



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 Bryn Castell
Llangewydd Road
Cefn Glas
Bridgend
CF31 4JP**

Date of inspection: February 2013

by

**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.

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Context

Ysgol Bryn Castell is a day special school maintained by Bridgend County Borough Council. The school provides education for pupils from seven to 19 years of age with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and additional learning needs. In this context it is not possible to compare the school's performance with national averages, as there is no benchmark data available.

Nearly all pupils live within the county borough of Bridgend. Provision is made for the majority of pupils on the site of a previous residential school in Bridgend. The other pupils attend three satellite resource base provisions in mainstream schools in the borough.

At the time of the inspection the school educated 104 pupils ranging from key stage 2 to post-16 on the main site, 10 key stage 2 pupils at Maes Yr Haul Primary school, 12 key stage 3 and 4 pupils at Bryntirion Comprehensive School and 39 key stage 3 and 4 pupils at Cynffig Comprehensive School.

Forty-nine per cent of the total school population have a statement of special educational needs and 8% have 'looked-after child' status. English is the predominant language of nearly all pupils. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. Two per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups and no pupils receive support for English as an additional language. Forty-seven per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is higher than the all-Wales average of 43% for special schools.

The school's motto is 'together we can achieve' and the school's aim is to create a school environment in which each pupil can feel safe and secure and be well prepared for his or her future.

The present headteacher has been in post for three years and the deputy headteacher for two years.

Following the inspection in 2007 the school was subject to significant improvement from 2007 to 2008 and special measures between 2008 and 2009.

The resource bases at Bryntirion Comprehensive School and Cynffig Comprehensive School have recently been subject to separate inspection arrangements.

This inspection was based on Ysgol Bryn Castell's main site with visits to the resource bases at Maes Yr Haul Primary School, Bryntirion Comprehensive School and Cynffig Comprehensive School.

For the purpose of this report, the term 'school' will refer to the main site. However, teaching includes lessons observed on the main site and in the resource bases at Maes Yr Haul Primary School and Cynffig Comprehensive School.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol Bryn Castell is a good school because:

- leaders have high expectations and ensure that the school functions effectively;
- pupils achieve good standards in their learning;
- pupils behave very well;
- teaching is good;
- levels of care, support and guidance are high and allow pupils to access learning effectively;
- leaders monitor staff performance carefully; and
- the school has strong partnerships.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement in Ysgol Bryn Castell are good because:

- the headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by all staff;
- staff work effectively as a team and have high expectations of the pupils;
- leaders have a strong commitment to continuous school improvement;
- staff performance is managed very carefully and is used effectively to identify whole school training and development needs; and
- the school manages its resources well and provides good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the role of the governing body in challenging the work of the school
- R2 Continue to develop an effective and purposeful assessment system that is used consistently and effectively throughout the school
- R3 Ensure that individual education plans (IEPs) always identify appropriate numeracy and literacy targets
- R4 Effectively monitor the programme of sex education to make sure that it meets the individual needs of all pupils
- R5 Make sure that marking always helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work
- R6 Improve pupils' Welsh Language development

What happens next?

The school 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

Pupils who attend the school have a range of difficulties. These include social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and other additional learning needs.

The effective support systems and good modelling of staff enable pupils to learn valuable strategies to improve their behaviour and their learning. Pupils make good progress, across the school, in relation to their individual needs and abilities. There is no significant difference between the progress of groups of pupils, for example those who are 'looked after' by a local authority or those who receive free school meals.

In nearly all lessons, pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite and attentive and make good progress. They contribute enthusiastically in lessons, take pride in their learning and congratulate each other on their successes.

Presentation of pupils' work is consistently of a high standard. Pupils are able to recall prior learning and are increasingly confident in writing for different purposes. More able pupils are able to express themselves well using an appropriate range of language.

Due to the whole school approach to raising standards of literacy, pupils develop and improve their reading and spelling skills appropriately. Pupils are becoming more confident in reading aloud in class.

Pupils are developing their number skills well. This includes handling data and using and applying appropriate mathematical concepts such as number calculations and simple additions. More able pupils can interpret data successfully and evaluate their work effectively. For example, they are developing good investigative skills in science. In a few lessons pupils use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. However, pupils do not always transfer their numeracy and ICT skills effectively across other subjects.

All pupils, from Year 7 onwards, follow a wide range of accredited courses. Examples include food studies, sport and leisure and ICT. Older pupils follow individual vocational learning pathways and gain an appropriate range of qualifications. These include horticulture, painting and decorating and health and safety. Courses are accredited at different levels and they include Open College Network level 1 and level 2, ASDAN, WJEC entry Level qualifications and GCSE.

Over the last three years an increasing number of pupils have accessed post-16 provision at the school. Many leavers at key stage 4 have moved on to further education, training or employment. The number of pupils not engaged in education, training or employment has reduced. Over the past three years all leavers at post-16 moved on to further education.

Pupils have good opportunities to experience the world of work, for example in local garages, catering, environmental projects and youth work.

Pupils' progress in developing their skills in Welsh is adequate. Few pupils use incidental Welsh confidently.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel safe in school and engage well in lessons. They show courtesy and respect to staff and behave very well. They show pride in their work and feel very much part of the school community.

Pupils develop the skills that they need to get on well with others during the school day. Nearly all pupils say that the school deals effectively with bullying and they know whom to talk to if they are worried.

Almost all pupils agree that they have good opportunities for regular exercise and most pupils engage in these activities. They feel that the school teaches them to be healthy.

Pupils express their opinions well and actively contribute to planning what and how they learn. They feel valued and supported by the school staff.

The school council plays a useful role in making decisions that affect the life of the school. This includes establishing a netball team, improving the quality and choice of school meals and reducing litter around the site. Members of the school council have been actively involved in recent staff appointments.

Pupils' attendance improves as they progress through the school with many pupils making a significant improvement. A few pupils do not attend regularly due to medical conditions and this impacts on the overall figures. The school is developing good strategies to improve attendance. This includes employing a full time Home School Liaison Officer to work with families and pupils.

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

The school provides a wide range of learning experiences that are well matched to the needs of the pupils at all key stages. The school groups pupils carefully so that they can learn effectively.

The school makes good provision for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. The comprehensive schemes of work and detailed lesson plans clearly identify how pupils will develop these skills. Practical activities help pupils to develop their thinking skills, in and outside the classroom. However, the opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy and ICT skills effectively across all areas of the curriculum are not as well developed.

Provision for the Welsh dimension, such as the annual Eisteddfod and cultural visits to the Senedd and Big Pit, helps pupils to understand the culture and history of Wales. However, opportunities to develop pupils' Welsh oral skills are insufficient across the school.

Pupils in key stage 4 and post-16 have access to a wide range of accredited courses. These include GCSE, WJEC entry Level, ASDAN and Agored Cymru. All pupils access a well-planned vocational programme, linked to the 14-19 partnership, with other schools and a local college. This includes pupils from other schools accessing courses such as horticulture and customer services at Ysgol Bryn Castell. The school plays a leading role within the wider partnership for 14-19 provision. This extends the opportunities for post-16 provision across the local authority.

The school's 'Cwpan Fach' café is run by students as part of the post-16 provision. Pupils have access to a wide range of activities within the community. These include cultural visits, visits to local shops and work experience. The school is also effectively developing an exciting partnership with a multinational company to provide an appropriate manufacturing environment for pupils on site.

The school successfully promotes education for sustainable development and global citizenship through activities such as recycling, gardening and links with other countries through the Comenius Project. The school has recently won a silver medal in the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower show with an eco-garden display.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is good or better in most lessons and teachers and support staff work very well as a team. Staff have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour in lessons. They have very good relationships with the pupils and extensive knowledge of their individual needs and abilities.

Teachers plan lessons effectively and offer a range of learning strategies to stimulate and challenge pupils to achieve. They match the work carefully to pupils' abilities. They use a wide range of resources including interactive whiteboards to hold pupils' interest. Staff give good verbal feedback and encouragement to pupils.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. In a few subjects they use written feedback very effectively to inform pupils about their progress and to identify areas for improvement. However, marking does not always explain clearly to pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

In a few lessons where teaching is excellent, teachers provide an extensive range of engaging activities that meets pupils' individual needs and abilities very effectively. Pupils are fully engaged and challenged to move forward with their learning.

In the few lessons where teaching is judged only as adequate, lessons lack appropriate pace and challenge and there is little feedback to pupils about their performance.

The school uses a wide range of assessment tools appropriate to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Staff use data to capture pupils' progress and plan further learning opportunities effectively. Lesson plans take good account of pupils' individual targets. However, assessment data is not always used consistently throughout the school.

Parents and carers are well informed of the progress their children are making.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a high level of care, support and guidance.

The school has appropriate policies and provision to promote pupils' health and wellbeing which include an extensive range of physical exercise and outdoor activities. The learning experiences promote pupils' personal development effectively, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Effective behaviour management plans and procedures ensure that behaviour is very good throughout the school. The school is developing appropriate strategies to improve attendance. It has employed a full time home school liaison officer to work with families and pupils. It also works well with other agencies and has successfully run family learning projects to encourage parental engagement.

The school employs a full-time speech and language therapist and a basic skills learning support officer. They work closely together to identify appropriately the individual needs of pupils. This provision is impacting positively on pupils' wellbeing and progress in learning.

The school has an appropriate programme for personal, social and health education. However, it is not monitored well enough to ensure that the sex and relationships programme always meets the needs of all pupils, including those new to the school.

The school works closely with a wide range of outside agencies and specialist services. These include the Educational Psychology Service, the Bridgend Counselling Service, Careers Wales and the West Glamorgan Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

The school meets statutory requirements for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs and the provision for meeting pupils' additional learning needs is good. Individual education plans (IEPs) identify targets and are reviewed every half term. However, they do not always identify appropriate numeracy and literacy targets and a minority of the targets are not sufficiently measurable.

Pupils and parents receive appropriate guidance and information regarding their education, wellbeing and post-school provision. All pupils have the appropriate support of learning coaches including through specialist interventions such as the Living Well Scheme, the Student Assistance Programme and Careers Wales.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a positive and supportive ethos, which is promoted by all staff. It provides a caring, inclusive community in which pupils are respected and have equal access to all areas of school life.

The school community places strong emphasis on recognising and respecting diversity.

The accommodation is well maintained and provides a welcoming learning environment to support the teaching and learning. Displays around the school and in classrooms promote and celebrate the achievement of pupils.

Learning resources are sufficient to meet the pupils' individual learning needs and the requirements of the curriculum. Classrooms have a suitable range of ICT equipment.

The school has an appropriate range of specialist teaching areas such as the sports hall, science rooms and design and technology rooms. Older buildings and outside areas are utilised well, for example to provide the post-16 common room area, the school cafe and post-16 courses such as horticulture.

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

The headteacher has a clear, strategic vision to move Ysgol Bryn Castell forward. He has established an effective leadership structure and sought to include everyone in sharing the vision and direction for the school.

Members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders have clear roles and responsibilities, which focus effectively on school improvement targets. They work well across the school, have high expectations of staff and pupils and increasingly support and challenge colleagues.

The school's plans and policies focus appropriately on meeting pupils' needs and raising standards. Teachers and support staff work effectively as a team and communication throughout the school is a strong feature.

Staff in each of the three satellite resource bases ensure good day-to-day management of the bases. They work well with their host school to promote very effective inclusive practices.

The governing body shares the school's vision and is supportive of the school. Governors meet regularly and have appropriate sub-committees in place. However, they do not appropriately challenge and hold the school to account for the standards and quality it achieves.

Staff performance is monitored regularly, and evaluated through an inclusive and effective performance management and appraisal system.

The school uses performance management and appraisal procedures effectively to identify whole school training and development needs. This enables the school to meet the individual, specific and changing needs of the pupils in order to raise standards. However, opportunities for peer observation and sharing good practice within the school are not well-developed.

The school meets both local and national priorities effectively. This includes the local authority's priorities for special schools and the School's Effectiveness Framework agenda.

Improving quality: Good

The school's leadership team takes responsibility for self-evaluation and effectively uses a range of evidence as part of the process.

All staff and pupils contribute effectively to the process and the self-evaluation report is based on an appropriate range of data. However, it is too descriptive and not detailed and evaluative enough.

The school seeks and values the views of parents and an appropriate range of stakeholders. Views of stakeholders contribute to self-evaluation through regular questionnaires, training events and annual reviews with parents and carers.

The school successfully links the outcomes of self-evaluation to a detailed plan for school improvement. The plan appropriately identifies time lines, responsibilities, costs and monitoring measures.

Performance management is well embedded in the school. Outcomes are used well to identify further areas for training and development for school staff. The school has appropriate support systems in place. All staff access a wide range of courses, which impacts positively on improving standards and the wellbeing of pupils.

The school is developing and using a wide range of data to monitor the progress of individual pupils over time. However, data does not inform school improvement well enough and its use to measure progress of all pupils is not fully developed.

The school has established effective networks of professional practice within the last two years for moving literacy and the key stage 3 curriculum forward. This has helped in securing measurable improvements in these areas. The school has established effective networks with other special schools, mainstream schools and partners.

The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations of the last inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established good partnerships with special and mainstream schools, the community, parents and carers. The headteacher has created key roles within the school to ensure partnership work is effective. These partnerships are having a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and standards.

Parents and carers are involved in decisions about their children's education and are well informed about their progress. They value the support they get from the school. This includes school initiatives such as the family learning programme.

The school works effectively with a number of outside organisations to provide pupils with valuable learning experiences, support and resources. Links with the youth service and Careers Wales are examples of good partnership work.

The school is taking a prominent role in developing collaborative practices for the delivery of provision for pupils at post-16. The school has established trust and clear communication between partners to achieve this.

Pupils receive appropriate advice and guidance within the 14-19 Framework for moving on to further education or the world of work. Links with local businesses successfully promote the pupils' social development and their understanding of the world of work.

Resource management: Good

The school has a good range of experienced, specialist teachers and other staff who are deployed effectively to meet the individual needs of the pupils.

Staff have appropriate planning, preparation and assessment time. This enables them to be effective in ensuring that the pupils are provided with a wide variety of learning experiences.

Professional development opportunities are identified effectively through the performance management procedures and are well matched to the school's targets.

Resources are of good quality and used appropriately to match the interest and abilities of the pupils.

Areas of the school, such as the post-16 area, have been well designed to ensure that they meet the needs of older pupils.

The school's financial management is effective. In view of the good standards achieved by the pupils, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty-one parents completed questionnaires and they are all satisfied or very satisfied with the school and feel that it is well run. They all agree that the teaching is good. Nearly all parents agree or strongly agree that their child feels safe in school, likes the school and is making good progress. All parents agree or strongly agree that their child was helped to settle in at the start and receives appropriate additional support in relation to their individual needs. Almost all parents feel that pupils behave well in school and that staff expect them to work hard. All agree that pupils are treated fairly and with respect and that the school encourages them to take on responsibility, be healthy and take regular exercise. Nearly all parents feel that the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress. A few parents do not feel that their child is well prepared for moving onto the next school or college or place of work.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Sixty-one pupils responded to the questionnaire and, overall, are very positive about their school. All pupils agree that teachers help them to learn and they feel safe in school. A few pupils do not feel that the school deals well with bullying. Nearly all pupils agree that they are doing well at school, have someone to talk to if they are worried and have enough books and equipment. Nearly all pupils agree that they have plenty of opportunities to exercise regularly and most pupils feel that the school teaches them to be healthy. A few do not agree that pupils behave well so that they can get their work done.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Meinir Rees	Reporting Inspector
Huw Davies	Team Inspector
Alec Clarke	Team Inspector
Michael Ridout	Team Inspector
Bernard Harrington	Lay Inspector
Wayne Murphy	Peer Inspector
Helen Ridout	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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 ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment