



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 Gartholwg
Campws Cymunedol Gartholwg
Pentre'r Eglwys
Pontypridd
CF38 1RQ**

Date of inspection: March 2012

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 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

Gartholwg Nursery is located on the Gartholwg community campus in Church Village (Rhondda Cynon Taff). The campus comprises the Welsh medium nursery, primary and secondary schools and the learning centre based in the community library. The area is a typical valley community.

The Meithrinfa was opened some six years ago and is managed by Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin as a non-profit organisation. The Board of Trustees oversee the financial aspects and the Registered persons overseeing the Nursery are officials of the Mudiad Meithrin.

Currently the Nursery manager and deputy manager are on maternity leave. This, together with other issues, including long term sickness, has resulted in considerable staff changes within the Nursery recently. The Mudiad Meithrin have seconded an experienced acting manager to oversee the work of the Nursery for 3 days a week and appointed internally one of the staff for 2 days a week.

The Nursery is approached down some steps or a sloping ramp. The outside door is permanently locked and anyone entering has to be let in by a member of staff. This door leads to a corridor with a notice board which gives parents and carers some useful information. Parents and carers sign their children into the Nursery on arrival. The Nursery is well designed with rooms for the Nursery leader, a duplicating room, staff room, a kitchen and other teaching rooms. Children aged 2 and 3 years work together and meet in a large, well lit warm teaching room. Adjoining this room is a small comfortable room used for story time. The main teaching room is set out with a range of activity areas and opens to the outside. Along side this room is another room used for eating and other activities, such as those involving food.

The outside area is extensive and provides numerous well designed activity areas for children. These include an area for growing plants and observing small creatures. There is a wooden shed where children can play, and other play areas. Children also have access to a soft play area where they can use large moveable toys. Overall, the outside area provides a valuable play area for children, although there is no covered area.

Children attend the Nursery following their third birthday and move on to the next stage of their education usually to the adjacent primary school in the September following their 4th birthday. Most children live in the immediate locality, although some come from further afield in order to benefit from education through the medium of Welsh. The Nursery report that children come from homes that are not particularly advantaged or disadvantaged socio-economically and about a third come from Welsh speaking homes. Most of the others are from homes where one parent/carer is Welsh speaking. Whilst the Nursery is quite happy to accept them, there are currently no children from minority ethnic communities or children identified with additional learning needs (ALN).

The Nursery is open from 7.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. and offers 3 sessions daily. These include all day (7.30 a.m. – 6 p.m.), morning session (7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.) and

afternoon session (1 p.m. – 6 p.m.). The Nursery is open throughout the year apart from the bank holidays.

The Nursery is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate up to 40 children. Currently there are 13 three years olds on the register and 7 are funded.

The Nursery was last inspected by CSSIW in December 2011 and the report was published in January 2012. There were no specific recommendations. The Nursery has not previously been inspected by Estyn.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

Good features

- Children's achievement and progress in learning, especially their language and mathematical skills.
- Children's attitudes and behaviour and their interest in learning.
- Provision for ensuring children's wellbeing.
- Staff are good language models and use questioning well to develop children's language skills.
- Relationships between children and with adults are good.
- The learning environment, especially the outside areas and its impact on children's learning.
- Links with the primary school which facilitates the transfer of children.
- Relationships with parents and their support for the Nursery.

Adequate features

- Curriculum includes good experiences for children but is insufficiently focused on developing children's learning progressively.
- Tasks and activities interest children but are insufficiently focused on children's needs and the next steps in their learning.
- Use of assessment in planning future activities.

Prospects for improvement

Good features

- The lead practitioner's attitude to change and her focus on providing the best provision for the children.

Adequate features

- Self-evaluation and the leadership's knowledge of the settings performance is underdeveloped.

Unsatisfactory features

- Development planning including prioritising aspects for development.

Recommendations

In order to improve the Nursery needs to:

- R1 ensure that leadership provides the nursery with clear strategic direction and focuses on supporting staff development;
- R2 use information derived from self-evaluation to prioritise matters for improvement and put in place a developmental plan;
- R3 use assessment results to identify the next steps in children's learning so that tasks are well matched to their ability and prior attainment;
- R4 plan the curriculum so that it builds systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the setting's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

All children make realistic progress in all areas of learning and achieve well. Most children make particularly good progress in developing their language and numeracy skills. All children are actively involved and show commendable interest in what they are doing.

Children's literacy skills in the Welsh language are developing very well. Virtually all children understand instructions and commands and respond appropriately showing their understanding of the language. Many children are quite happy to converse in the language making themselves understood. They use the language naturally in their play expressing themselves clearly.

Most children enjoy stories and many take an active part answering questions enthusiastically. They follow the story, such as the story of "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" and can sequence the stages in the life of the caterpillar. Children are interested in books but a minority of children do not have good book-handling skills, such as to turn pages methodically. Most children are learning to make marks as a forerunner to writing. They understand some of the purposes of writing.

Nearly all children have good number skills. They are developing a good mathematical language in relevant contexts such as "large" or "small" when describing mini beasts. Children recognise pattern and sequence objects, such as when playing with animal pictured dominoes. A good and noteworthy activity is the shop activities using plastic money to "purchase" fruit. This gives children a good basic introduction of the use of money, addition and subtraction.

Many children use toy cash registers and mobile phones in their play. Children can control battery operated toys and scrutiny of children's work books shows that they can create simple computer generated pictures.

Overall, children are developing their skills across the curriculum. During the inspection children were seen using a magnifying glass to observe mini beasts, such as earthworms and spiders. They enjoy role playing as part of their outside activities. All children take part in physical play on their moveable toys and show good control. Their creative work included work undertaken at home, such as their three-dimensional collage illustration of "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" using household rubbish items, such as egg boxes, dried fruit and coloured paper.

Wellbeing: Good

All children respond well to the Nursery's focus on developing their wellbeing. Children arrive with a sense of expectation and are soon actively involved in activities set out for them. They show an enjoyment in learning. They have a positive attitude and an interest in the work that sustains them for extended periods of time.

Behaviour is very good with little, if any, antisocial behaviour, but rather considerate, courteous attitudes to each other and to adults.

Children's understanding of healthy habits is developing well. They are aware that some foods contribute towards a healthy diet, and they clean their teeth enthusiastically. They have plenty of opportunities to play out of doors and to engage in robust physical activities. Children work together very well and have opportunities to make decisions concerning what tasks and activities they undertake. Probably because of the high adult to child ratio, children have fewer opportunities to work independently.

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

All practitioners are involved in planning the curriculum. Staff know children's interests and the flexible planning approach ensures that learning experiences are interesting and this successfully engages all children. Planning is focused on the six areas of learning as highlighted in the Foundation Phase philosophy. However, curriculum planning is insufficiently focused on building systematically on children's existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Overall, however, children are acquiring a good range of skills across all areas of learning but the planning does not ensure progression and continuity in the learning, neither does it focus sufficiently on matching tasks to individual children's ability and prior attainment. Nevertheless, the curriculum encourages children to become confident learners and to show respect and tolerance of each other.

The curriculum incorporates study of peoples from different cultural backgrounds, such as when studying and celebrating the Chinese New Year. Children sample Chinese foods, looked at Chinese clothes and drew Chinese artefacts, such as dragons.

Children show good physical skills, as when using large moveable toys, their understanding of the world is well developed through study of living things.

The Welsh language and children's communication skills are well developed through immersion in the language. A good feature is the newsletter to parents highlighting new Welsh words to be introduced and practitioners natural use of the language. An understanding of the traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales is given prominence, such as the celebration of St. David's Day and Santes Dwynwen.

Children learn about sustainability through recycling, such as recycling paper and milk cartons.

Teaching: Good

All children are well supported and are invariably actively involved in activities. Practitioners are always on hand to challenge children, and they use questioning well to develop their thinking skills. Staff are good language models and this ensures that

children are immersed in the language during their time in the Nursery. Staff, in the main, understand the requirements of the Foundation Phase although too few opportunities exist for children to work independently, as opposed to activities which are practitioner directed or led. Nevertheless, staff have high expectations of children; their behaviour is effectively managed by positive behaviour strategies and the use of praise. All children, whatever their background or ability, have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum.

Practitioners assess children regularly and comprehensively. They record their observations in children's individual record books under the six areas of learning. Comments also refer to the Foundation Phase learning outcomes. These records are detailed and are available for parents or carers to see at the end of the year. Each day parents have a summary of what topics have been studied. Whilst these records are useful as a record of each child's achievement, they are not used sufficiently when planning future activities so as to meet children's needs so that tasks are well matched to children's ability and prior attainment. Neither are they used to inform parents of their child's progress or the next steps in children's learning and consequently what they can do to help them in their learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Provision for ensuring children's health and wellbeing, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Work and activities in the outside environment provide children with very good opportunities to develop a sense of wonder about the world in which they live. Children show a great deal of interest when looking for minibeasts, finding out where they live and their living conditions.

The Nursery is a happy, calm setting that successfully fosters respect for each other, honesty and fairness. Children's behaviour is good, often very good and they understand the difference between right and wrong. Many children take responsibility and show initiative, as when helping the staff, and the planned activities encourage children to be physically active and to develop their creativity.

The Nursery reports that specialist services are available if necessary, although no child at present is in need of additional help.

Children identified with additional learning needs (ALN) have, in the past, had full access to all areas of learning and parents have been regularly consulted. When necessary such children have been given extra help and external agencies involved.

The setting has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of children. Staff with specific responsibility for child protection have been identified and staff have received appropriate training. Procedures reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008. The Nursery is vigilant to ensure that children only leave with nominated persons or parent.

Learning environment: Good

The setting is an inclusive community displaying a good, positive ethos. All children are valued and respected and have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum.

The Nursery successfully develops children's tolerant attitudes resulting in a community free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. A notable and good feature is the high adult to child ratio resulting in all children being well supported in their chosen activities. Overall, practitioners create a stimulating environment for learning.

The Nursery, in general, has a good range of resources that are well matched to children's learning needs. The outside areas in particular provide interesting and stimulating areas for children to explore and to develop their knowledge and understanding of living things. There are ample moveable toys and sufficient space for children to develop their physical skills and to be active.

The accommodation overall is well maintained.

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

The Nursery lacks clear strategic thinking and a well defined focus in its work to direct improvement. The former leadership initiated staff changes between the different age groups of children but no training strategies were planned for, nor implemented.

The Nursery relies very heavily on the individual commitment of the Nursery class leader who has led the other staff, planned the current curriculum and worked hard to provide the children with an exciting and worthwhile learning opportunities. Current standards are a reflection of the commitment of the Nursery class leader who has the full support of her staff. However, whilst children are well looked after and achieve good standards in, for example, their linguistic and number skills, there is insufficient emphasis on developing each child's potential and moving them on to the next steps in their education.

There is no strategy in place that provides a clear direction to the work of the Nursery focused on improving learning and sustain improvement. Practitioners are inadequately managed and supported in their work so that there is a clear focus in developing children to their full potential.

The current leadership's knowledge of the working of the Nursery is limited and as such has a superficial understanding of children's individual needs.

Links with parents are generally good and parents, in discussion, reported their satisfaction with the provision. They reported that Nursery staff are always available to discuss issues that arise.

Day-to-day administration of the Nursery by the acting staff is done efficiently. The Nursery is overseen by a Board of Trustees and the Responsible persons are employees of Mudiad Meithrin. They fulfil their legal duties. National Priorities, such as the implementation of the Foundation Phase curriculum has been implemented.

Improving quality: Adequate

The recently produced self-evaluation report identifies the strengths of the setting based on the three key questions and the quality indicators itemised in the Guidance for the Inspection document. However, some of the self-evaluation report aims and targets are not recognised by the Nursery staff. The Nursery reports that all staff have been involved in preparing the self-evaluation report, however, some of the aims and objectives highlighted in the self-evaluation report are not recognised by the Nursery staff. The actual involvement of the staff in preparing the self-evaluation report and their ability to use it constructively is unclear.

A two year development plan (2010-2012) identifies action to be taken under 3 targets and includes success criteria, resources and timescale. However, there is no indication of what has been undertaken or how the proposed outcomes have or will be evaluated or completed. Self-evaluation has not prioritised matters for improvement nor is there any indication that the views of parents/carers or children have been taken into account.

However, the provision for the 3 year olds has been developed, mainly through the efforts of the lead practitioner. This has involved a close working arrangement with local authority staff.

Partnership working: Good

Parents are supportive of the setting and there are parents who use the setting because it provides Welsh medium education. Parents have trust in the setting, know that their children are well looked after and that they can approach the staff at any time. Parents are kept well informed about all aspects of the setting's work. Good arrangements are in place for the transfer of children to the next stage of their education. The Local Authority support staff have given the setting active support and this has proved beneficial. Practitioners work well together and support each other.

Resource management: Good

The setting is well resourced and an attractive learning environment for children. A good and noteworthy feature is the way the outside environment has been developed to support children's learning. It provides activities that interest and motivate children; it is well used and allows children a choice of activities. It develops children's skills across the curriculum, particularly their thinking skills.

The setting is generously staffed and staff and children work together happily. Staff respect the children and are themselves respected. Children feel secure in the setting and are sufficiently confident to partake in all activities.

Overall, children make good progress and achieve well and this currently represents adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent's questionnaire due to the small number of responses received (less than 10).

Responses to discussions with children

All children enjoy their time at the Nursery. They show their enthusiasm when coming to the setting and are soon involved in activities set out for them. Children are happy at the setting and are self-confident.

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)