



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 Gyfun Gŵyr**

**Talbot Street
Gowerton
Swansea
SA4 3DB**

Date of inspection: 18 January 2011

by

Mr William Gwyn Thomas

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

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

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

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2011: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.

Context

Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr is an 11-19 designated bilingual mixed comprehensive school maintained by Swansea Unitary Authority. The school is located in the centre of Gowerton and serves a wide catchment area covering the west of Swansea. There is a mixture of city, urban and rural areas as well as areas which are economically disadvantaged.

Pupils of all abilities are received by the school.

The school has 644 pupils on roll including 122 students in the Sixth Form. During the last inspection in January 2005, there were 830 pupils on roll including 170 students in the sixth form. Since that time, the school's catchment has been halved to allow for the opening of a second Welsh-medium secondary school within the Unitary Authority. This has resulted in a reduction in pupil numbers over this period. However, projected numbers show steady growth from September 2011, rising to around 900 by 2016.

There are 42 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 26 full-time equivalent support staff in the school.

In 2009-2010, 9.1% of pupils were eligible for free school meals. This figure is well below the national average of 17.1%.

There are 4.4% of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of compulsory age pupils on the special educational needs' register is 14.4% which is below the national average of 20.9%. In 2010, 17.4% of 15 year old pupils were on the special educational needs' register. The school has a specialist teaching facility for nine pupils with general learning difficulties.

All pupils are bilingual with 24% of pupils coming from homes where Welsh is spoken and 76% come from homes where English is the main language.

The headteacher was appointed permanently to the post in September 2002.

The school's aims are to create a supportive, caring and inspiring learning community through the medium of Welsh where all learners grow in self-worth and self-esteem and reach their full potential.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr is £4477 which compares with a maximum of £5430 and a minimum of £3544 for secondary schools in Swansea. The school has the fourth highest budget per pupil of the 15 secondary schools in Swansea.

Summary

| | |
|---|------------------|
| The school's current performance | Excellent |
| The school's prospects for improvement | Excellent |

Current performance

This is an excellent school due to the:

- vision and commitment of the headteacher, the management team and all staff at the school to ensure the highest standards in all aspects of school life;
- high standards learners achieve, and the progress they make across the key stages;
- family ethos that protects the interests of all learners, whatever their background or ability;
- quality of the 14-19 partnerships which the school has developed;
- experiences of high quality, within the classroom, and the wide programme of extra-curricular activities; and
- high quality of the teaching, care, support and guidance.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are excellent due to the:

- leadership and vision of the headteacher, and the strong support she receives from the senior management team and all staff at the school;
- strong systems that exist for self-evaluation, monitoring learners' performance and planning for improvement; and
- the school's ability to choose and select the appropriate initiatives for developing the quality of teaching, training and management.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr need to:

- R1 continue to focus on raising standards in all key stages through attaining the highest quartile in most of the benchmarking indicators;
- R2 continue to ensure and refine the skills' provision in key stage 3; and
- R3 work with the Local Education Authority to ensure adequate and appropriate accommodation for the increase in the number of pupils.

All the recommendations are reflected in the school's development plan.

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 prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice seen during the inspection.

Main findings

| |
|---|
| Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? |
|---|

| |
|------------------|
| Excellent |
|------------------|

Standards: Excellent

The school's overall performance in both key stage 3 and key stage 4 is outstanding.

When compared with similar schools in terms of the free school meals benchmark, standards are good or better even though results varied slightly. However, the school's high placement (mostly first or second) within the family, the significantly higher than expected performance of learners, very good standards of groups of learners, their skills of high quality and excellent standards in Welsh, ensure overall standards are outstanding.

In 2010 in key stage 3, the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) and science were in the top 25% when compared with similar schools in terms of the free school meals benchmark. Welsh first language and mathematics were in the top 50% and English was very close. In 2010, results in the core subjects and the core subject indicator placed the school either first or second within its family of 11 schools (groups of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, having special educational needs and learning English as an additional language) . This is an outstanding feature. In 2008, all indicators were in the top 25% of similar schools.

During 2008-2010, pupils' achievement above level 5 and level 6 in the core subjects was consistently above the family and national averages. Pupils made very good

A report on Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
18 January 2011

progress based on their attainment at the end of key stage 2. These are very good features.

On many occasions over a three-year period, pupils' achievement at level 5 and above in nearly all the non-core subjects was outstanding. In 2010 the school was placed mostly first in its family.

At key stage 4 in 2010, pupils' performance in nearly all indicators was outstanding and was well above pupils' performance in 2008 and better than the national improvements during this period. Nearly all key indicators were in the top 25% when compared with similar schools in terms of levels of the free school meals benchmark in 2010. Compared with its family of schools, the school was placed nearly always first or second.

Over a three-year period, pupils' performance was consistently above the family and national averages. Several indicators, including the threshold level 2 (a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSE's at grades A*-C) including English or Welsh first language and mathematics had risen by nearly 10 percentage points. Overall, pupils had made very good progress based on their attainment at the end of key stages 2 and 3. These are outstanding features.

Sixth-form students' performance has improved significantly over the last three years. The percentage of students gaining the level 3 threshold (a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grades A*-E) is very good. It is well above the national average for two of these years.

The continuous improvement in the school's average wider points' score (all externally approved qualifications at age 17) between 2008-2010 is a very good feature. Results have been consistently above the national averages and the improvement is nearly twice as great as the national improvement.

The outcomes of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualifications have made an exceptional contribution to raising sixth-form standards to outstanding.

At the end of key stage 4 during 2008-2010, nearly all pupils left school with a recognised qualification. This was better than the national average for two of the last three years. At the end of Year 11 in 2010, all pupils continued their full-time education in school, further education or in work-based training. At the end of Year 13, most students continued in education and training. These are very good features.

Contrary to national trends, during 2008-2010, boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science on a few occasions in both key stage 3 and key stage 4. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is frequently less than the Wales figures.

Most pupils with additional learning needs make outstanding progress. Most show continuous improvement throughout the year groups and achieve very good qualifications. Able and talented learners perform very well. Free school meals' pupils perform well.

A report on Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
18 January 2011

Overall, in nearly all the lessons observed, most learners make very good progress. They listen exceptionally well, speak clearly and express their views confidently. Their reading and writing skills are good or better. The standards of pupils' communication, numeracy and information technology skills are good or better in key stage 3. In key stage 4 and in the sixth form these skills are outstanding and have impacted very positively on results especially in 2010. The school is one of a very few nationally where nearly all students gain a level 3 qualification in numeracy skills. Collectively, these features are outstanding.

In Welsh first language, pupils' achievement in key stage 3 and key stage 4 is outstanding over a three-year period. Results at both key stages are above the family and national averages on all occasions. Learners' reading and writing skills are of a high order. Their bilingual skills are outstanding.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Nearly all learners feel very safe in school and receive very good personal support. The very few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Nearly all learners are considerate, courteous and behave in an exemplary manner. The family ethos of the school is superb. These positive features have resulted in very few fixed term and no permanent exclusions over the last three years. These are outstanding features.

Most learners have a comprehensive understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and have very positive attitudes towards exercise and diet. The percentage of learners participating in fitness, sporting and related extra-curricular activities is exceptionally high and well above the national average.

Pupils' attendance levels are very good and are in the top 25% when compared with similar schools. The school's attendance rates were the best within its family of schools during the last three years.

In nearly all lessons observed, learners work very well with each other and make very good progress. Their attitude to learning is very good. Learners' concentration levels are exemplary.

An outstanding feature of the school's life is the varied and wide range of opportunities available to learners to participate in the community of the school and further afield. The school council, year council, Eco-group and others make very purposeful contributions to the decision-making processes in the school. Students attend governing body meetings.

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Key Question 2: How good is provision? | Excellent |
|---|------------------|

Learning experiences: Excellent

The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum and ensures that appropriate time is given to cover National Curriculum and religious education requirements. The school plans extremely well in order that all pupils' needs are

A report on Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
18 January 2011

catered for whatever their ability. Most teachers work collaboratively within the school and with outside partners.

In key stage 3, through excellent co-operation with partner primary schools, the school curriculum builds positively on existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

In key stages 4 and the sixth form, the school offers all pupils and students a wide range of general and vocational courses. The school's collaboration with Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe in particular, but also with other local providers, is outstanding. Close co-operation has ensured continuity and progression in a range of subjects, rigorous assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, and successful timetabling to ensure that pupils are able to follow their chosen pathway. The school far exceeds the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure. It has made very good progress in implementing Learning Pathways 14-19.

Preparation for adult life is excellent. Work related education is an integral part of the personal social and health education curriculum throughout the key stages and the quality of the programmes of study is of a very high standard.

Provision for delivery of key skills in key stage 3 is very good. The content and implementation of the skills' course in Year 7 is very successful in encouraging pupils to become more effective learners. The skills' provision in key stage 4 and the sixth form is also of a high standard.

Basic skills' provision is very good with opportunities afforded for extra help in literacy and numeracy. The more able and talented pupils are recognized and challenged through creative strategies such as master classes in Swansea University, early entry for some GCSE subjects and challenging teaching and learning strategies which develop critical thinking .

Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. The variety of opportunities available to learners is well above expectations and all are encouraged to take part. There is a very good mix of sporting and fitness activities, music activities, drama productions and clubs in a variety of subjects. The school responds positively to opportunities for learners to work with organizations.

Provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension within the school is excellent. Through strategies such as the Welsh Baccaulaureate, assemblies, co-operation with Menter Iaith Abertawe and the Urdd, learners are made very well aware of the advantages and importance of bilingualism. The Welsh dimension within schemes of work across the school is good.

Sustainable development and global citizenship are promoted successfully by the school.

Teaching: Excellent

Within the sample of lessons observed, all teachers plan lessons well using their subject knowledge to inform their lesson plans. A wide range of teaching strategies is employed very effectively. All lessons have good pace and challenge, with clear aims

and objectives. All learners are continuously engaged. Teachers conduct very effective plenary sessions to ensure learners' progress. The reinforcement of skills in lessons is a notable feature. Members of support staff are deployed very effectively.

Relationships between all learners and teachers are excellent, and classroom behaviour is exemplary.

The quality and consistency of marking is excellent. Books are marked regularly with informative and diagnostic comments given to pupils. The regular assessment tasks are of high quality and provide opportunities for detailed targets for improvement. Effective strategies are in place to ensure that any missing work is completed promptly.

A variety of effective strategies are in place to ensure that self-assessment and peer-assessment is well embedded throughout the school.

Learners are very well informed about their progress. There is a comprehensive, easily accessible and consistent tracking system which ensures that under achievement is identified early. Strategies to remedy the situation are discussed with learners. All learners have a very good grasp of their current levels of performance and what is required of them to improve.

Reports to parents are of a very high standard. Parents receive an interim and end-of-year report. Both provide clear information on learners' progress, effort, behaviour, and identify specific targets for improvement. Parents are encouraged to comment freely on any matter of concern both on the reports and at parents' evenings.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is a happy and caring inclusive community. Learners' enjoyment and involvement in school life are outstanding features. Well-designed personal and social education arrangements, including careers education, contribute effectively to pupils' wellbeing. The school promotes healthy eating and healthy lifestyles and is on phase 4 of the Healthy Schools' initiative. The commitment of numerous staff to extra-curricular activities is an outstanding feature.

Learning experiences throughout the school offer stimulating opportunities to promote learners' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Learners' involvement in Welsh cultural and community activities is extensive.

The school provides very good impartial careers advice and guidance for all learners. It also guides pupils very well to make their subject choices.

The school enjoys close and very effective working relationships with parents and carers. The school listens carefully to parents and carers and takes their views fully into consideration. Regular learner questionnaires and the school council ensure that learners have a voice in the decision-making process.

Learners make very good use of professional support from within the school. The school liaises very effectively with outside agencies.

A report on Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
18 January 2011

A member of the senior management team is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and all members of staff are fully trained.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding. The school has appropriate systems for identifying pupils' additional learning needs working closely with partner primary schools. There are robust systems and strategies to monitor and support pupils, and give them access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are included well in the school community.

Individual education plans are comprehensive. Multi-disciplinary agencies work in partnership with the school to ensure pupils are very well supported. Parents of pupils with additional learning needs are kept well informed and are fully involved with their child's education.

Those gifted and talented pupils in a particular subject area are targeted and supported very well within that subject.

Learning environment: Good

The school's ethos reflects its fully inclusive and open policies. This exceptional family orientated ethos is based on the implementation of policies which respect the rights of each individual within the school community. Equal opportunity underpins the work of the school with every learner having equal access to all areas of the curriculum.

The school ensures that all learners have the opportunity to fully develop their academic and social skills. A very positive learning atmosphere permeates all aspects of the school environment.

The accommodation is sufficient to deliver all aspects of an extensive curriculum and has significantly improved since the last inspection. Displays of pupils' work of high quality are found in most classrooms and corridors. They provide a stimulating and positive environment for learning.

The school buildings and grounds are well maintained. Toilet and changing facilities are in good order.

| |
|--|
| Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management? |
|--|

| |
|------------------|
| Excellent |
|------------------|

Leadership: Excellent

The leadership of the headteacher is an outstanding feature. She has a clear vision for the school and is very well supported by other members of the senior management team and most subject leaders. Together they have a clear and strong commitment to school improvement. They set high expectations which are

A report on Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
18 January 2011

communicated very effectively through the coherent management and committee structures to all staff.

The school's strategic direction is clearly communicated through its plans and policies. Analysis of performance clearly identifies areas for improvement, and the senior management team and most leaders have drawn up clear strategies to address any shortcomings. The regular review of action points identified has ensured that the school's high standards and successful learning culture are maintained and further developed.

Well-structured performance management arrangements help identify appropriate targets for individual and whole-school training development needs. The school has been successful in supporting training needs for all staff through collaboration with a number of Welsh-medium schools and in-house training.

The progress made by the school in addressing national and local priorities is an outstanding feature. The school has successfully developed 14-19 provision, the Welsh Baccalaureate at key stage 4 and sixth form and an extensive transition programme.

Very good progress has been made in addressing the Transformation Agenda and implementing the recommendations of the School Effectiveness Framework.

Governors are very supportive and have a high profile in the school. They have a good understanding of how the school is performing and are aware of key issues. In recent years, the work of the governing body was instrumental in establishing the very successful partnership with Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe in providing wider provision through the medium of Welsh for 14-19 learners. Through the work of the curriculum sub-committee, the role of the governors as 'critical friends' is developing well. They fulfil their legal and regulatory duties.

Improving quality: Excellent

The school's self-evaluation process is very effectively embedded in strategic planning. This has had a very positive impact on the school's success in the standards achieved and the initiatives planned and implemented to move the school forward.

The school and most subject self-evaluation reports are detailed and accurate. They are based on the rigorous evaluation of data on standards and a range of first-hand evidence. All reports have used the new Inspection Framework very effectively to analyse the progress made and identify priorities for improvement.

The self-evaluation process is very well informed as to the school's strengths and areas for development through a range of robust procedures. These include senior management thematic surveys, book surveys at all levels and peer sharing of good practice.

The school and most subject leaders link the conclusions of self-evaluation very effectively to set priorities for improvement. In the school's and most subject

improvement plans, there is a clear focus on raising standards, quality of learning and shared leadership. Most plans identify measurable and suitably challenging targets, specific strategies for implementation and detailed success criteria.

Regular dialogue between the senior management team, subject and progress leaders, and teachers ensures the success of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The school succeeds in regularly taking account of the views of learners, parents and the school council. In many cases these opinions have resulted in positive changes.

The school is very successful in identifying the professional development needs of all staff. Through the comprehensive performance management procedures, clear training needs are identified. The school has been very successful in securing innovative training opportunities for all teachers and in developing many professional learning communities. The development of these wide-ranging opportunities for teachers to share good practice and discuss other strategies for teaching and learning is an outstanding feature of the work of the school.

The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations identified in the previous inspection.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has developed very effective joint strategies and working practices with partner primary schools. These ensure excellent progression and continuity between key stage 2 and key stage 3. The partnership initiative with Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe as part of the 14-19 strategy is innovative and highly effective.

There are effective well-established quality assurance procedures in place to assess learners' progress and to keep courses under regular review.

The joint working practices with external agencies, businesses, the voluntary sector and local colleges have significantly enriched the opportunities available to all learners. The sharing of resources has led to an extremely cost-effective delivery of provision.

Resource management: Excellent

The school is appropriately staffed to deliver effectively the extensive curricular programme. It meets the statutory requirements in respect of the national agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload'. This has enabled the school to reduce substantially the administrative workload of the teaching staff. This reduction has led to significant improvements in providing additional planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers. This is reflected in the high standards achieved by learners. All support staff provide outstanding assistance to teachers and learners.

The school makes excellent and effective use of its allocated resources which are well matched to learners' needs.

The management and control of the allocated budget by the finance sub-committee, assistant headteacher and the bursar demonstrate outstanding features. The rigorous systematic planning, implementation, monitoring and review of the available budget ensure a high degree of cost effectiveness in all aspects of the school's expenditure and investment. The school ensures a very close relationship between the use of resources and the school's identified areas for development.

The school provides excellent value for money through the achievements of its learners, rigorous management of resources, extremely cost-effective delivery of the curriculum and its positive partnership links.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report:

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 48 responses to parent questionnaires which is a low figure.

All parents were happy with the support given to their child to settle in well to the new school.

Most were satisfied overall with the school as expectations were high; their child was safe and happy. Children are developed as responsible individuals to achieve their full potential. They are given appropriate homework.

Whilst over 80% were satisfied with all other aspects of school life, many were of the opinion that their child received appropriate additional support in relation to their particular needs and were prepared well for moving to the next school or college. Many parents think that the school is well run.

Whilst many parents think that pupils behave well, a few express concern.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received 157 responses from learners.

All learners state that they feel safe in school and most say that they are doing well. Most have enough resources and the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds. There is more than sufficient support available. Most are encouraged to be responsible and become independent learners.

Most learners say that the school deals well with bullying. There are many opportunities to get regular exercise and the school teaches many how to keep fit.

Many learners state that the school listens to their views; homework helps them to understand and improve their work and pupils behave well in class. However, a minority of pupils in key stage 4 disagree with these views.

A report on Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
18 January 2011

Many pupils say that staff treat them with respect and give good advice in planning for the future.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| William Gwyn Thomas | Reporting Inspector |
| Glyn Davies | Team Inspector |
| Huw Llewelyn | Team Inspector |
| Bethan Whittall | Team Inspector |
| Gwynoro Jones | Lay Inspector |
| Heather Lewis | Peer Inspector |
| Llinos John | School Nominee |

Contractor:

EPPC/Severn Crossing Ltd
Suite F2A Britannic House
Britannic Way
Llandarcy
Neath
SA10 6JQ

Copies of the report

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

Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

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 |