



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

**Ysgol Feithrin Pontypool
Saint James' Hall
Saint James' Field
Pontypool
Gwent
NP4 6JT**

Date of inspection: 11 October 2013

by

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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

Ysgol Feithrin Pontypool is situated in Saint James' Upper hall which belongs to the Pontypool Park Estate. Opened in 1979, the building was completely renovated in 2010. It is situated in the centre of Pontypool and most children come from this area. The setting is run in accordance with the recognised guidelines of Mudiad Meithrin and is registered under the Children Act 1989. It is managed by a Management Committee.

The setting provides care for children from the local community and surrounding areas for four days a week from 9.30 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. and 12.45 to 3.15 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays during school terms. On Thursday mornings a Cylch Ti a Fi is held instead of the Cylch Meithrin. The setting is registered for twenty-four children per session and twenty-nine were registered at the time of the inspection. The setting accepts children of two and a half years upwards and they leave when they begin their statutory education after their fourth birthday when they begin their statutory education usually in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bryn Onnen, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Panteg or Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwmbrân.

The building consists of a very large hall, which is used for activities, physical exercise and dance. There is also a storage area, a kitchen and appropriate toilets for young children. There is a large attractive area outside which includes a hard surface, sloping grass banks, mature shrubs and trees and it gives children ample space to play outside. There is a fence which ensures children's safety. Entrance is gained by means of a secure system.

Welsh is the language of the setting and very few children speak Welsh at home. At the time of the inspection, 17 children were funded for part-time education provision. There are no children with additional learning needs.

Five members of staff are employed including the leader and all work with the children. All have appropriate qualifications and experience in early years education and the leader is a qualified teacher. All have received training in child protection and safety and in first aid. The last inspection by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales was conducted on 18 September 2012 and the setting was last inspected by Estyn in September 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

Current performance is good because:

- children achieve well and make good progress from their starting point;
- children feel happy and safe in the setting;
- the very good use made of the environment and the community to enrich children's experiences;
- the active learning experiences which engage and sustain the children's interest;
- the teaching is of a consistently good standard, and
- the effective use of assessment by observation to plan the next steps.

Prospects for improvement

The provider's prospects for improvement are good because:

- there is a culture of professional reflection which is based on self-evaluation;
- the standard of leadership is good;
- the setting demonstrates a commitment to continuous professional development, and
- practitioners work effectively as a team.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the setting needs to:

R1. Continue to improve children's Welsh language skills

R2. Improve the provision for children's spiritual development

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it 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 make good progress from their starting point and achieve well according to their stage of development.

Although all but one of the children have no Welsh at all when they begin in the setting, all learn words, everyday phrases, rhymes and songs, understand simple instructions and sometimes use Welsh words when they play. The majority develops a wide vocabulary but not every child uses Welsh at all times without the encouragement of adults.

All children make good progress in developing communication, numeracy and information technology (ICT) skills. They love to listen to stories and handle books like reader. They choose favourite stories and join in with parts they know. All enjoy making marks both indoors and outdoors which demonstrate a good knowledge of the purposes of writing. Their numeracy skills develop well and they count to ten using their fingers and enjoy mark-making with numbers during role play. All children's number skills develop well when they buy things in their shop and pay for them. They use the computer confidently, for example, when they use the magnifier to examine closely objects, which interest them. They also use a programmable toy and compact disk player confidently and this helps them to develop good early ICT skills.

Wellbeing: Good

All have a positive and enthusiastic attitude to learning and take an active and energetic part in their experiences both indoors and outdoors and behave very well. All make firm decisions and choices about their learning and almost all are very confident. All concentrate and persevere with their activities and play enthusiastically. They are all very happy in the setting and enjoy their experiences there. The close and warm relationship between the adults and the children makes them feel safe and contented. The self-confidence and happiness of the children show that they are appreciated and respected and they, in turn, respect and like the adults. They show concern for one another, the practitioners and visitors. They are always well-mannered and all show consideration towards others. The majority makes friends in the nursery and they are very fond of one another.

Everyone understands that eating healthily, dental hygiene and keeping fit are important for their health and they name healthy foods and things they should not eat and clean their teeth after eating snack. They enjoy eating their snack together every day and behave very politely at the table.

They all enjoy their frequent visits to the community when they visit the park, the library, the museum, the community farm, the fire station, the police station, the market and the shops. The children benefit considerably from these and the visits made to them by members of the community such as people from the fire and police service as well as parents who come to speak to them about their work.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The standard of planning is good. Before planning, practitioners evaluate the week's provision and results. They discuss all children's attainments, progress and needs and consider assessments through observations. They include children in planning by asking them about their interests and what they like doing; this is a good feature. They use all this information well to inform the next cycle of provision; as a result, planning responds well to children's interests and needs. A wide range of interesting and active learning experiences is planned which enable children to make good progress towards meeting the outcomes of the Foundation Phase. Planning is flexible and practitioners adapt it to meet children's interests. Adults build on children's knowledge, understanding, skills and interests well and in a way that is meaningful to them.

Practitioners give children good opportunities to develop into enthusiastic, confident and independent learners and to develop good creative, physical, linguistic and mathematical skills in all areas of learning. They promote the development of good creative skills by providing many opportunities to paint, to enjoy dance and to make music with percussion instruments. Children receive good opportunities to explore their natural environment by exploring in the park, walking the length of the stream and through visiting the community farm.

Children receive an excellent model of the Welsh language from the leader and they are encouraged successfully by practitioners to extend their language by reciting rhymes, songs and hearing and responding to stories which contain rich language and a wide vocabulary. They celebrate the Welsh culture in a range of ways, including going to the market on Saint David's Day to sing and perform folk dancing and by cooking Welsh food such as 'cawl' and Welsh cakes.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have good knowledge of children's development and current developments in the area and this gives a good foundation and clear direction to the provision. They understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase and they have high expectations of all children according to their stage of development. Behaviour is managed in a very sensitive and positive way and, as a result, children learn lifelong attitudes, including showing respect, sensitivity and kindness towards others.

Practitioners use a wide range of interesting teaching strategies to stimulate children effectively. They make good use of open-ended questions to extend children's learning and their thinking skills and the flexibility of teaching meets pupils' individual needs well. Children have good opportunities to make decisions and choices about their learning and this promotes well their independence and self-confidence. Practitioners give children enough time to immerse themselves in their learning experiences, for example, when going out to play and exploring and they do not intervene unless there is an opportunity to extend learning.

Practitioners know and understand the children very well. They assess through observing the children at their learning experiences identifying significant things and discussing their findings with one another. They use the information gathered to inform the next cycle of planning; the effect of this information is seen in the good quality of provision. They keep continuous records of children's attainments which include useful and thorough information that gives a clear picture of all children's achievements. Children's progress is measured regularly in all learning areas and practitioners use this information well to meet children's needs and interests. Parents receive a thorough report about their children when they leave to go to school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Practitioners have created a homely atmosphere in the setting and children feel very comfortable and happy. All children are valued and practitioners show respect for their ideas and interests.

Adults develop children's awareness of the importance of eating healthily and of keeping fit. Children's curiosity about their own lives and beliefs and those of other children are developed well through celebrating the Chinese New Year, Diwali and through stories and cooking foods of other countries. Practitioners develop well children's sense of awe and wonder about the world around them through the many opportunities they give them to investigate their beautiful surroundings such as in the park and further afield, for example, Garn Lakes and to plant and grow flowers and

vegetables. These enrich greatly the children's experiences and are very good features. They also give children good opportunities to learn about sustainable development by setting aside waste food and re-cycling paper, plastic and cardboard.

Staff nurture well the morals and values they believe are necessary to the development of the child. The children learn about the importance of fairness, honesty and truth by following the staff's personal example and through positive guidance. The provision enables the children to socialise well, to take responsibility, to display initiative and to develop a good understanding of living and sharing within their small community. By engaging with interesting experiences, children have good opportunities to develop strong relationships with others. This is seen in the way in which they show respect and tolerance to all, including people of other cultures.

The effective arrangements which exist to support children's health and wellbeing contribute well to their general development and wellbeing and support their learning. Learning experiences promote children's personal development well including their moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development, however, is not promoted as successfully.

The setting has an appropriate policy for safeguarding children and practitioners are aware of it and know well the steps to be taken. Every practitioner has received child protection training and all necessary procedures for safeguarding are in place, meet regulations and ensure children's safety at all times. There were no children with additional learning needs at the time of the inspection but appropriate arrangements are in place to identify such children and practitioners know well how to respond to them when the need arises.

Learning environment: Excellent

The setting has an exceptionally caring and inclusive ethos which is centred firmly on the needs of the child. The wide range of children's backgrounds is used in a natural and exemplary way to celebrate diversity and as a result all adults and children are tolerant, kind and there is no trace of anxiety. Exemplary caring and affectionate relationships form the foundation of the life and work of the cylch. Practitioners know the children and their needs and interests extremely well. The key worker system promotes high standards of children's behaviour consistently and ensure equality of opportunity.

The ratio of staff to children is excellent and this, together with resources of a very good quality, contributes considerably to the excellence of the learning environment. The accommodation and resources are excellent and provide a very stimulating and inviting learning environment. The sloping grassed area outdoors provides excellent opportunities for the children to develop problem-solving skills by experimenting with things they can push and pull and roll. Its different areas provide very good opportunities for imaginative role play and the outdoor area enhances exceptionally well their learning in all areas. The setting is extending very successfully the integration of indoor and outdoor learning.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Good

Leadership: Good

The leader gives clear and firm direction to all of the setting's life and the improvement process and creates a positive and happy ethos. She co-operates well with the deputy and practitioners and they share clear principles and objectives which are based on a good knowledge of child development. These are seen to be implemented through the active learning experiences which are provided for children which are a good feature. They are seen also in the opportunities children are given to make decisions and choices concerning their learning, to develop self-confidence and independence and to make good progress.

All practitioners undertake their responsibilities effectively showing firm commitment to their role to the benefit of the children. The leader and practitioners work well together to plan strategically for the setting's future. The leader shares the values, aims and objectives she wishes to promote through personal example and regular discussion. She has high expectations of herself, of staff and of children together with targets which ensure good standards of achievement. Progress towards achieving them is monitored regularly.

The management committee is aware of everything that happens in the setting and its members understand and undertake their roles effectively. They know the setting's performance well and use robust information to make effective decisions. They discharge their legal duties fully. Leaders fulfill national and local priorities according to the requirements of the Welsh Government and the local authority, for example, the requirements of the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Good

The setting makes good use of its self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The self-evaluation report leads to strategies for improvement which ensure positive advantages for all children. The leader consults with staff, parents and carers to inform the self-evaluation. She uses information received from parents to gather opinions and identify areas to be developed. She also makes effective use of the support of the local authority's Foundation Phase advisory teacher and practitioners implement her recommendations effectively. Following the self-evaluation process a setting improvement plan is produced which shows a good awareness of the setting's performance and which, overall, focuses on raising standards through setting targets to improve provision.

Practitioners have an annual interview with the manageress to evaluate performance and identify professional development needs. They attend in-service training courses provided by the local authority and Mudiad Meithrin regularly in order to develop new teaching methods. The positive effect of this can be seen on teaching and children's wellbeing as they implement what they have learned. The leader has visited other settings in order to see good practice and practitioners attend training meetings with other practitioners which are organised by the local authority in order to discuss current developments.

Partnership working: Good

The setting co-operates well with others to present learning experiences. The leader works very closely and effectively with the local authority's Foundation Phase advisory teacher. Positive results of this partnership can be seen in the improvements in provision and standards.

The setting works closely with stakeholders, especially parents, and it is very willing to consult with them and receive suggestions from them. There is also a very good partnership with the schools which facilitates their transition when children leave.

Resource management: Good

Practitioners are deployed well in order to make the most effective use of their expertise and ensure good provision. Staff use indoor resources effectively in order to provide interesting experiences for children. They measure the effect of resources on learning and teaching and plan for resource needs in the future; for example, they have applied for a grant to develop further the outdoor environment to include a shelter and water supply. They use the outdoors well to develop children's skills in every learning area.

Leaders make the best use of the setting's resources and of funding to offer the best provision and succeed in so doing. The setting prioritises its expenditure in order to respond to its targets for improvement. Financial decisions are evaluated effectively by the management committee in order to ensure positive outcomes in raising standards. The setting provides very good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Sixteen replies were received to the parent/guardian questionnaire. Nearly all said they are happy with the setting's provision. Any strengths or areas for development identified in the questionnaires by individual parents were considered during the inspection. Discussions with a large selection of parents during the inspection confirmed that they are happy with all aspects of the setting's provision.

Responses to discussions with children

During the inspection children were very keen to come to the nursery and all went confidently to the activity of their choice. Their relationships with their friends and adults are excellent and they are all extremely happy in the setting. Children who had only just started in the cylch bonded very quickly with their key worker and the other adults and clearly felt very safe. The welcoming and inclusive ethos ensures they all feel happy and secure. They enjoyed speaking to adults, including visitors, and asked and answered questions confidently. All children show a very strong sense of trust and they know that the practitioners are there to help them.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Branwen Llewelyn Jones	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.

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)	This is a professional membership association working with registered childminders to ensure local high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support.
National Day Nurseries Association (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.