



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 Abergele
Ysgol Glan Morfa
Ffordd Y Morfa
Abergele
Conwy
LL22 7NU

Date of inspection: April 2012

by

Mr W 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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Context

Cylch Meithrin Abergele was opened over forty years ago in a chapel in the town but is now situated in a cabin on the premises of Ysgol Glan Morfa. It is part of the provision of the County of Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership and provides Welsh medium pre-school education for the children of the town of Abergele and the surrounding area.

The children who attend the setting come from a wide variety of different backgrounds and a few of them are from socially and economically deprived areas. Children of all abilities and backgrounds are admitted to the setting, including children from minority ethnic groups. Very few children with additional educational needs attend the setting.

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

All the children speak English at home. The setting's main medium of teaching and learning is Welsh.

Four full time practitioners support the children's education. They are appropriately qualified to teach the early years.

When they have completed their time at the setting, most of the children will continue with their education at Ysgol Glan Morfa.

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

Summary

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

Current performance

The setting's current performance is good because:

- most of the children use their literacy skills well across the curriculum;
- almost every child makes good progress in learning;
- the children's behaviour and the care they show for one another is good;
- practitioners provide a wide range of interesting and exciting activities;
- there is a strong emphasis on learning through play and on solving practical problems;
- the quality of the care, support and guidance is high, and
- the setting provides good value for money.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the strong sense of purpose provided by the leader promotes and sustains improvement effectively;
- the management committee has good knowledge of the setting's performance;
- practitioners know the setting well and are continually looking for ways to improve;
- the setting is developing very well as a strong learning community, and
- practitioners are very open to new ideas and willing to try different ways of working.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the setting needs to:

R1. plan Welsh language development in more detail;

R2. provide more guidance to parents on how they can help their children, and

R3. make better use of assessment information in planning the next steps in learning.

What happens next?

The setting will form an action plan showing how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Nearly all children make good progress in learning from the time they start at the setting and achieve good standards in all areas of learning. Most of the children recall previous learning well, develop good thinking and problem solving skills and acquire new knowledge and skills with increasing confidence. All children usually work to their utmost ability. During activities where they are given freedom to choose, every child experiments and investigates confidently, is willing to take risks and makes good progress towards becoming independent learners.

Most children use their communication and literacy skills well in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. All children can convey what they want with clarity and, during group sessions, they express their feelings and ideas clearly and confidently. When they undertake role play in the shop or the surgery, most of the children use language that is appropriate to the situation very skilfully.

With or without an adult, children of all abilities show enthusiasm and an interest in story and factual books and enjoy their content, handling them as readers. Many children are able to choose books independently for a specific purpose, whilst a few have started to use some strategies for recognising letters and familiar words. As they experiment with different media for mark making, most of the children start to understand some of the functions of writing, such as sending a letter or creating a greetings card for a member of the family.

All children have positive attitudes towards learning Welsh. Most children respond quickly to basic instructions from practitioners and understand far more words than they can speak. During group sessions, many of the children repeat familiar words and phrases correctly and join in singing and rhymes in Welsh with great enthusiasm. Almost everyone follows and responds to familiar stories and shows an interest in the content of Welsh books.

Wellbeing: Good

All children enjoy their time at the setting and have formed close relationships with other children and practitioners. The children's good behaviour and the care they show towards each other is a very apparent feature of the setting. Most children are considerate of other children's feelings, and when they are involved in specific activities chosen by themselves, they work together harmoniously. In line with their ability and stage of development, almost every child shows high levels of independence and perseverance.

All children have a good understanding of how they can become healthy through what they eat and the physical activities they undertake. When speaking to a visitor, children say that they feel safe at the setting and that they are free from any physical or verbal abuse.

Learning experiences: Good

The principles of the Foundation Phase are strongly reflected in the quality of the curriculum provided for children. Through detailed and flexible collaborative planning, practitioners succeed in providing a wide range of interesting and exciting activities across every area of learning. This fires the interest of all children. The practice of following the children's interest adds substantially to the quality of children's learning.

Provision for developing literacy, numeracy and information communications technology skills is coherent and firmly embedded into the experiences for all children. Practitioners successfully create an extremely imaginative environment indoors which encourages children to experiment with new experiences and to develop key skill effectively. The outdoor learning area, as well as the interesting garden, enriches children's learning substantially. Children's learning experiences are further enhanced by visits to places in the community such as a shop and café and by contributions made by visitors to the setting.

Opportunities provided for children to develop their personal identity and to raise their awareness of Welsh culture, festivals and traditions are of high quality. Through role play and tasting foods from different countries, such as Italy, and raising money for charities, children become increasingly aware of their role as global citizens. There are good opportunities for them to learn about sustainability and to take an active role in the setting's recycling arrangements.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have up-to-date knowledge of child development and have a sound understanding of Foundation Phase requirements. They have high expectations of every child, including children with additional learning needs and the more able and talented children. Through purposeful collaborative planning, practitioners successfully provide motivating and challenging learning experiences both indoors and outside. The wide range of teaching strategies used by the practitioners fire children's interest and ensuring their involvement in their tasks. Almost invariably, the tasks include appropriate challenge and place strong emphasis on learning through play and solving practical problems. An appropriate balance is maintained between activities selected by the child and those directed by adults. Through purposeful intervention and skilful questioning, children's ideas are challenged learning moved on. By joining in play, practitioners are able to make sure that children take full advantage of what every activity has to offer. The very close working relationship between practitioners and children ensure that the setting has a good awareness of every child's personal and educational needs. When rare instances of unacceptable behaviour or disputes between individuals arise, they are solved firmly and sensitively by the practitioners.

Practitioners assess children regularly and comprehensively and record observations and assessments carefully to measure children's progress. The setting has recently began to use assessment outcomes to plan activities for the future, but this practice is not yet fully developed. There are thorough arrangements to involve parents in

their children’s assessments and ensuring that they have good knowledge of their children’s progress and what they themselves can do to help them to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is good provision for promoting children’s health and welfare, which includes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The daily experience the children have of working in the outside area and in the garden has a beneficial effect on their spiritual and physical development and raises their awareness of the beauty of the world around them. During their daily involvement with the children, practitioners emphasise strongly the need for everyone to be kind to each other, to be honest and fair and to behave in a responsible manner. This greatly helps children in learning to differentiate between right and wrong. The regular opportunities afforded the children through ‘Helpwr heddiw’ to undertake responsibilities and to make their own choices about their learning contribute significantly towards their personal and social development.

Practitioners know the children well and provide them with clear guidance during sessions. Practitioners know how to access professional assistance such as that of the educational psychologist.

The induction arrangements are effective in helping children to settle down quickly and easily at the setting. The setting has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Children’s learning needs are noted in detail when they join the setting and practitioners ensure that these needs are met. The help and support provided for children with special educational needs is very effective and enables these children to make good progress in their personal and key skills.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community where every child is given equal access to all areas of learning and activities provided. There is a strong emphasis on developing tolerant attitudes and on ensuring that every child and member of staff is free from any harrassment. The setting has enough practitioners who possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach every aspect of the Foundation Phase curriculum. A very prominent characteristic of the setting is the extremely interesting learning environment created and the opportunities for every child to develop positive values and attitudes.

There is a good supply of good quality resources in all areas of learning including information communications technology and these are carefully matched to every individual’s development and learning needs. The resources in the outside area and in the community are used very purposefully to enrich the curriculum and to support learning in the classroom. The building and the premises are of good quality and are used extensively.

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

Through the leader's dedication and enthusiasm, the setting has managed to create an extremely positive ethos with children and staff feeling that they are appreciated. Practitioners share common values about learning, behaviour and relationships and work together very effectively to ensure that the Foundation Phase and other national priorities are implemented successfully. The strong sense of purpose provided by the leader promotes and maintains improvement effectively. Learning and teaching are well managed, and the setting's policies are implemented effectively. Members of staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities which they fulfil conscientiously. Relationships with children, parents and the primary school are very positive and contribute significantly to the sense of community.

Expectations for securing improvement are high with the leader supporting staff well and challenging everyone to do their best. There are effective procedures for managing and appraising staff performance.

The management committee is well informed about the setting's performance and fulfils its responsibilities conscientiously. It supports the setting in the role of a critical friend and is influential in sustaining high standards and setting priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Practitioners know the setting well and with the leader's encouragement, they continually self evaluate and look for ways to improve. Firm arrangements have been established to maintain good practice and to implement change in areas that need improving. Self evaluation pays careful regard to the views of parents and children and derives substantial benefit from the professional advice of the local authority support teacher. Practitioners are able to show how, through self evaluation, they have improved provision and raised children's standards of achievement and welfare.

The setting's self evaluation report is of good quality. Effective use of the information has been made by the setting to formulate an action plan and to implement strategies for improvement.

Practitioners are strongly supported through a programme of continuous professional development provided mainly by the local authority. This has enabled them to acquire new knowledge and skills and to implement the Foundation Phase successfully. The training sessions also give them valuable opportunities to share their practice with practitioners from other settings.

The setting is developing very well as a robust learning community. Through the leader's encouragement, practitioners are very open to new ideas and are willing to try different ways of working and to share knowledge and ideas amongst themselves. This is one of the settings main strengths.

Partnership working: Good

A wide range of partnership activities make a strong contribution towards children's good achievements and welfare. Parents are informed regularly about every aspect of the setting's work and practitioners take active steps to include them in all the activities arranged. The parents' handbook provides useful information about the setting's policies and procedures but it does not advise parents as to how they can help their children. The setting has close links with the local Welsh primary school and there are clear arrangements for sharing assessment information and good practice.

The setting's close collaboration with the local authority support teacher makes a very positive contribution towards improving the quality of provision and standards. Practitioners work together very effectively, share information about children and know who to contact and when if children need any additional assistance. Very good links have been formed with a number of institutions in the local community.

Resource management: Good

Staff and resources are managed very skilfully by the leader. The setting is appropriately staffed and there are thorough procedures for meeting practitioners' development needs. This ensure that all staff have current knowledge about recent developments in the Foundation Phase. The leader and the management committee understand their budget well and prioritise spending in line with the setting's development needs. Expenditure decisions are carefully evaluated to ensure that they have a direct impact on children's standards of achievement, progress and welfare. The setting provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

Nine parent questionnaires were returned and all the responses were positive. This compares very well with national percentages.

Every parent says that his or her child enjoys attending the setting and is making good progress. They believe that the setting is well run, that there is a good range of activities and that the children have been well prepared to move on to school.

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 guidance.

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)

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

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.