children move onto this primary school.

The Cylch was last inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in July 2009. There were no major recommendations.

The Cylch has not previously been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

- All children achieve good standards and make good progress based on their age and background.
- All children at the Cylch are immersed in the Welsh language and are making realistic progress.
- A majority of children show an interest in books.
- A majority of children enjoy mark making and a few understand the purpose of writing.
- All children feel safe at the Cylch and enjoy learning.
- When working in small groups children show good attitudes and behave well. A minority of children show antisocial behaviour and poor attitudes when gathered together in one group.
- Children experience a wide range of activities that challenge and motivate them.
- Staff work together very well and establish very good relationships with the children.
- Provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing is very good.
- The leader has established clear aims and direction for the Cylch, she is self-evaluative and improvements are focused on improving the provision for the children.
- Parents are highly supportive of the Cylch.

Prospects for improvement

- There is a track record of improving the provision
- Staff have regularly attended training courses, training is evaluated and where appropriate used to improve the provision.
- Current self-evaluation objectives are realistic and are focused on improving the range of experiences for the children.
- The leadership and staff are open to ideas and receptive to change.

Recommendations

1. Review the curriculum and include aspects that are under represented at present.
2. Refine assessment procedures to focus on children's skill development and to identify the next steps in children's learning.
3. Plan for alternative groupings of children, eliminating large group activities and highlighting small group work well matched to their ability and prior achievement.

What happens next?

The provider will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Nearly all children achieve good standards making realistic progress from their starting point. When working in small groups all children are actively involved and work hard. They make decisions and work co-operatively for sustained periods of time.

Children in the Cylch are immersed in the Welsh language and have a realistic command of the language relative to their age and background. Most children understand basic Welsh words and instructions and act accordingly. Their ability to speak the language is more limited but they join in Welsh songs and nursery rhymes and perform action songs appropriately. A few children were observed looking at books and most children enjoy mark making. A few know the purpose of writing, such as making a shopping list when prompted by the Inspector.

Most children have a basic idea of number and many children count to 15 when prompted by an adult as at registration. They enjoy mathematical activities, such as sequencing objects and matching patterns.

Most children know that buttons and switches operate some electronic equipment but children's information and communication skills are underdeveloped.

All children's creative and physical skills are developing well. Children have opportunities to select, mix and use paints and to make artefacts from junk materials. Children, daily have sufficient opportunities for robust physical exercise and games to develop their good hand-eye co-ordination. They know that living things need to be looked after.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children have an appropriate understanding relative to their age and stage of development of how they keep healthy. They recognise the need to keep clean and wash their hands before food or after going to the toilet. They do this willingly, although several needed prompting. A few children realise the importance of exercise. What is very apparent is that all children feel safe at the Cylch, being free of any physical and verbal abuse.

All children participate in the different small group activities set out for them and show considerable enjoyment in learning. They show interest in their work and engage in a wide variety of tasks willingly and enthusiastically. Virtually all children have the self-confidence to choose and to work independently. They have good attitudes and behaviour and relate well to each other and to adults. Children's behaviour when gathered together in a large group is more problematical in that a minority of children misbehave and interfere with other children's learning.

Children have opportunities to make decisions and to be involved in planning future activities.

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

Planning is done collaboratively involving all staff and including some of the children's ideas. This successfully engages all children and overall the planning is well focused on meeting the Foundation Phase outcomes. There are good arrangements in place to ensure that children's literacy skills, numeracy and creative skills are developed systematically. Matching tasks to children's ability and prior attainment is not always done appropriately and when the whole group is together a minority of children very quickly lose interest.

Small group learning activities are well designed to enable children to form good relationships and to work together showing tolerance and respect. There are suitable opportunities for independent learning and for children to develop their physical and creative skills and an understanding of how long things like seedlings need to be looked after.

All children have good opportunities to develop their key and basic skills. Staff are particularly vigilant through question and answer sequences, discussion and general conversation to develop children's Welsh vocabulary. Children are well immersed in the language. The traditions and celebration of the culture of Wales associated with St. David's day enables children to know something of the culture and traditions of Wales. Children are beginning to learn about sustainability and recycling through, for example, the recycling of yoghurt pots.

Teaching: Good

Staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and knowledge of child development. Staff have high expectations of the children.

There is a good balance between child-selected and adult-led activities. Questioning is used appropriately to develop children's thinking skills. Staff are good role models and treat children with respect and are sensitive to their needs. They intervene when necessary and children's behaviour when engaged in interesting activities is generally good. Children, when in a large group, tend to become boisterous, particularly when not interested in the activity, such as when tasks are not well matched to their ability and prior attainment.

Children are regularly assessed and results recorded. Examples of children's achievements are included in their individual record of achievement booklet under the 6 areas of learning as itemised in the Foundation Phase objectives. Children's achievements are dated so progress can be assessed. However, records tend to be descriptive and not always based on the skills acquired by the child so that the next steps in their learning are not clearly identified.

The results of assessment are not always sufficiently used in planning so as to ensure that activities are well matched to children's ability, particularly their ability to listen.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The Cylch's provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Cylch successfully fosters values such as honesty and fairness and helps children distinguish between right and wrong.

Staff have high regard for the children and show them respect. Children in turn treat each other with respect. Children, particularly when interacting in small groups, work co-operatively, sharing and showing initiative. In such instances children are well mannered, contribute to decision making and have the self-confidence to seek help when necessary.

Children benefit from the help and support provided by specialist services. Staff are vigilant of children's needs and any child suspected of having special or additional needs is kept under review. Children suspected of having additional learning needs are referred to specialist services and in the past such children have received the necessary support and this has been successful. Parents are informed at an early stage and kept updated regularly.

The Cylch has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of children. The leader assumes responsibility and all staff have received training. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008).

Learning environment: Good

The Cylch has a friendly, homely ethos that is inclusive and ensures equality for all. All children have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and a tolerant attitude prevails. Day-to-day activities successfully prevent oppressive behaviour or harassment.

There are no children with a disability currently present, however, whilst the main room would not provide any difficulties for the physically disabled, access to the outside play area and the play area itself would be problematic due to steps and sloping ground. A complaints procedure is in place but has not been used.

The Cylch is generously staffed with qualified and experienced adults. During the inspection there was also a student on placement. Resources are adequate and generally sufficient to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the needs of the Cylch, one exception being electronic equipment.

The main room is set out to enable children access to different activities. Space is somewhat limited, as is storage space. The Cylch benefits from having exclusive use of the room. The outside environment is well used.

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

Leadership: Good

Staff fully understand and accept their roles and responsibilities. They work together well under the direction of the Cylch's leader. The Cylch displays a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains good standards. Staff share values, aims and objectives, focused on providing good quality provision for children and focused on their personal, social and academic development.

All staff contribute to strategic planning in looking for ways to improve the provision. They create a positive ethos in the Cylch focused on children's needs. New staff benefit from the induction arrangements and staff are annually appraised.

Links with parents are very good and this enables any issues to be made known and resolved.

The management committee is effective and supportive of the Cylch. They fulfil their legal duties. The financial arrangements are under the care of a paid treasurer and audited annually.

The Cylch meets both national and local priorities. They have recently kept themselves abreast of developments, such as the establishment of the Foundation Phase curriculum, Healthy Eating initiatives and more recently the dental hygiene arrangements introduced in the county.

Improving quality: Good

Staff know their Cylch well including its major strengths and areas for development. Action in the past has been taken to maintain good practice and to implement change. Staff regularly meet and through informal discussion identify what needs to be done. Such initiatives are formally identified by the leader who initiates plans for improvement.

Staff are open to new ideas and are self-evaluative. They share ideas derived from training courses and evaluate them in terms of their own requirements. All such initiatives are focused on improving the provision for the children. Over time, this has been successful but the staff are not complacent and are continually looking for new ideas to incorporate in the Cylch's activities.

Partnership working: Good

The good range of partnerships established by the Cylch makes a significant contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing. Staff are active in involving parents and carers and this is a reciprocal arrangement that works well. Parents are particularly appreciative of the easy access they have to the staff.

Parents are well informed about all aspects of the work of the Cylch.

Strong links also exist with the primary school and these arrangements facilitate the transfer of children to the next phase of their education.

A good and positive relationship exists with the Local Authority advisory teacher and the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. The staff at the Cylch are highly appreciative of the support they have received and its impact on the quality of provision.

Good, effective links are also in place with specialist services and used when children require extra support. Community links also enhance children's understanding of their community.

Resource management: Good

Resources are managed and deployed effectively to support learning. The budget has been focused on providing resources to support children's learning. Overall, resources are well matched to children's needs and to the Foundation Phase requirements. The budget is well controlled.

Overall, the Cylch provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Nine questionnaire replies were received from parents.

In the main, replies were strongly supportive of the Cylch. In total 75% strongly agreed that

1. My child settled in well when starting at the setting.
2. The teaching is good
3. Staff treat children with respect
4. My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.
5. My child is safe at the setting.
6. I feel comfortable at approaching the setting.
7. My child is well prepared to moving on to school.
8. The setting is well run.

In only 3 instances were disagreements with the statements in the questionnaires.

1. I am kept well informed about my child's progress (22%)
2. I understand the settings procedures for dealing with complaints (14%).
3. There is a good range of activities including trips and visits (14%).

Responses to discussions with children

In discussion, children spoke of their enjoyment in coming to the Cylch. They particularly enjoyed outdoor play and their painting. Several spoke about their affection for the staff.

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.