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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cylch Meithrin Llanfair Caereinion
Mount Road
Llanfair Caereinion
Powys
SY21 0HT**

Date of inspection: May 2013

by

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

The Cylch Meithrin is located in Llanfair Caereinion – a village some 10 miles west of Welshpool. There are 23 children on the register, of whom 13 are aged 3 years. All children aged 3 years are funded. On the morning of the inspection (Wednesday) there were 13 children present – of whom 9 were 3 year olds.

The setting is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to accommodate a maximum of 18 children in any one session. The Cylch meets on 5 mornings a week from 9 a.m. until 11.30 a.m. for 38 weeks of the year.

The Cylch is long established and occupies a renovated building that was the old primary school. It has exclusive use of the building which comprises a large room, toilets and a purpose built kitchen. A small office gives the Cylch a degree of privacy when this is needed. The main room is spacious and comprises a range of play and educational resources. There are adequate storage facilities and sufficient small tables and chairs to accommodate all the children. There are also sufficient display areas. Outside there are play facilities including a storage area for large toys and bicycles.

Children attend the Cylch when they are aged 2½ years and move on to the next stage of their education in the term of their 4th birthday. If requested by parents they can remain at the Cylch for a further term.

Children come from the town of Llanfair Caereinion and from the surrounding villages and rural areas. Most children come from homes where English is the predominant language. However a small number come from homes where both or one parent speaks Welsh.

Welsh is the medium of instruction although several children have a very limited grasp of the language which necessitates the use of English.

The Cylch reports that children's backgrounds are neither particularly advantaged nor disadvantaged socio-economically. The children represent the full range of ability and no children come from a minority ethnic background. None of the children have been identified with special educational needs. The Cylch is well designed to receive children with such needs, including those with physical disabilities.

The Cylch is administered by a management committee who meet termly or as needs arise. The Cylch was awarded the status of Cylch Ragorol in 2012 and was most recently inspected by CSSIW in 2012. There were no major recommendations. The Cylch was previously inspected by Estyn in 2006 and the recommendations have been addressed.

Summary

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

Current performance

The settings current performance is good because:

- all children achieve good standards and make good progress;
- all children have good attitudes to learning and behave well;
- all children are well cared for and supported;
- of the good quality of teaching;
- of the good ethos and tolerant attitudes;
- of the effective partnership with parents;
- of the good facilities in terms of accommodation.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- staff work together well and have a positive attitude to change;
- of the support provided by the local authority advisory teacher;
- staff regularly attend professional training courses;
- assessment procedures and their use in planning the curriculum is beginning to be effective;
- the management committee is effective and knowledgeable about the educational provision of the setting.

Recommendations

The setting needs to:

R1. continue to refine assessment procedures so as to identify children's achievement in terms of acquired skills, particularly in language and numeracy.

R2. to provide differentiated activities to match children's ability and the next steps in their learning.

R3. to extend the range of activities available for the children so as to encourage independent learning.

R4. draw up a development plan to itemise how the above will be addressed.

What happens next?

The Cylch will draw up an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

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

All children achieve good standards and make good progress in all areas of learning. Children work diligently and think about their tasks.

All children have good communication skills and express themselves well. English is their preferred language of communication. They have good listening skills and are receptive to suggestions. They carry out instructions willingly. All children show an interest in books and enjoy stories. Many are able to identify characters in stories they have heard. Most children experiment with mark-making and know some of the functions of writing.

All children are learning to count – many beyond 10, and recognise and name common shapes such as circles. Many children can sort and match shapes, and use mathematical language, as for example when playing with sand.

All children use digital equipment, such as mobile phones, in their play and have access to a computer.

All children have opportunities to develop their physical skills during outside play, to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world through nature walks and to developing their creative skills through painting.

All children are developing a basic Welsh vocabulary and are beginning to acquire a good degree of competence in the language relative to their starting point. They understand basic instructions, understanding more words than they can speak. They respond to a familiar voice answering questions, such as during registration. They repeat familiar words and enjoy taking part in Welsh action songs and rhymes. All children have good listening skills and respond positively to instructions. They enjoy Welsh stories such as “Tri mochyn bach” and know and name the characters in the story. Many children experiment with mark-making.

Wellbeing: Good

All children have a positive attitude to learning and show a commendable interest in activities set out for them. They engage in tasks happily and sustain their concentration for significant periods of time. All children behave well and are considerate and willing to share. All children relate well to each other and to adults.

All children have acquired an awareness of personal hygiene. They wash their hands before snack time and many do so without prompting. Snack time is a good social occasion when children converse happily with their friends.

Children show that they feel safe in the Cylch and that they are free from physical or verbal abuse.

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

All staff collaborate when planning future themes and the leader and her assistant meet each Friday afternoon to plan the following week's activities. Activities successfully engage all children who are actively involved for most of the time. Activities are well focused to meet the Foundation Phase outcomes and the curriculum successfully integrates the skills, knowledge and understanding.

The curriculum, however, lacks variety and activities are not always sufficiently challenging for all children in that the work lacks sufficient differentiation to cater for children of all abilities. Children, however, are developing the necessary skills across all areas of learning. A particularly good aspect of the learning experiences is the good and very good relationships evident in the Cylch. All children are tolerant and respect each other. Day-to-day activities are well designed to enable children to become confident and to select their favourite activities. There are ample opportunities for children to develop their creative and physical skills. Children also grow seeds and plants in raised borders outside and this helps them to understand that living things need to be cared for.

The setting is a Welsh medium one and although children come from English speaking homes, many develop sufficient competence in the language enabling them to continue their education through the medium of Welsh. Planning ensures that the language is used as much as possible.

All staff are Welsh speakers and so children hear Welsh spoken naturally. The traditions and celebrations of the culture of Wales, such as celebration of St. David's day are an integral part of the curriculum.

Children's understanding of recycling is developing through the recycling of paper and the growing of plants.

Teaching: Good

All practitioners are experienced and have a good understanding of child development. Staff have a thorough understanding of the philosophy of the Foundation Phase and this is reflected in the setting's day-to-day working. Staff

manage children's behaviour well. They use praise appropriately and there is a good range of activities which keep children busy. Staff are good language models and this helps to develop children's speaking skills. Additional practitioners are used effectively. Staff work together well and know their roles.

Children are assessed regularly and observations recorded in children's individual files. This provides a good measure of children's progress. The outcomes of assessment are increasingly used to plan future activities. However, assessment comments are rather generalised and do not focus sufficiently on children's acquired skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Currently assessment records do not enable the next steps in children's learning to be identified.

In discussion parents reported on the progress children make at the setting but were not always aware of what they could do to help them improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The setting's provision for promoting children's health and wellbeing, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Day-to-day activities foster values such as honesty, fairness and respect for each other. Children distinguish between right and wrong and all act accordingly. All children are happy to take responsibility, such as during snack time, and have a good understanding of sharing with others. All children know the rules of behaviour and act accordingly. Walks in the nearby woods and growing plants help children understand the wonders of nature and a sense of curiosity about the world. Children have ample opportunities to learn about cultural activities and to participate in physical activities.

Safe-guarding arrangements are in place. The setting has adopted the policies and procedures for child care and protection provided by the Mudiad Meithrin. All staff have attended recent and relevant courses and are aware of the need to be vigilant. The setting's provision for safe-guarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.

The setting has appropriate links with specialist services but no child in recent years has needed to be referred to such services. Neither has the setting needed to address the issue of additional learning needs (ALN). However, the necessary prerequisites for dealing with children with ALN are in place.

Learning environment: Good

The setting has a strong positive ethos that is totally inclusive. All children are enthusiastic participants in activities set out for them and enjoy each others company. Children are respected as individuals and are well supported by adults. They have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum.

Day-to-day activities encourage a tolerant attitude and children are free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. The setting accepts children whatever their background or ability and whilst no child currently or recently has been recognised with any form of disability, the setting is able to accommodate any such child. There is a complaints procedure in place but has not been used.

The setting is generously staffed with well qualified and experienced practitioners. Resources are adequate to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum but children would benefit from a wider selection of activities. Accommodation overall, however, is good and suitable for this age of children. The accommodation and outside play areas are secure and well maintained. Children benefit from using the local environment and through visits to the town shopping area.

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 fully accept their responsibilities. The setting exudes a sense of purpose focused on providing high quality provision for the children. Staff share values and aims and all are involved in strategic planning.

There are high expectations of the children and these are realised in practice. The setting has a good ethos and activities are well focused on children's needs. Induction arrangements are well established and appraisal is used to identify professional needs. Attendance at local authority courses have resulted in improvements in the educational provision for the children.

Links with parents are well established and their support is instrumental in children's learning.

The management committee is well established and fully supportive of the Cylch. Discussion with the management indicated their good understanding of their roles and their understanding of the performance of the setting. They have taken appropriate account of relevant legislation and guidance. The management fulfil their legal duties.

The Cylch has met national and local priorities including establishing the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Improving quality: Good

The setting has produced a clear and succinct self-evaluation that identifies strengths including the evidence on which it is based and areas for improvement. Areas for improvement are firmly focused on providing positive gains for the children.

The management has been part of the self-evaluation process. Current planning is focused on improving facilities for the children.

Practitioners are engaged in professional development usually provided by the local authority and have impacted well on children's progress and wellbeing.

Partnership working: Good

The setting has established a good relationship with parents who, in turn, are very supportive of the Cylch. In discussion a sample of parents spoke glowingly of the Cylch, its staff and their children's good progress in learning and social skills. There is a feeling of trust that is well established and clear communication between Cylch staff and parents. Parents are always involved in any decisions about their children. Parents receive regular news letters, a useful informative booklet and have received a questionnaire asking their opinions of the Cylch. The replies were very positive.

The Cylch benefits substantially from the advice and help it receives from the local authority advisory teacher. Regular visits by the advisory teacher, provides the Cylch with an evaluation of its educational provision and highlights the way forward. Such advice has been well received and has a positive impact on the setting and its working. The Mudiad Meithrin also give the Cylch useful support.

Resource management: Good

Practitioners work well as a team and are well deployed. Resources are used to motivate the children and are well focused on the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

In some instances resources are rather sparse, such as to provide stimuli for e.g. number work and knowledge and understanding of the world. Future resource needs, such as to enhance learning out of doors have been identified.

The setting uses its fundings well and provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Parents responses.

In all, 12 replies were received to the parent questionnaires. Parents were asked to respond to 16 statements, using one of five criteria: “strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or don’t know”.

No responses “disagreed, strongly disagreed, or don’t know”.

In summary 75% of the respondents “strongly agreed” with the following statements:

Overall I am satisfied with the setting.

My child likes this setting

My child was helped to settle in well when he or 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.

My child is safe at the setting.

I feel comfortable about approaching the setting with questions, suggestions or a problem.

There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.

The setting is well run.

Half of the other respondents “strongly agreed” with the following statements:

My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.

My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.

I am kept well informed about my child’s progress.

I understand the setting’s procedures for dealing with complaints.

My child is well prepared for moving on to school.

All respondents “agreed or strongly agreed” with all the statements.

Children’s responses.

All children were keen to enter the Cylch and were soon actively involved. They said they enjoyed playing, especially outside and listening to stories.

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)

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.