



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

**Machynlleth Community Children's Project
Plas Grounds
Maesgwyn Street
Machynlleth
Powys
SY20 8HZ**

Date of inspection: May 2013

by

Mary Dyas

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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About the setting

Machynlleth Community Children's Project Ltd.(MCCP) was set up in 1991 by three local women, to provide affordable, local childcare provision. The nursery was established to cater for babies and children up to the age of 4 years. In 1996 the Out of School care provision was set up with the aid of a National Lottery Grant and in 2012 'Ti a Fi', a Welsh medium mothers and toddlers playgroup, was established. The nursery is a registered charity managed by a voluntary committee as a company limited by guarantee and registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to provide day care as an incorporated organisation.

The Nursery is situated in the centre of Machynlleth and aims for children to feel comfortable communicating through the medium of both Welsh and English. Currently all children in the pre-school group come from homes where English is the main language although a very few have one parent at home who is Welsh speaking. There are no children with identified additional learning needs but the setting is inclusive and welcomes all children. Children attending the nursery come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and there are currently 15 children on roll in the pre-school room of whom ten three-year-olds and one four-year-old are in receipt of funded educational provision.

The accommodation is a former air training depot refurbished in 1996 and the setting is currently organising and fundraising for the replacement of windows at the front of the building with a long term plan to replace the existing building. The nursery is split into three main playrooms and the Green Room, used by the three and four year old children, is relatively small but well set out with all areas of learning. There is a large and attractive outdoor area which is laid partly with grass and partly with rubber safety flooring and during the summer months most activities take place outside.

The setting was last inspected by the CSSIW in April 2013 and by Estyn in July 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the setting is good because:

- There is a warm and caring ethos where all children are respected as individuals;
- The range of activities successfully engages and supports children's learning;
- Teaching is of a consistently good standard;
- Staff work well together and resources are well used to support learning;
- There are strong partnerships with parents, other providers and the community and
- All children enjoy their learning and make good progress.

Prospects for improvement

The setting's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The setting is well run;
- staff share a vision for improvement; and
- The self-evaluation process is in established and progress is being made towards meeting the setting's current targets.

Recommendations

R1 Further develop children's involvement in making decisions about their learning

R2 Consider ways in which parents can be informed of their child's progress and how they can help them to improve

What happens next?

The setting will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

All children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their age and starting points across all the Foundation Phase areas of learning. Most children demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding and all approach challenging activities with interest and confidence. Nearly all children persevere well with the tasks set during free choice activities. Most children listen attentively and communicate articulately. Many use complex sentence structures to express themselves. All children join in with songs and rhymes enthusiastically and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. All enjoy mark-making both inside and in the outside area and they experiment confidently with a wide range of materials. A few are beginning to write their names and to understand the purpose of writing; for example when independently writing a pizza order in the role play kitchen/cafe. All children develop their knowledge of technology through their independent use of a range of electronic toys, camera and CD player. They also use simple programs on the computer to select and move items on the screen.

All children use early mathematical skills effectively to count accurately up to at least ten and describe shapes such as circles, triangles, squares and rectangles. Many use correct mathematical language and skills correctly in their play. They describe the position of objects accurately, for example using words such as 'behind', 'under' or 'on top of'.

Children's progress in Welsh is good. All clearly understand the words and phrases used by adults in the setting and respond to questions and commands in Welsh with understanding. Most count confidently to ten and are very familiar with Welsh words for colour which they are beginning to use spontaneously in their speech..

Wellbeing: Good

Children are relaxed and happy in the setting and are eager to try new experiences. Most are beginning to understand that it is important to eat healthily and are able to name healthy foods and things that should be kept for treats. All enjoy their snack time when they meet together with the younger children in the nursery and set a good example by their good behaviour at the table. All are developing good independence and most take full responsibility for going to the toilet, washing their hands, putting on and taking off their coats, buttering their toast and pouring their own drinks. Children are polite to each other and to adults. Most children take turns and understand the need to share toys and objects without having to be reminded. They are happy to talk about what they have been doing and are confident to ask for help from adults. All children make decisions about the activities they are going to take part in.

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

Planning is well organized and a wide range of activities stimulates, engages and challenges most children to learn effectively. Plans are based on ensuring coverage of the areas of learning using the local authority's Foundation Phase skills list and on specific needs identified from observations of children's learning. Practitioners know the children very well and respond appropriately to their varying needs, abilities and interests. Planning clearly addresses the needs and interests of the children and, overall, learning experiences successfully enable children to develop communication, numeracy and ICT skills every day. Children have recently begun to be more directly involved in planning for future activities and this is an area that the setting has identified for further development.

The use of the Welsh language alongside English is a real strength of the setting. Practitioners develop children's Welsh language skills very well. Welsh is used consistently for whole group activities such as the daily 'Cylch' session where English is sandwiched with Welsh, and all practitioners make good use of incidental Welsh during their interactions with the children. Children are encouraged to use Welsh wherever possible. St David's Day is well used to teach children about the customs and traditions of Wales.

All children are developing a good understanding of the need for recycling and place paper from their handwashing before their meals and plastic containers from their lunch into the correct containers. Children are appropriately introduced to cultural diversity through a good range of resources including books and puzzles, tasting different foods and the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good. All practitioners are aware of the learning objectives for activities and have a secure understanding of Foundation Phase principles and practice. They use a wide range of approaches to stimulate play and active learning experiences which interest and appeal to children of all abilities. Children respond particularly well to staff efforts to make learning fun.

Adults give children sufficient time to complete a task or to develop an idea and intervene appropriately and sensitively when needed. Teaching is most effective when practitioners use open-ended questions to challenge children's thinking. Practitioners provide children with helpful oral feedback as they learn. Children's progress and wellbeing are tracked across all areas of learning and this information is used effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning.

Daily observations are noted the room leader and then entered into children's personal profiles. Together with the observations from adult led activities, this information is effectively used to inform the nursery's assessment documentation and

the report which is given to parents at the end of the year. There is a daily verbal exchange of information with parents and carers during the handover at the beginning and end of sessions but there are currently no formal arrangements to inform them of their children's progress or how they can help them to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Good arrangements are in place to support children's health and wellbeing. Practitioners value children as individuals and strive to enable each child to develop their potential and personality. A range of policies relating directly to the practice within the nursery ensures that children settle quickly when they start at the setting and are kept safe from harm and bullying.

The setting's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and give no reason for concern. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff are robust and adhered to and there are good procedures for managing children's arrival at and leaving the setting.

Provision for ensuring children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are particularly good opportunities for children to experience a sense of awe and wonder about their surroundings. Practitioners are good role models and foster a sense of right and wrong and of treating one other with respect. Although there are currently no children with identified additional learning needs, practitioners are aware of the need for early identification and have worked closely with other professionals in past years.

Learning environment: Good

The nursery displays a positive inclusive ethos that provides equality of access to all children whatever their background. Staff know their children well, are sensitive to their needs and show children affection, consideration and understanding. The nursery is a warm, supportive environment where children display a tolerant attitude free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. Policies and procedures for dealing with specific instances of discrimination are in place.

The nursery is able to accept children with any form of disability and has policies in place to promote equal opportunities. The nursery is generously staffed with well qualified and experienced practitioners. Resources are well matched to the demands of the Foundation Phase curriculum and accessible to the children. There is a generous supply of resources and materials which are well focused on the specific needs of the children. Overall, the accommodation, particularly the well-developed outdoor area, provides a very good environment for children's learning and is used effectively. The local environment is used well to support the learning.

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

Leadership: Good

All staff have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff working in the nursery are highly effective in meeting the needs of the children and the day-to-day activities and experiences provided for the children are imaginative and of a high standard. The overall leadership of the nursery by the manager provides clear direction and a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement. Staff share values, aims and objectives.

There are effective procedures in place to induct, appraise and improve practitioners. Staff are appraised annually and their professional needs and the expectations of the nursery addressed. Regular supervision sessions ensure that any concerns are dealt with quickly and achievement is recognized. Overall, the impact of the leadership has provided the nursery with clear direction and a fully committed staff.

The board of trustees offers good support to the manager and her team. They are well informed about the work of the setting and have recently strengthened numbers by actively seeking individuals with specific skills to enable them to offer all round and informed support to the nursery. The nursery is effective in meeting both national and local priorities.

Improving quality: Good

The setting makes effective use of its self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The current self-evaluation report is thorough and leads to sound strategies for improvement which ensure positive outcomes for all children. The views of parents and care-givers have been sought in order to inform the self-evaluation. The setting has used the information collected from parents' questionnaires to gather opinions and to identify areas for improvement.

Following the process of self-evaluation, a setting improvement plan has been produced which indicates a good awareness of the setting's performance and focuses on raising standards by improving provision and setting clear targets. A representative of the board of trustees has been closely involved in the self-evaluation process and ensures that the board is kept informed of the resulting targets and their implementation.

Practitioners attend training courses regularly and the positive impact of this is seen in the teaching and the children's wellbeing as they implement what they have learned. Due to the distance that practitioners need to travel to access training courses, the nursery manager has been pro-active in organising opportunities for courses to be run in the town's Integrated Learning Centre which is managed by MCCP – for example a Welsh language course specifically for local child carers. This course has been attended not only by staff from the nursery but also by local child minders and staff from other settings.

Partnership working: Good

Practitioners take positive steps to involve parents and carers in the setting. Parents are kept informed about all aspects of the setting's activities through regular newsletters and notices in the foyer. There is also an information sheet at the beginning of each topic to suggest ways in which parents can help their children and giving specific Welsh vocabulary that their children will be introduced to. Parents are very appreciative of the work of the nursery and feel that their children are well supported both educationally and emotionally.

The setting has good links with the local primary school and every term takes the children that will be transferring the following term for several visits with a member of staff to support them. The nursery manager is keen to extend this to other schools in the area to which the children transfer. MCCP has good links with the local community and has recently been chosen by the local Rotary Committee to receive funding and practical support to replace the windows in the nursery building.

The setting welcomes the support they receive from the local authority advisory teacher and there is clear evidence that they have acted positively on the advice she has given.

Resource management: Good

The setting is well staffed and has a good range of resources which are used effectively to support different learning experiences. A particular strength is the development of the outdoor area which fully supports all areas of learning of the Foundation Phase. Staff within the pre-school group deploy themselves informally and make good use of their individual interests and abilities.

The Project's Financial Controller manages the finances rigorously. The nursery has petty cash for weekly spending and all larger requirements are carefully considered by the board of trustees. The setting gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

All parents who returned the questionnaire strongly agree that teaching in the setting is good and that practitioners treat their children fairly and with respect. Almost all parents either agree or strongly agree to the statements on the inspection questionnaire. Very few indicated that they do not feel they are kept well informed about their child's progress.

Responses to discussions with children

Children like coming to the group. They show enthusiasm for the staff and the activities and say that they particularly enjoy their visits to the community garden club.

Appendix 2

The reporting inspector

Mary Dyas	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	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.

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.