



*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 Abercaseg  
Bethesda  
Bangor  
Gwynedd  
LL57 3PL**

**Date of inspection: February 2012**

**by**

**Mr Mervyn Lloyd Jones**

**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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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## Context

Ysgol Abercaseg is an infants' school situated in the village of Bethesda and the pupils come from the village and the surrounding areas. It is maintained by Gwynedd local authority. The language and culture of the area is Welsh and almost 70% of the children come from homes where Welsh is mother tongue.

The area can be described as one which is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged.

The school provides education for pupils between three and seven years of age. There are 98 full-time pupils on the school's register together with 23 nursery children who attend on a part-time basis. They are taught by four full-time and two part-time teachers. They represent the full range of ability and their attainments vary considerably when they start at the school.

Children are accepted into the school's nursery class on a part-time basis in the September following their third birthday and on a full-time basis into the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Pupil numbers have remained constant since the last inspection in 2006.

Twenty-two pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs; two of them hold statements for special educational needs. The percentage of pupils (19%) who are entitled to receive free school meals is higher than the average for Gwynedd and Wales.

The school was last inspected in January 2006. The headteacher was appointed to her post in September 2008.

In 2011-12, the individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Abercaseg was £3336. The maximum per pupil in Gwynedd primary schools is £7732 and the minimum £2745. Ysgol Abercaseg has the 57<sup>th</sup> highest individual school budget per pupil of the 102 primary schools in Gwynedd.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### Current performance

#### **Ysgol Abercaseg's current performance is excellent because:**

- the school's performance is consistently higher than that in similar schools;
- a high percentage of the pupils attain beyond the expected level;
- almost all of the pupils achieve and make good or excellent progress in their lessons;
- the school provides a very good range of interesting learning experiences;
- very effective learning methods are having a positive effect on pupils' communication skills;
- of the caring, inclusive and happy ethos which ensures that the child's voice has a prominent place in all of the schools work and life; and
- the high standard of training provided for all members of staff and parents which supports the learning.

### Prospects for improvement

#### **The school has excellent prospects for improvement because:**

- of the strong and very effective leadership of the headteacher and governors which creates the best possible conditions for each individual to develop and flourish;
- of the willingness of the school to constantly seek new and innovative ways of improving the provision;
- very good monitoring procedures ensure that evaluations of all aspects of the school's life and work are based on direct, comprehensive and accurate evidence;
- of the regular practice of reflecting on and evaluating the effect of the teaching on pupils' wellbeing and standards; and
- the school has maintained and improved on the high standards since the previous inspection.

## Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 ensure that more pupils achieve the higher level in science; and
- R2 strengthen the link between the findings of the self-evaluation process and the planning for improving outcomes.

### *What happens next?*

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to produce a written case study, to describe the excellent practices identified during the inspection.

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>
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<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Standards: Excellent**

Over the last four years, the school's performance in relation to the expected level in Welsh, mathematics and science, for pupils at seven years of age (the core subject indicator), is higher than the average for schools in the same family and the Welsh average.

A particular feature of the school is the high percentage who achieve beyond the expected level. Over the last four years, the percentage achieving the higher level in Welsh and mathematics has been considerably higher than the average for schools in the same family in Welsh and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools in respect of the number of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, it places the school amongst the highest 25% in Wales. The percentage that achieves the higher level in science has fallen in the last two years.

The individual work books and class work books of most pupils show excellent progress during their time in the Foundation Phase, and those of higher ability achieve extended work of a high quality. Most are very confident and knowledgeable when recalling and discussing their previous work. They use their key skills and thinking skills very imaginatively and creatively across several learning areas.

The standards and progress most pupils make across the Foundation Phase in the key skills of speaking and listening are very good. The early reading skills of many pupils are developing well. By year 2, most have developed good reading skills with those of higher ability reading with excellent expression, fluency and accuracy. Most write to different purposes and in different styles with increasing skills and there are good examples of extended writing work. By the end of the Foundation Phase, the presentation and writing skills of most pupils is very good.

All pupils with additional learning needs achieve well against their personal targets and make good progress in line with their ability, interests and previous achievement.

Numeracy skills and information and communications technology skills are good across the learning areas.

The continuity and progress of most pupils in Welsh is very good and one of the school's strengths. The Welsh skills of those pupils who come from non Welsh-speaking homes and the latecomers is developing quickly and very effectively, and they succeed in attaining the expected level, namely level 2, or better by the end of year 2.

**Wellbeing: Excellent**

Pupils' personal, social and life skills are developing very well and preparing them excellently for their future.

Most pupils have a good awareness of health and safety issues. They understand the need to undertake physical exercise and eat healthily. All parents stated that their children were safe at the school.

The confidence of most pupils develops quickly as they choose their learning activities and they apply themselves enthusiastically and enjoy them. They are all very courteous and show respect to each other. Many work confidently independently and participate very well in making decisions and choices on what they want to learn. Their collaborative and problem solving skills and their social skills are all developing excellently. Many pupils improve their social and life skills very successfully through taking part in the various after school activities.

Within classes and during break and lunch times the behaviour of almost all pupils is outstanding.

Considering their age, members of the Ideas Squad and the Green Fingers Group are very active in the school and represent the pupils' opinions well. They have had a very positive effect on issues such as health, the school environment, resources for pupils and inter-relationships with each other. Each member was very clear of their responsibilities and undertaking their roles very responsibly.

By the end of year 1, most pupils can reflect wisely on their own learning, and begin to show a good awareness of the standard of their work and what they need to do in order to improve it. By the end of year 2, many pupils have developed these skills very well and very willingly contribute to planning success criteria and units of work. Attendance rates of almost 95% are good and place the school amongst the highest 25% of similar schools.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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**Learning experiences: Excellent**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that fully meets the requirements of the Foundation Phase and religious education. The stimulating learning experiences are particularly successful in arousing the interest of the full range of ability. Teachers and assistants work together very effectively to plan detailed, imaginative and interesting work.

Use of the history of Penrhyn Quarry and Gelert's fable are used very skilfully to ensure learning experiences of a high quality. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities and community events are offered in order to enrich pupils' experiences.

Particular emphasis is placed on developing the key skills in all areas of learning to ensure continuity and progression for all pupils and challenging the pupils of higher ability extremely successfully.

Provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension are excellent.

Very creative and valuable experiences are provided both within and outside classes to promote education for sustainable development and global citizenship. This is a strength in the school.

### **Teaching: Excellent**

The quality of teaching is of a very high standard. Lessons are planned thoroughly and with clear learning objectives. There is skilful use of a variety of learning styles which stimulate all pupils to work increasingly independently on interesting activities. This is extremely successful throughout the school.

Each one of the teachers and assistants question the pupils particularly skilfully in order to extend their understanding and develop their thinking and communication skills. In classes, they consistently model language of a high standard.

Teachers and assistants have excellent knowledge of the principles of the Foundation Phase and have very high expectations of each pupil. A particularly good working relationship can be seen in all classes. They work together very effectively to promote the excellent behaviour that was observed.

All teachers include very effective elements of assessment for learning in their lessons. Valuable oral feedback and constructive comments in pupils' books clearly expresses what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are given good and regular opportunities to contribute towards their individual targets.

All teachers track pupils' progress and performance in detail in order to place challenging targets for improvement.

School reports to parents are comprehensive and extremely useful. Parents appreciate these greatly.

### **Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The school gives particularly good care, support and guidance to all the pupils. The importance of how and why to keep healthy is promoted successfully and the Ideas Squad is an innovative example of how to include young pupils in this aspect of the school's work.

Provision for listening to concerns is excellent. A very good example of this is the capable skills of the Playground Buddies in caring for the younger children.

The school makes extensive use of the expertise of agencies such as the police, health service and the social services. These relationships ensure early and very effective support when needed.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safety.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs ensures excellent support to meet individual needs. Very effective use is made of continuous assessment information and basic skills tests to identify pupils in need of early support to ensure that they receive support of a very high standard. Individual educational plans are of good quality and are regularly reviewed with the pupils and their parents.

Procedures for improving attendance are very successful.

### **Learning environment: Excellent**

The school's ethos gives an extremely welcoming and happy environment. It is an inclusive community, where all pupils have equal access to all areas of the school's provision. Clear emphasis is placed on acknowledging, respecting and celebrating equality and diversity.

There is a wide and varied range of good quality resources to meet the pupils' learning needs. Full use is made of relevant resources and the resources available in the community to augment and enrich pupils' experiences.

The learning environment is of a very high quality. The building offers appropriate classes for the number of children. Throughout the school, there are interesting and stimulating displays to acknowledge and celebrate pupils' successes.

The building and the outdoor facilities are safe and very well maintained.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>
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<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Leadership: Excellent**

The headteacher provides strong and very effective leadership. This ensures that the school has a clear sense of direction and culture which strives for improvement. It ensures that all aspects and progressiveness of school life have a clear and positive effect on the standards achieved by the pupils. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and benefit the school's requirements very well. Staff meetings focus very clearly on the school improvement process and lead to action points to improve practice. They regularly review earlier decisions, to identify progress.

Performance management is very effective and contributes substantially to the high standard of teaching and towards improving pupils' standards. The aims for improvement correspond very well with whole-school improvement plans, individual development needs and needs for developing leadership skills. Performance management arrangements for support staff are also very good. Particularly good use is made of performance data to analyse results and trends and to plan strategically for improvement.

The governing body provides effective support. They have a very good understanding of how the school performs in comparison with similar schools. Governors are aware of issues that arise from data analysis and of the school's self-evaluation report. They regularly use the information to challenge the school in areas where there is a need to improve further.

Very good, and at times innovative attention is given to implementing county and national priorities. Staff carefully reflect on their practices and are very willing to accept ideas and constantly looking for new and innovative ways of improving the provision. These developments have had a very beneficial effect on improving the teaching and the learning. The 'children's voice' has a prominent place and is an excellent aspect of school life. An outstanding example of this, established at the request of the children, is the training of pupils in year 2 to train the younger pupils in playtime activities.



### **Improving quality: Excellent**

The school knows its own performance very well. Self-evaluation arrangements are excellent and a regular part of the school's life and work. The process is comprehensive and particularly thorough. The headteacher, staff and governors show complete commitment to high standards. A very good range of monitoring activities is used, including data analysis, lesson observation and examining pupils' work. Listening to the pupils' voice is a very strong element in the process, and their comments, together with those of the parents, are given serious consideration. Good use is made of advisers and teacher advisers to support the school's work in raising standards.

Priorities in the school improvement plan focus clearly on raising standards. Challenging quantitative targets are set and also detailed action steps which include success indicators and suitable timetabling for their completion. Even so, the link between the findings of the self-evaluation process and the planning for improving outcomes are not always clear.

The school is a very strong learning community. There are particularly good procedures for supporting the professional development of all members of staff. The regular practice of reflecting on their own practices and of evaluating the effect on pupils' learning and wellbeing is a particular feature of the school. The prominent commitment of teachers with several learning communities is a very effective means of developing innovative methods for teaching and learning.

### **Partnership working: Excellent**

The school has a number of strategic partnerships that contribute very effectively to the quality of the provision and towards the standards that pupils achieve.

The strong partnership with parents contributes very effectively towards realising the school's aims. Many parents contribute towards a variety of activities. A particular feature of the partnership is the number of courses presented to the parents annually which are an outstanding means of establishing a sound partnership and involving parents in the process of maintaining and improving standards.

There are very many links with the local community and this has an extensive influence on pupils' learning experiences, their awareness of their community and the importance of contributing towards it.

There is very effective collaboration and planning between the school and the local junior school to which the pupils are transferred at seven years of age. This close relationship helps to ensure that pupils make the appropriate progress in the next stage of their education. In addition, the transfer arrangements promote an expedient and confident transfer. Parents' responses to the transfer plans are very positive.

There are very strong links with other primary schools in the area. The school is prominent in the process of moderating and joint standardising of end of key stage assessments. The headteachers' network, through sharing resources and expertise, has had a very good effect on the standard of policies, health and safety and in improving the quality of the school's self-evaluation. Regular visits between local schools have been a very effective means of exchanging good practices.

There are constructive links with local businesses and higher education institutions. An innovative example of this aspect is the effective collaboration with the local university to enable parents to nurture their children's early emotional skills.

**Resource management: Excellent**

The headteacher and other staff manage resources very effectively and efficiently to support improvement in learning. They ensure a high level of staffing to teach the curriculum effectively and ensure that staff make the best possible use of their time, expertise and experience. Expertise is shared very effectively and the contribution of the learning assistants in ensuring improvement in the standards of pupils in their care is exceptional.

Training of a very high standard is provided for all members of staff and parents who support the teaching in order to ensure the best possible provision for all pupils. The effect of the training on pupils' achievement is reviewed regularly and thoroughly.

The school's willingness to share resources and expertise with partners is a strength and leads to better outcomes for the pupils. The school's expenditure decisions link very well with the priorities for improvement and pupils' wellbeing.

The school's building and grounds are well maintained. All members of staff succeed in creating an attractive and stimulating atmosphere in all classes and areas of learning.

As a result of this, and because pupils achieve outcomes of a very high standard, the school gives excellent value for money.

## Appendix 1

### **Commentary on performance data**

Over the last four years, the school's performance in relation to the expected level in Welsh, mathematics and science, for pupils at seven years of age (the core subject indicator), is higher than the average for schools in the same family and the Welsh average.

This places the school amongst the highest 50% of similar schools in Wales in respect of pupils entitled to receive free school meals in each year during the period. In 2010 and 2011, the school's performance was amongst the highest 25%.

Results for speaking, reading and writing are consistently higher than the averages for the family of schools and schools in Wales. In 2011, the results for reading and writing are with the highest in the family.

In key stage 1, the percentage attaining beyond the expected level in 2011 is higher than that of the family and Wales in each subject. In Welsh and mathematics it is with the highest in the family. Over the last four years, the percentage achieving the higher level has been consistently higher than the average for schools in the family and the average for Wales in every subject. The percentage has risen considerably in Welsh and mathematics over the period. The percentage achieving the higher level in science has fallen since 2009.

In comparing the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level in Welsh over the last four years with similar schools in respect of the number of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school is consistently amongst the highest 25% in Wales. The percentage attaining the higher level in mathematics has been amongst the highest 25% for three of these years and in science also in two of them.

The gap between the achievement of pupils entitled to receive free school meals and their peers has lessened substantially over the last three years. In 2011, there was no difference between the achievements of these pupils. Overall, there is no significant pattern between the results of girls and boys, although more girls of higher ability have achieved the higher level in Welsh in the last two years.

Examining pupils' work and evidence from classroom observations fully support these judgements.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

**Responses to parent questionnaires    Number of responses: 47**

***All parents agree or strongly agree that the school:***

- is well run;
- provides a good variety of activities;
- helps their child to become more mature and to shoulder responsibility; and
- gives appropriate additional support in relation to any specific individual needs.

***All parents agree or strongly agree that that their child:***

- likes the school;
- receives support to settle in well when starting at the school;
- makes good progress;
- is encouraged to be healthy and to undertake regular physical exercise;
- is safe at the school; and
- is well prepared for moving on to their next school.

***All parents agree or strongly agree that:***

- the teaching is good;
- pupils behave well;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do their best;
- the homework given builds well on what their child learns in school; and that
- staff treat each child fairly and with respect.

***All parents agree or strongly agree that they:***

- are given regular information on their child's progress;
- feel comfortable in asking the school questions, or making suggestions or identifying a problem; and
- understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

### Responses to learner questionnaires

As this is an infants' school there were no questionnaires from pupils.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Mervyn Lloyd Jones	Reporting Inspector
Goronwy Morris	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Siwan Tecwyn Jones	Peer Inspector
Sioned Hywel Thomas	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

### Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **National Curriculum**

#### **Expected National Curriculum levels**

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

#### **Core subject indicator in all key stages**

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

#### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.