



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 Gwenffrwd

Whitford Street
Holywell
Flintshire
CH8 7NJ

Date of inspection: January 2011

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL

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

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

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Context

Ysgol Gwenffrwd is a designated Welsh-medium school. The school was opened in May 1949 and moved to the present building in 1985. This is the school's sixth site. The pupils come from a very wide catchment area that includes the town of Holywell and a number of small rural villages from Halkyn Mountain to the banks of the Mostyn.

There are 160 full-time pupils on the school register together with 25 children of nursery age who attend part time. Over the past three years, there has been a year on year increase in the number of pupils that have attended the nursery class. English is the main language of the home for approximately 95% of the pupils but the school ensures that they are fluent in Welsh by the time they reach key stage 2.

Children are accepted in the school on a full time basis at the beginning of the year following their fourth birthday. The school has pupils of a full range of ability and their attainment varies greatly when they begin school. The catchment area is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is 11.8% which is below the national average of 20.1%. The percentage of pupils with additional learning needs is 33.2%, which is higher than the national average of 21.6%, and two of them have a statement of special educational needs.

The school was last inspected in January 2005. The current headteacher was appointed to the post in September 1997.

In 2010-2011, the individual school budget for Ysgol Gwenffrwd is £3,130 per pupil, which compares with a maximum of £7,635 and a minimum of £2,660 for primary schools in Flintshire. The school has the 38th highest budget per pupil of the 74 primary schools in Flintshire.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- almost all pupils are making good progress or better in the Foundation Phase and in key stage 2;
- the school provides a wide and balanced range of stimulating experiences for all pupils that fully meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the national curriculum and religious education;
- the teaching is consistently good with excellence shown in some lessons; and
- the children's behaviour is exceptional throughout the school and their attitudes reflect their full participation in learning.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team is good and they have established a culture that encourages improvement;
- the self-evaluation arrangements are a strength of the school;
- the school has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the previous inspection; and
- the governing body has a comprehensive knowledge of the school's performance in comparison with other similar schools.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 continue to improve the writing of key stage 2 pupils; and
- R2 refine the school's procedures in terms of responding to the needs of the more able and talented pupils.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Almost every pupil is making good progress or better in the Foundation Phase and in key stage 2. The standards and progress of most pupils in the key skills of oracy and reading are good. Their listening skills and their ability to concentrate are very good in every class. The standard of the written work of the majority of pupils is generally good and, this year, there is obvious progress in the quality of the older pupils' written work.

The standards in Welsh of most pupils are good and very good in a number of cases. They are developing quickly into becoming confident Welsh speakers and, as they move from one year to the next, their ability to use Welsh in different contexts is developing well. In addition, their ability to use Welsh and English alongside each other to collect and analyse information is developing effectively.

In comparison with similar schools, attainment of the core subject indicator (CSI – the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) for key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been generally good over the past three years. In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining the CSI has been higher than that of the family of schools over the past three years. In Welsh, the percentage of pupils that reach level 2 shows a similar trend. However, the percentage reaching level 3 or higher is below that for the family of schools over the same period. In mathematics and science, the percentage that reaches level 3 varies both in terms of trend and in comparison with the family of schools. In comparison with schools of a similar background in terms of the proportion of pupils entitled to free schools meals, the school's performance has varied over the quarters without any apparent trend. In key stage 2, between 2007 and 2009, there was a definite trend of improvement to be seen in relation to the CSI and the core subjects. The school's performance was higher than the family and the national average during this period. In 2010, the school's results were below the average for the family of schools. A similar trend was seen in the number of pupils attaining level 5 or above across the core subjects and in the school's performance in comparison with similar schools in terms of entitlement to free school meals. However, although the data indicates that the school's standards have fallen in 2010, the contextual evidence shows that pupils have achieved well.

Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are making good progress in relation to their ability. There is no significant pattern highlighted in the performance of boys and girls.

The thinking skills of most pupils and their ability to work independently are developing particularly well. Throughout the school, pupils are making sensible decisions and they know what to do when facing new challenges. They know how and where to find answers when solving problems. This aspect is an excellent element.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Every pupil has a good understanding of how to keep healthy and of which foods are beneficial, and know that physical exercise is important. The standards of physical education throughout the school are a notable strength, and the commitment of the majority of pupils to activities such as “Deffrwch, Dansiwch (Wake Up and Dance), sports teams and the extra-curricular provision in the areas of sports and fitness is high. The pupils enjoy learning and the attendance rate has been above 95% for the past three years. The school is consistently in the highest quartile in terms of attendance when compared with similar schools over the same period. Pupils’ behaviour throughout the school is exceptional and their attitude reflects their full participation in learning. The good relationship that exists between them and with adults contributes effectively to the quality of their work. Every child feels safe in the school and knows how to get help if they are not happy.

The school council is very active and meets regularly. It represents all pupils effectively and ensures that pupils’ opinions influence decisions. It also contributes to the wider community through working with local charities. The opinion and standpoint of the Eco Council contribute effectively to developing and monitoring action plans for recycling and improving the environment both within the school and in the community.

The majority of pupils are confident in the skills that they need to improve their learning. All of the pupils show respect towards each other. They relate well to their fellow pupils and to those who teach them. Their collaborative skills are very good throughout the school. Almost all of the pupils develop to be independent learners. They are confident when discussing their work and their progress. This aspect is a strength in the school.

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

The school prepares a wide and balanced range of stimulating experiences for all pupils that respond fully to the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the national curriculum and religious education. The provision for communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) has been planned appropriately. Members of staff collaborate effectively to plan flexible and responsive programmes, for example when fostering the early reading skills of the youngest children.

Foundation Phase and key stage 2 classes provide rich and direct experiences that have a very positive effect on pupils’ personal and social skills. The provision is particularly effective throughout the school when developing pupils’ thinking skills and ability to learn independently. The provision for pupils with specific needs is good throughout the school.

Visits are interesting and numerous, and, alongside the contributions of visitors such as resident artists, they stimulate pupils’ interest. They also have a good influence on the standards of achievement. The provision for developing the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is very effective throughout the school. This element is

core to the whole work and life of the school. As a result, pupils' knowledge and awareness of their Welsh heritage are developing very well.

The school gives priority to aspects of sustainability and the environment and has received Green Flag accreditation. Various opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their understanding through activities that promote recycling and improve the school's environment.

The pupils understand the importance of respecting multiculturalism. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of global citizenship through personal and social education (PSE) periods and religious education and geography lessons. The school is prominent in local Fair Trade campaigns, and organising a farmers' market was a beneficial project to promote understanding of that topic. The school also contributes regularly to international charities such as the recent disaster in Haiti.

Teaching: Good

The teaching is consistently good with some lessons showing excellence. The teachers have high expectations and they use an appropriate range of methods to stimulate every pupil to achieve their potential. The taught sessions are planned thoroughly and the contribution of the support staff to the quality of children's learning is substantial. The school's resources are used effectively to support learning. Pupils' additional needs are planned well. Every lesson has a positive learning atmosphere and pupils' behaviour is managed effectively.

Teachers use a range of activities which ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do in order to improve. The school's system for marking and providing oral feedback contributes substantially to this aim. The procedures also provide effective opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and the work of their fellow pupils throughout the school. The pupils are aware of their targets for improvement in language and numeracy and apply themselves to achieving them.

The school records progress in pupils' standards and wellbeing clearly and thoroughly throughout the school. The information is used effectively to inform planning. These arrangements ensure that the needs of all the children are identified well. They also assist in reporting effectively to parents about their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is innovative in promoting all aspects of keeping healthy and safe. It has a wide range of appropriate policies and procedures to promote healthy living and pupils' wellbeing. The provision within the school and the extra-curricular provision, such as the 'Heartstart' club, in terms of healthy attitudes and fitness, are excellent elements and have a positive influence on standards. The school leads the annual Gymnastics festival to celebrate St David's Day within its cluster of schools. The opinions of parents and pupils confirm that the school has very effective arrangements for ensuring the safety and emotional and physical wellbeing of pupils. The arrangements also ensure that the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriate.

The school provides a wide range of information for pupils and their parents. This includes producing pamphlets to promote parents' contribution to aspects of reading and numeracy work and to improve their understanding of dyslexia. When appropriate, the school encourages pupils and their parents to receive guidance from specialist, external agencies. For example, there have been recent cases of collaboration with the local authority's social services department that benefitted children from the school and their families.

The school has appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils.

The school has thorough arrangements and systems for identifying pupils who require additional support. The learning experiences provided for them in the main stream, and in special groups, support them effectively to achieve appropriate standards. A good range of suitable resources is used that improves the quality of the provision. The support is co-ordinated effectively within the school and, where appropriate, there are good links with external agencies. Tracking procedures are used well to target additional support and to monitor its effect. The school regularly holds progress reviews and consults well with parents and carers.

Learning environment: Good

The ethos of the school is a welcoming one in which pupils feel safe and comfortable. The staff work together successfully to promote inclusive attitudes. The school's arrangements also provide equal opportunities for every pupil to take advantage of the learning opportunities provided through the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities. Pupils' varied backgrounds are valued and due attention is given to developing their understanding of human rights.

Full advantage is taken of the substantial building and large grounds that surround it. The classrooms are of good quality and create a stimulating atmosphere. Valuable areas have been developed and they are used effectively to encourage pupils' curiosity and enrich the learning. There are displays of a high standard around the school that reflect the work of pupils in the school and in their community.

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

The leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team is good and they have established a culture that promotes improvement. The regular staff meetings focus on improving the school and ensure that strategies and plans are understood and developed effectively.

Leaders and managers alike have high expectations. Effective performance management arrangements are helpful in conveying these to all members of staff. The staff work towards challenging targets that encompass whole-school improvements and individual development requirements. The responsibility for leading improvement projects and plans has been devolved effectively to members of staff. This promotes motivation and builds capacity for continuous improvement.

The school's governing body understands its role well. It has a comprehensive knowledge about the school's performance in comparison with other similar schools and it interprets the data effectively. Regular presentations by members of staff ensure that the governing body is aware of curricular and organisational developments and this is complemented by visits by governors to the school. The governing body provides suitable guidance in terms of direction and works effectively with the senior team to improve quality. It has adopted a suitable complaints procedure and ensures that it is known to parents and carers.

The Foundation Phase has been established very successfully and appropriate arrangements are in place to extend the arrangements fully to year two. Elements of the School Effectiveness Framework, such as professional learning communities, are already effective within the school's arrangements.

Improving quality: Good

The school knows itself well and there is a strong commitment to promote improvement throughout the school. Comparative data is analysed very well for the purposes of monitoring performance, alongside the effective monitoring and evaluation work of subject co-ordinators. Full consideration is given to continuous evaluations of pupils' wellbeing. The arrangements also give due consideration to the opinions of pupils and parents, as well as the recommendations of the local authority's education service officers, and ensure that appropriate priorities for improvement are identified. For example, aspects of pupils' writing and attainment at higher levels have been identified as priorities in the current school improvement plan. Self-evaluation arrangements are a strength in the school.

Self-evaluation priorities are linked clearly to the school improvement plans. Strategies to meet the necessary improvements have been identified. These include a range of activities, with leadership responsibility for co-ordinating them given to members of staff, as well as success indicators, specific timescales and a record of the resources that have been allocated. The school has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the previous report.

Professional learning communities are an integral part of the school's planning and self-evaluation arrangements. They contribute effectively to identifying, developing and promoting good practice in learning and assessment.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established a good range of partnerships with other schools, further and higher education institutions and local community groups.

Effective working links exist with the local authority's services including the education welfare service and social services. This ensures that children and families benefit from projects related to attendance and care in the home. The school co-ordinated an effective partnership with a range of partners to reduce the effects of vandalism on the site and to develop the quality of the external provision. It also works closely with two local universities and further education institutions to train teachers and support staff.

The continuous contact with parents involves ascertaining their opinion on matters relating to wellbeing and standards. This helps to maintain the effective and supportive partnership that exists between them. Parents' involvement in schemes such as promoting reading has a positive impact on standards. The partnership also benefits from regular awareness-raising sessions for parents on a range of educational and wellbeing matters. The school benefits from the support of an active parent/teacher association.

The school jointly plans with a range of partners to implement programmes that improve pupils' outcomes and wellbeing. For example, the work with a skills officer led to projects to raise standards of writing in Welsh and the school's membership of the Children's University has refined and rewarded their extra-curricular activities. Activities that were planned jointly with the Sports Council have contributed to high standards in physical education. The school also benefitted from a number of projects planned jointly with the Arts Council.

Monthly meetings are held that promote transition to the secondary school. A partnership with parents, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and Flying Start has been established that ensures very effective transition arrangements from the school's nursery classes.

Resource management: Good

The school is staffed appropriately and makes effective use of the time, expertise and experience of members of staff. Good use is made of teaching assistants throughout the school, including in the Foundation Phase, and in supporting pupils with ALN. Teachers make effective use of their time for planning, preparation and assessment, and the school fulfils the statutory requirements in relation to workload. In general, the school has a good supply of resources that are managed appropriately.

The school's identification of improvement needs and developing plans for improvement enable leaders and managers to allocate financial resources very effectively. Budget monitoring procedures are effective and help to ensure that all resources that are available to the school are allocated cost-effectively.

The outcomes for pupils are good. There are no unsatisfactory standards or aspects of the provision. The school provides good value for money in terms of the use that is made of the budget allocated to it.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

A total of 78 questionnaires were returned and, in almost all of them, parents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the school in general. Parents state that their children feel safe in the school. Almost everyone believes that the behaviour of pupils is good, that pupils are respected and treated fairly, and that they are developing into being more mature and ready to shoulder responsibilities. Every parent feels that the teaching in classrooms and pupils' behaviour are good, and almost everyone feels that their children are making good progress in the school. Every parent also states that their children enjoy the school. However, a very small number of parents feel that they do not have regular information about their children's progress, and a few parents feel that they do not understand the school's complaints procedures. Almost every parent is of the opinion that the school is either run well or very well.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Most of the learners in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire and, during the inspection, members of the team spoke to pupils throughout the school. Everyone said that they felt safe in the school and that the schools deals well with bullying. Every pupil knows whom they can talk to if they have concerns or if they are having difficulty with their work. All learners are of the opinion that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress, and almost everyone felt that they are doing well in the school. A few pupils feel that the homework they are set does not help them to understand or to improve their schoolwork.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Clive Phillips	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Alun Rees	Peer Inspector
Iola Owen	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk).

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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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 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	R	Y1	Y2	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:

Key stage 1	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