



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

**Meithrinfa Seren Fach
Brithdir
Dolgellau
Gwynedd
LL40 2RP**

Date of inspection: December 2011

by

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**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

Meithrinfa Seren Fach is located in an old Chapel in the village of Brithdir which is some 3 miles inland from Dolgellau. The Chapel has been renovated as part of a community scheme. The nursery manager was appointed in November 2005 and the nursery opened in January 2006. Following an increase in demand for more places an extension was added and completed by September 2010 and consequently enabling more children to be accommodated. The outside play area is well developed and a very good facility. Overall, the facility is aesthetically pleasing and an outstanding learning environment. It is a very worthwhile community facility.

The Nursery has sole use of the facility and is administered by a Board of Directors, three of whom are the Responsible Persons registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW).

The Nursery provides for children from less than a year old to age 4 years and is located in 3 separate rooms. It also offers after school facilities for children up to 8 years of age. Currently there are 58 children on the register of whom 8 are aged 3 years. It is registered by the CSSIW to admit up to 34 children at any one time and up to 14 three year olds. The Nursery is open for 5 days of the week, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. except for bank holidays. Children attend for differing periods of time throughout the day and the week.

The Nursery attracts children from the immediate locality but children increasingly come from further afield as the Nursery's reputation grew. All children come from typical Welsh homes and, in the main, are neither particularly disadvantaged nor socio-economically advantaged. The majority are from Welsh speaking homes with a minority from English speaking backgrounds, where possibly one parent is Welsh speaking. The language of the Nursery is Welsh and the Nursery benefits from staff being Welsh speaking. There are no children from minority ethnic communities and currently no child is recognised as having additional learning needs (ALN). However, the Nursery has supported children with ALN in the past and is well equipped to accept children with specific needs and providing individual support as necessary.

There is ample off-road parking that ensures the safety of children attending the Nursery. The main door which is kept locked unless attended by a member of staff, opens into a hallway where useful information is displayed for parents. Another locked door opens into the main room which is the nursery children's base room. This room also functions as the refectory when all children come together for food. There is a well appointed kitchen opening into this room and this enables hot food to be prepared. Other rooms opening from this room, including the baby room, staff room and toilet facilities. Beyond this room and in the new extension is another room for children up to age 2½ years and an office for the Nursery manager. Access to the outside facilities is via the new room. The outside provides exceptional facilities including a covered area, soft play surfaces, grassed landscaped area, and sandpit, together with a range of toys. The outside facilities are enclosed by a dry stone wall with extensive rural views.

The Nursery manager oversees 12 staff who work together efficiently. Three members of staff are permanently employed overseeing the 3 year old children under the direction of an under manager. All are appropriately qualified.

The setting was previously inspected by CSSIW in January 2011. There were no major recommendations. It has not been previously inspected by Estyn.

Summary

The Nursery's current performance	Good
The Nursery's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

Excellent features include:

- the self-evaluation and planning which has secured improvement in the facilities for the benefit of the children;
- the leadership that has provided the Nursery with strategic direction and a sense of purpose. It has successfully promoted and maintained improvements.

Good features include:

- children's standards of achievement and the progress they make;
- children's skill development, particularly their language and literacy skills;
- children's attitudes to learning and their behaviour;
- planning to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase;
- the quality of teaching to meet individual children's needs;
- the provision for developing children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- support provided by local authority advisory teacher and the support officers from Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are excellent because of:

- the setting's successful track record of planning and securing improvements;
- the setting's capacity and capability to make improvements;
- the challenging targets that have been met in the last few years;
- the quality of resources matched to children's needs;
- the emphasis on staff training to meet their professional needs and focused on improved educational provision for the children.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the setting needs to:

- R1 use the results of assessments to identify the next steps in children's learning and to plan accordingly;
- R2 implement plans so that children use the outside facilities as part of their free choice activities;
- R3 in due course, develop a baseline assessment profile for each child.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how the setting is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the setting to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

All children achieve good standards and make effective progress in all areas of learning. They are actively involved and constantly engaged in their tasks. Children persevere and concentrate on their activities, showing good commitment to their work.

All children are developing good communication skills. They have a good and developing vocabulary and are able to converse effectively with each other and with adults. Children use an appropriate language in their play; they listen and respond to instructions appropriately. Most children's background enables them to converse confidently in the Welsh language and those from non-Welsh speaking homes, are developing and impressive fluency in the language. All children enjoy singing Welsh action songs and rhymes and have a good repertoire.

All children enjoy stories and many can recall events and characters in stories they have heard. Children show an interest in books, holding them appropriately and following the story. All children also experiment with mark-making and their work books show that they are making impressive progress. Children also know some of the functions of writing. Several children are able to outline letters of the alphabet and recognise the first letter of their name. A few children can draw some letters in sand and chalk dust.

Children's mathematical ideas are developing well – most are able to count to five and a few to ten. They recognise patterns and sequences of number. Children know that buttons and switches operate electronic equipment and are familiar with simple computer programs.

Wellbeing: Good

All children show a positive attitude to learning and an enjoyment in participating in the differing activities set out for them. All children behave well, show interest in their work and relate well to each other. The Nursery employs a cook and emphasis is given to providing nutritious, home made and locally sourced food and to promote healthy eating habits. Snack and lunch times are good social occasions. Children show by their behaviour that they feel safe and there are sufficient facilities for children to engage in and enjoy physical activities.

Children co-operate well and work together happily – they are presented with a good choice of activities and have opportunities to make choices as to what they do. Children enjoy the very good out of door facilities but do not have free access to them during the day. However, they have opportunities as a group.

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

Planning is detailed and responds flexibly to children's interests. This ensures that it engages all children. Learning experiences are well designed to meet the objectives of the Foundation Phase curriculum, in that activities are planned for all areas of learning. The curriculum builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and particularly their skill development.

Planning incorporates a wide range of activities and encourages children to become confident learners and to develop a degree of independence. Children's creative skills are well developed and their work books show the different materials and techniques they have used. This involves using scissors to cut paper, glueing and painting their models to express their ideas.

Children have also studied the lives of other children across the world and this helps them to appreciate the needs and lifestyles of different people.

Planning places good emphasis on children's skill development across all areas of learning. The interaction between adults and children is highly effective in developing and extending their language and in developing their thinking skills. Adults are skilful in exploiting opportunities to develop children's skills in all area of learning, particularly their communication skills. The children's perceptions of the traditions and celebrations of the cultures of Wales are well developed.

Children are beginning to understand the need to recycle, such as recycling paper.

Teaching: Good

Staff are well experienced and have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of child development. They have high expectations of all children, including their personal and social development.

A good and notable feature is the staff's understanding of the requirements of the Foundation Phase and this ensures an appropriate emphasis on children's progressive skill development.

A good balance is planned between child-selected and adult-led activities. Activities are also suitably challenging to meet children's differing needs. Adults have a good understanding of when to intervene in children's activities and when to allow children to work independently.

Staff are good language models and children are totally immersed in the Welsh language. Questioning is well used to develop children's thinking skills. Overall, the successful teaching results from collaborative planning and detailed weekly plans.

Children are assessed regularly and staff record individual children's achievement in their notebooks. Staff observations are transferred to individual children's records.

These describe the child's achievements and are dated enabling progress to be monitored. At the end of each week children's overall assessment on the weekly tasks is noted and this is used in planning the following weeks work. This system is effective in ensuring continuity and progress in the activities taught, but does not always identify the next steps in the individual child's learning so that tasks can be well matched to individual needs.

Parents receive a detailed report on their child's achievements and progress, but it does not always suggest what they can do to help children improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The Nursery is successful in promoting children's health and wellbeing. All children are well cared for and the key worker system ensures that staff know the children well. During the inspection staff were seen to be responding particularly well to children's individual needs. A list of key workers and the children for which they are responsible is displayed in the hallway for parents to see. Children show that they are happy and feel safe. There is an outstanding homely feeling in the Nursery and this is effective in developing children's understanding of being part of a close knit community. It also fosters values, such as honesty, fairness and respect. It enables these young children to appreciate and distinguish between right and wrong and hence fostering their moral and social development.

Overall, the provision for developing children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Children are well respected as individuals and staff are aware of their specific needs. Parents and carers have regular access to the Nursery staff when arriving with their children and when collecting them. This allows for informal discussion and an exchange of information. Each child also has a personal diary filled in by the key worker and taken home every day by the child. This enables parents to be made aware of the daily activities and any issues, such as eating habits and behaviour.

When necessary, the Nursery makes use of professional support available locally from specialist services such as health visitors and speech therapists. The Nursery's first contact is with the parents and this ensures that they are fully aware of any recommendations made by the Nursery and involved in any future planning.

The Nursery manager is the person with responsibility for child protection and safeguarding issues and all staff are well aware of their roles and responsibilities. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place regarding child protection and reflect the "All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008". Staff receive regular and appropriate training.

Any child suspected of having additional learning needs (ALN) is carefully supervised. In the first instance discussion takes place with the parents and they are fully involved at each stage, particularly if outside agencies are involved. In the past the Nursery has provided 1:1 support as necessary, whilst ensuring the child has full access to all areas of learning.

Learning environment: Good

The Nursery has a superb ethos that is friendly, welcoming and fully inclusive. It is sensitive to children's needs and provides children with a warm, homely atmosphere. A tolerant attitude pervades the setting and all children show respect and concern for each other.

All children are completely free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. All children are well supported and no child is left unsupervised for any length of time. In the past, children with disabilities have been well supported and made good progress. Complaints procedures are in place through none has been necessary since the Nursery opened.

The Nursery is generously staffed and all have relevant and appropriate qualifications and experience of working with young children. The accommodation is of a high standard and used effectively. Resources are of good quality, suitable and sufficient to meet the needs and requirements of the Foundation Phase Curriculum.

The Nursery's outside resources are outstanding and provide exceptional play and activity areas for the children. However, the children do not have free access to these facilities and this limits their opportunities for outside play. Children, however, have regular time tabled opportunities to use the outside facilities but they cannot individually or in small groups decide when to play outside.

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

The Nursery manager provides the Nursery with highly effective and outstanding leadership. Her influence pervades all aspects of the setting and provides it with clear aims and strategic objectives focused on delivering a provision that fully meets children's needs. The Nursery manager is very well supported by her staff who understand and fulfil their roles focused on providing the best possible experiences for the children.

A sense of purpose pervades the Nursery that promotes and sustains improvement. There is a positive ethos and high expectations of the children in terms of attitude, behaviour and performance. Both staff and children are valued as individuals and their views respected. The Nursery manager is well supported by her assistant manager who has primary responsibility for the 3 year old class. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning.

Staff meetings are held regularly and all staff appraised annually. All staff have been appropriately inducted and have continued their professional development resulting in improved contributions and benefit to the children.

Overall, the Nursery is highly effective in providing children with a wide range of relevant experiences and this reflects the highly effective leadership of the setting.

Excellent links exist with parents with the benefit to children's learning.

The Board of Directors have been and continue to be very influential in the development of the Nursery. They understand and fulfil their roles effectively and have, over the last few years, managed the conversion of the present building into a highly effective provision for pre-school children. As the number of children attending increased, the setting has further developed, and extended the facilities available to the children. This enhanced provision currently provides children with excellent experiences. The Board of Directors fully support the Nursery and have taken account of the relevant legislation.

The Nursery fully meets its legal duties.

The Nursery has taken good account of National and local priorities. The Foundation Phase is fully implemented and due attention is given to the development of skills and to the Welsh language. The Nursery takes very good account of healthy eating initiatives.

Improving quality: Excellent

The Nursery is an outstanding example of what can be achieved in a community having a vision, effective planning and a high degree of commitment. At each stage aspects were prioritised for improvement and strategies formulated. Strengths and areas for improvement were identified in the process of self-evaluation and at each stage the results secured positive gains for the children.

Parents were regularly consulted and their views acknowledged. An excellent example of this was when the initial building very soon became too small to accommodate potentially the number of children registered as wishing to attend. Increasingly this included the wishes of parents from further afield as the Nursery's reputation grew. In response to parental response the Nursery undertook an extension to the building with the necessary refurbishment. This was successfully completed, together with the provision of excellent outside facilities for the children.

The outside provision and facilities are exceptional for non-maintained Nurseries in that it incorporates a wide range of child-friendly play equipment and toys. This includes well built covered accommodation, soft play areas, hard standing and climbing play equipment. In all it is an outstanding provision for children and highly effective in developing their gross motor skills. Children's views have been fully implemented.

The Nursery continues to undertake self-evaluation and the current areas for development are realistic and designed to ensure positive gains for the children. The leader is also active in securing professional training for her staff.

Overall, the Nursery represents a high quality provision with some outstanding features that have resulted from highly effective quality improvement.

Partnership working: Good

The well developed and effective partnership activities make a strong contribution to children's good achievements and wellbeing. The Nursery manager, assisted by her

staff, take active steps to involve parents. Initially prospective parents are provided with a handbook for parents providing them with information about the Nursery and invited to visit with their child. They have opportunities to discuss policies and procedures with the Nursery manager. This enables them to make informed choices regarding the kind of service available for their children.

Relevant information is displayed in the hallway and parents receive regular circulars providing them with up-to-date information. Children beginning at the Nursery are supported by their parent's attendance as long as necessary and key staff are always available for informal contacts with parents. This ensures the smooth transfer from home to the Nursery. The personal notebook which goes home with the child is another useful and effective means of communication between Nursery and home. Parents also receive regular (termly and end of year) reports. These are detailed describing what the child has accomplished. In discussion parents reported that they would have no hesitation in recommending the Nursery to others.

There is regular communication with the local primary school. However several children attend other schools some distance from the Nursery and this makes contact with them more difficult.

There are good links with the local authority advisory teacher and the representative of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. Their support and advice has been valuable in establishing the very good facilities.

Resource management: Good

Resources are well managed and deployed effectively to support learning. The manager and staff have a good understanding of what is required to support children's learning and to achieve the objectives of the Foundation Phase. Resources are of good quality and the outside play facilities are exceptional. The Board of Directors have ensured very good facilities for the children.

Overall, the Nursery provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

From, the questionnaire replies received and in discussion with a sample of parents, all, without exception, were fully supportive of the Nursery. All “strongly agreed” with the following statements which appeared in the parents’ questionnaire.

- overall, I am satisfied with the setting;
- my child likes this setting;
- my child was helped to settle in well when he/she started at the setting;
- my child is making good progress at the setting;
- children behave well in the setting;
- teaching is good;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem;
- I understand the setting’s procedure for dealing with complaints;
- my child is well prepared for moving on to school;
- the setting is well run.

There were no responses indicating any disagreement and this was reflected in discussion with parents.

Responses to discussions with children

All children enjoy coming to the Nursery and meeting their friends. They are confident with their key workers and other staff and ask questions and speak with them naturally. They enjoy activities set out for them and often relax with books, especially during lunch breaks. Snack and lunch times are social occasions when children converse freely. Children are totally relaxed in the setting and enjoy the homely atmosphere and being with adults.

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)