



A report on
Cylch Meithrin Abergwaun, Wdig a'r Fro

**The Portacabin
Sladeway
Fishguard
SA65 9NY**

Date of inspection: March 2011

by

Mr Eifion R Morgan

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 Abergwaun Wdigi a'r Fro is based in a demountable portacabin in the grounds of Ysgol Glannau Gwaun in Fishguard. Currently there are 18 children on role aged 2½ years to 4 years, but no more than 16 children attend on any morning. There are 7 children aged 3 years of whom 6 are funded. The Cylch operates on 4 mornings a week (not Wednesday) from 9.10 a.m. to 11.40 a.m. during school terms.

Children attending the Cylch come from Fishguard and the surrounding area – none are regarded as coming from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. The area is a typically Welsh coastal town with scattered rural villages and is adjacent to Goodwick which is the terminal of the Irish ferry.

Linguistically very few come from homes where the predominant language spoken is Welsh. None come from minority ethnic groups and all are English speaking. The Cylch is able to accept and has in the past accepted children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) but none of the current cohort have been identified as having such needs.

Children are admitted once they are 2½ years old and move on to the next stage of education aged 3½ or 4 years, depending on the school of choice.

The Cylch is situated to one side of the local primary school and is approached through the school car park. It occupies a fenced area that encloses an outside hard surface play area and a sloping grassed surround. There is an outside wooden shed in which children's toys are stored. A sloping wooden path leads to the entrance to the Cylch - the secure outside door leads to a small entrance hall. This is a well used area providing cloakroom facilities, appropriately sized toilets for the children, a small play area and notice board facilities.

The main room used by the Cylch is carpeted and pleasantly decorated with examples of children's work. It is suitably differentiated into activity areas in keeping with the Foundation Phase curriculum. It is adequately resourced and resources are, in the main, accessible to the children. In one corner is a gated kitchen area used for food preparation.

The current leader who has worked at the Cylch for some 7 years took over her role in January 2011. She is assisted by two members of staff.

The setting was originally registered in 2004 and most recently inspected by Care and Social Services in Wales (CSSIW) in 2009. There were no important recommendations. It is a member of the Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and achieved a "Meithrinfa Rhagorol" status in 2007.

The Cylch has not previously been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

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

Current performance

- * All children progress and achieve well, particularly in developing their competence in the Welsh language.
- * Staff are good role models, are fluent Welsh speakers and take every opportunity to encourage children to speak the language.
- * All children are well cared for and supported and the Cylch very successfully promotes children's health and wellbeing.
- * The Cylch is inclusive and all children have equality of opportunity.
- * Safeguarding arrangements are good and all children are free from any form of harassment.
- * Resources are well used to support the learning.

Prospects for improvement

- * The leader in the short period of time since assuming her leadership role has evaluated the current provision and identified areas for improvement.
- * The setting's improvement plan has identified realistic areas for improvement and the implications in terms of staffing and costs.
- * Areas for improvement focus clearly on improving the provision for children.
- * The staff work together well and are receptive to change and have identified training required.
- * Staff have a good track record of attending relevant courses and implementing ideas to improve the quality of education for the children.
- * The management committee is well informed and supportive of the Cylch.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the setting needs to:

- R1 refine its planning procedures so as to ensure that the learning programme reflects the requirements of the Foundation Phase and that the curriculum builds on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.
- R2 ensure that there is a good balance in the teaching between child-selected and adult directed activities.
- R3 further develop strategies to develop children's independent learning, decision making skills and to take responsibility.
- R4 develop appropriate assessment procedures that clearly record children's achievements and use the results in planning so that tasks are well matched to children's needs and prior attainment.

What happens next?

The Cylch will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor its progress.

Main findings

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| Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? | Good |
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Standards: Good

All children achieve good standards and make realistic progress in learning. Most children work diligently for reasonable periods of time and persevere on tasks that interest them.

All children have good and developing communication skills. Most children can understand basic questions and instructions but are more reluctant to speak Welsh. However, when prompted, they can reply to familiar questions and know the Welsh translation of familiar words, such as colours and number.

The majority of children have good listening skills, such as when listening to a story – however, some of the younger ones have a limited concentration span.

Most children show an interest in books, holding them as readers and turning pages appropriately. They can identify some of the characters in stories they know. Older children experiment with mark making and the more able are beginning to over-write, as for example overwriting their names.

Overall, the Cylch is successfully developing children's competence in the Welsh language.

Most children have good skills of numeracy and information and communication technology. Many are able to count to 5 and some to 10 and beyond. Many show good control of the computer mouse and they are beginning to understand that programmable toys respond to their commands. Overall, their creative skills and knowledge of the world around them is good, as is their physical development.

Wellbeing: Good

Most children have an appropriate understanding of how they can keep healthy. They know when it is important to wash their hands and several do so with little prompting. Particularly worthwhile are the discussions children have when deciding the fruit content of next week's snacks. This makes a good contribution to children's understanding of healthy eating.

All children have ample opportunities to take part in rigorous physical activity when playing out of doors.

All children enjoy learning and are soon engaged in activities set out for them when they arrive in the morning. In the main, behaviour is good, and children respond promptly to instructions. However, they are not always given sufficient opportunities to choose and make decisions, to work independently, to take responsibility and at other times to work co-operatively in small groups without adult supervision.

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

Planning of the curriculum is done collaboratively based around a termly theme. Weekly plans are produced in preparation for the week ahead across the six areas of learning identified in the Foundation Phase outcomes. The planning is flexible and activities interest the children and successfully encourage children's learning. Children are acquiring a good range of skills including thinking skills. Overall scrutiny of children's work suggests that children are, in the main, progressing towards the Foundation Phase outcomes but there is no mechanism in place to ensure that the curriculum fully reflects the Foundation Phase programme of learning and builds systematically on existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Neither does the planning ensure progression and continuity in learning.

The planned learning activities provide opportunities for children to become confident learners as they are well supported by adults, but opportunities for children to work independently are more limited. Children are suitably encouraged to use and develop their creative skills using a good range of resources. Children enjoy their creative work and concentrate on their tasks for significant periods of time. Children enjoy their periods out of doors engaging confidently in a range of physical activities. Children also have opportunities to look at living things, including young animals and plants and learn the need to care for them.

The provision for developing the Welsh language is good. Adults are good role models and children are encouraged to use the language in their learning. The Welsh dimension is given appropriate prominence through Welsh songs and in particular the celebration of St. David's day which effectively helps children to develop an understanding of the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales.

Children also learn about other celebrations such as Divali and Hanukka and this teaches them about other cultures.

The recycling of paper and the growing of seeds and bulbs also introduces the ideas of sustainability and recycling. Visits to the locality, such as to the fire station, help children understand the roles people play in their local society.

Teaching: Adequate

Staff have high expectations of all children and are sensitive to their individual needs. Children's behaviour is managed effectively using positive behaviour strategies to which the children respond well. The staff are well experienced in child care and familiar with child development. They respond flexibly to the demands of different children whatever their needs and background. In the past this has included children identified with additional learning needs (ALN). Two of the staff have recently learnt the Welsh language and are now good language models. Questioning is well used to develop children's thinking skills and language.

A suitable and diverse range of activities are planned for each session including very worthwhile adult directed activities, such as using a programmable toy and developing computer skills. In the main, however, there are too few child-selected activities which would encourage children to make decisions, develop their independence and self-confidence to try new ideas.

Staff having been involved in the planning, understand their roles very well and use questioning well to develop children's competence in the Welsh language.

Children are assessed regularly and the results recorded. These are collated into a record of achievement file (Dyma fi) and made available to parents at the end of the year. Parents also receive samples of children's work and this together with regular contact with the staff enables parents to be well aware of how their children are progressing. Whilst staff know their children's capabilities well, the outcomes of assessment are not used when planning future activities so as to ensure that tasks meet children's needs and are well focused on the next steps in children's learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The Cylch is very successful in promoting children's health and wellbeing. The curriculum provides them with good learning experiences including visits to the community and the study of other life styles and customs, such as during Divali, the festival of light. Children have seen young animals, such as chicks and lambs which extend their sense of awe and wonder as well as developing a caring attitude towards young animals.

The day-to-day activities at the Cylch foster values such as honesty, fairness and truth and enables children to differentiate between right and wrong.

The Cylch's positive behaviour strategies, equality and fairness establish a good behaviour framework for the children. However, too little opportunities are provided for children to show initiative and to take responsibility.

Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their creative skills. Overall, the Cylch is successful in providing a good basis for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Specialist services are well used when necessary. The Cylch is vigilant in evaluating and recognising any child with additional learning needs (ALN) and whilst no one of the current cohort has such needs, children in the past identified as having ALN have been well supported, both within the Cylch and by outside professional and specialist agencies. In such instances parents have been fully involved.

The Cylch has appropriate policies and procedures in place in respect of safeguarding children. The leader is the named person with responsibility for dealing with child protection. All staff have received recent training and the procedures adopted by the Cylch reflect the "All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008".

Learning environment: Good

The friendly, inclusive nature of the setting promotes a very good ethos where all children are valued and their individuality recognised. All children have a full and equal access to the curriculum.

Staff treat children with respect and they in turn value and respect the staff. A tolerant attitude pervades the Cylch and this ensures that both staff and children are free from any form of harassment and free from any form of oppressive behaviour or discrimination.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that no child whatever their background or disability suffers less favourable treatment. The Cylch promotes equal opportunities and overall the quality of the learning environment is a notable and good feature of the Cylch.

The Cylch is well staffed with appropriately qualified and experienced adults. Resources are sufficient and suitably deployed and are readily available to the children and meet the needs of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The accommodation is in good condition, it is warm and welcoming for the children and used effectively.

The outside is a safe environment for the children, easily accessible and provides children with a hard surface and grassed areas. The Cylch is within the town and this provides easy access to the local shops and facilities.

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

Staff work together well, they understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities efficiently. A sense of purpose is evident and is directed at providing the best possible learning experiences for the children. All staff share aims, values and objectives that promote a positive ethos and high expectations of the children. These aims are fully realised in practice.

Staff are receptive to change and have attended regular training and this has kept them up to date with recent developments. When only one member of staff can attend courses information is shared and discussed. All staff are fully involved in planning and contribute well to the teaching programme.

Very good and effective links have been established with parents and carers and this enables them to support their children's learning.

The management committee have a good understanding of their roles and are very supportive of the Cylch. They are well informed about the performance of the setting and appreciative of the contribution of the staff to the success of the Cylch. The management committee take appropriate account of relevant legislation and fulfil their legal responsibilities.

The setting meets national and local priorities. It has taken account of Welsh Assembly Government initiatives including the directive on sessional day care, the Foundation Phase outcomes and healthy eating advice.

Improving quality: Adequate

The Cylch is self-evaluative and has identified, in its "self-evaluation document" strengths of its provision such as its success in developing children's competence in the Welsh language, and its provision for developing children's wellbeing. The current inspection confirms this. The "setting improvement plan" highlights areas for improvement which are realistic, including developing the curriculum and providing the resources to support such initiatives. All staff have been involved in self-evaluation and developing the "setting improvement plan". Areas for improvement have been prioritised. Whilst such modifications to the curriculum will potentially result in positive gains for the children, such plans are yet to impact on the curriculum since the current leader has only been in post for less than 3 months (appointed January 2011) and consequently the improvement strategies are yet to be fully implemented.

All staff have attended a range of relevant professional training courses and this has had a positive impact on the curriculum, on children's progress and wellbeing. Opportunities have been provided for staff to visit other settings in the locality.

Partnership working: Good

The Cylch has established a good partnership with parents and carers built on trust and clear communication. All parents and carers have easy access to the staff, both when bringing their children in the morning and collecting them at lunch times. This allows for free exchange of information and opportunity to deal with any issues that arise. Parents in the pre-inspection questionnaires and in discussion during the inspection expressed their complete satisfaction with the Cylch. This included the progress their child was making, how well children were acquiring the Welsh language and the preparation for the next stage in their education.

In terms of the children's social development parents reported that children enjoyed their time at the Cylch, how quickly they settled in, and the respect shown towards the children.

Parents were happy in that the Cylch is a safe environment. Parents also commented on the approachability of the staff. The transfer of children to the next stage of their education is facilitated by visits to the receiving schools and by meeting the teachers.

The Cylch works closely with the local authority and in particular the advisory teachers. This collaboration has been effective and provides the Cylch with ideas as well as useful advice. The Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin also provides useful support and the Cylch makes use of their policies.

The Cylch has been awarded a "Cylch Ragorol" status by Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

Resource management: Good

The Cylch is adequately resourced and resources are used appropriately to support the curriculum. Resources are easily accessible to the children but are set out generally in readiness for the planned activities. Planning for improvement includes identifying future resource needs.

The outdoors is a safe attractive environment for the children. The Cylch is well provided with outdoor toys. Activities are well focused on developing children's skills across the curriculum.

Overall, the Cylch provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Five questionnaires were returned.

The results of the pre-inspection questionnaires and discussion with a sample of parents during the inspection indicated their strong support for the Cylch.

The questionnaire results showed strong agreement with statements related to the social aspects including children's enjoyment, safety of children and how well children settled in.

Academically parents expressed the views that their children were progressing well, developing their competence in the Welsh language and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Parents regarded the Cylch as being well run, staff were approachable, the teaching is good and children are safe at the Cylch.

Overall, parents strongly agreed with the statement noting satisfaction with the setting.

Response to discussions with children

All children are happy at the Cylch. They show their enthusiasm when they arrive and soon engage with the activities set out for them. In conversation they said they enjoyed being in the Cylch and that they had lots of things to do.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

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| 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.