



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 Gymraeg y Ffin
Caldicot
Monmouthshire
NP26 4NQ**

Date of inspection: March 2011

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 Gymraeg y Ffin is situated in Caldicot, Monmouthshire. The school is a designated Welsh medium school that serves an area which includes the surrounding community and neighbouring areas. The school was established in 2001 and moved to the current building in 2008.

The vast majority of the pupils come from a catchment that the school describes as neither being prosperous nor disadvantaged. Eleven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is considerably lower than the national percentage.

Welsh is used as a teaching medium throughout the school, with English being introduced as a subject in key stage 2, with the aim of pupils being bilingual by the end of their time at the school.

At the time of the inspection, there were 101 pupils (full-time equivalent) between three and 11 years of age on the register, compared with 46 at the time of the last inspection in 2005. Approximately 4% of pupils come from homes where Welsh is the main language, and approximately a third of pupils come from homes where one parent speaks Welsh. Twenty per cent of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

The current headteacher has been in post since 2004.

The individual school budget per head in 2010-2011 for Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin is £4,153, compared to a maximum of £14,200 and a minimum of £2,965 for primary schools in Monmouthshire. The school's budget per pupil is the ninth highest of the 34 primary schools in Monmouthshire.

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 make appropriate progress during their time at the school;
- the behaviour of most pupils is good and a majority show motivation;
- the school provides a range of rich experiences for the pupils; and
- the general standard of teaching is good.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and managers have a clear vision for developing the school, which is communicated effectively;
- managers and leaders promote positive values that recognise the contributions of pupils and staff;
- there is an effective link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation procedure and the school's strategic planning; and
- the governing body has a clear understanding of the school's performance.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 ensure that staff expectations are consistent throughout the school;
- R2 continue to develop the provision for the more able pupils;
- R3 ensure that management responsibilities are distributed amongst the staff;
- R4 refine the self-evaluation arrangements in order to include monitoring and evaluating the teaching; and
- R5 refine the priorities in the school improvement plan.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address these recommendations. The local authority will monitor the implementation of the action plan.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

When they start at the school, the children's abilities vary. However, almost all pupils make appropriate progress during their time at the school and achieve standards that are appropriate to their age and ability. Data shows that there is a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls across both key stages. However, this is not apparent in their work or in their performance in the lessons observed during the inspection. Pupils on the additional learning needs register, from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who are entitled to free school meals make appropriate progress.

Overall, most pupils' Welsh skills are good, considering their linguistic background. In the Foundation Phase, they understand and respond well to a wide range of questions and simple instructions. The best show innovation in their oral skills. By the end of key stage 2, the majority speak correctly and confidently. Overall, pupils' writing skills develop appropriately throughout the school. Most pupils' reading skills are good and the best read correctly and confidently, with expression. Pupils' knowledge of Welsh history, geography, music and art is sound.

The English skills of the majority of pupils in key stage 2 are also good. The majority speak confidently, read correctly and write in an interesting manner, with the best of the older pupils being able to write extensively, using a wide range of media.

All pupils have the skills to enable them to participate fully in every aspect of the wider curriculum, as appropriate to their age and ability.

Pupils' standards in the classes in key stage 1 are higher than the standards that are reflected in the data. Their targets for this year support this.

Since 2007, pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has varied in each of the core subjects (Welsh, mathematics and science) and also in the core subject indicator (the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level in the three subjects combined). The school's results have varied compared to the average of the family of similar schools and the average for Wales. When comparing the school's results with those of schools that have a similar percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school's position has varied during the last four years between the top 25% and the bottom 25% in each of the core subjects. The school was in the bottom 25% for the core subject indicator and each core subject in 2010. The percentage who achieve level 3 in Welsh, mathematics and science overall, compares favourably with the averages for the family of similar schools and Wales.

There has been an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving core subject indicator in key stage 2 during the last four years. The results in 2010 were lower than in 2009 and 2008. However, during the last three years, the proportion achieving the core subject indicator has been higher than the average of the family of

similar schools and the average for Wales, except in 2008 when it was slightly lower than the family average. When comparing the school's results with those of schools which have a similar percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school's position has varied over the last four years between the top 25% and the bottom 50% in each of the core subjects in key stage 2. In 2010, a third of relevant pupils achieved level 5 in English, which is higher than the family and Welsh averages. Sixteen per cent achieved level 5 in Welsh, which is higher than the family average but lower than the Welsh average. The percentage that achieved level 5 in mathematics and science was lower than the family and Welsh averages.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and in the playground. The majority show motivation and they take pride in their work. Almost all pupils enjoy learning and, on the whole, they take an active part in their own learning.

Most pupils feel safe at school and they have a clear understanding of how to keep healthy. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating and exercise for their personal and educational development. The school's older pupils conscientiously take turns when caring for the younger pupils at different times of the day.

The school's attendance rate during the last three terms is above 95%, which is higher than the national rate and in the top 25% compared to that of similar schools in terms of free school meals in 2009-2010. Through the effective work of the school council and other school procedures, various groups of pupils appreciate and enjoy frequent opportunities to contribute to the life and development of the school. As a result, they develop confidence and positive attitudes and they treat other children and adults with respect. The majority have mature attitudes, which is a good basis for developing their life skills further. They also develop their confidence by taking part in a number of activities in the wider community, such as the annual carol service in the Methodist church in Chepstow and the Urdd's annual Sunday Service.

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

The school plans and provides a rich variety of interesting learning experiences that satisfy pupils' needs well and successfully includes the requirements of the curriculum. Developing the pupils' literacy, communication, numeracy and information technology skills is given prominence in schemes of work throughout the school. Learning activities include specific tasks that have been planned to close the gap between the performance of boys and girls. Teachers prepare differentiated activities for pupils in the majority of lessons observed. At its best, this is effective, but it does not always satisfy the needs of the more able and talented pupils. The provision for developing the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension underpins all of the school's activities and is one of its strengths. Interesting tasks are provided to pupils to write extensively in Welsh and English.

Teachers provide varied and interesting opportunities enthusiastically in order to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding of Welsh history, geography, music

and art through thematic work. The provision for developing global citizenship is sound and is fully embedded in the life of the school across the curriculum and through the activities of the school council and eco-council. The school operates in a sustainable manner and pupils are given frequent opportunities to improve their community.

Teaching: Good

Overall, the standard of teaching is good across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a firm understanding of the needs of different groups and individuals in their class. Almost without exception, teachers and classroom assistants work effectively together to support the teaching and to develop pupils' skills individually or in groups.

In the best lessons, there is a suitable pace, interesting and challenging tasks, probing questions and a constructive working relationship between the teacher and pupil that fosters respect and courtesy. The supportive ethos and active atmosphere are evident in most classes. Overall, teachers have high expectations; however, this is not always the case for the older pupils. Information and communication technology is used effectively as a teaching medium throughout the school.

The school has effective assessment systems that summarise pupils' progress. Teachers use this procedure effectively. A computerised tracking system is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress throughout the school, including the more able pupils and those who are likely to underachieve by the end of the key stage. There are good examples of detailed marking and a constructive response to pupils' work, which helps them to understand how to develop their written work. Teachers across the school enable pupils to set their own targets for improvement. The school provides parents with dedicated written reports each year on their children's progress.

Assessment for learning strategies are successfully embedded in the school. Strategies such as 'thumbs up' and 'traffic lights' are used to promote this with the younger pupils. The provision ensures that the majority of pupils concentrate on their work and develop into independent learners.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy environment that gives priority to children's welfare and safety. It has comprehensive procedures and close and effective links with specialist agencies, such as health and welfare services, the police, the school nurse, a counselling agency and social services. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinion and contribute effectively to developments within the school and to engage in activities in the local community.

There is appropriate provision for pupils' spiritual development in collective worship sessions. The school promotes the moral and social development of all its pupils daily by nurturing values such as fairness and respect in every activity. Learning experiences promote pupils' personal development well. Opportunities for developing empathy with other cultures in order to understand the differences

between people from different parts of the world are very effective. Many of the pupils are eager to raise money for charities such as the Haiti Appeal.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding children. All staff are aware of these and pupils know who to turn to when necessary.

There are also appropriate policies in place for additional learning needs and these are fully implemented. Effective arrangements exist to support all pupils who are identified as having additional learning needs. The school has identified more able and talented pupils. However, the provision has not yet been fully developed in order to stretch the most able pupils in every class.

Learning environment: Good

There is an extremely inclusive ethos at the school. The warm community among the headteacher, governors and pupils provides equal opportunities for pupils in all aspects of the school's provision. There is an emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

The school has a large site. The pupils themselves take part in planning the use of school areas, for example, the outdoor area. There are dedicated resources to meet learning needs and the school building and grounds are kept clean and tidy. Although there are dedicated areas in the Foundation Phase classes, the outdoor areas have not been fully developed.

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

Managers and leaders promote sound values that recognise the contributions of pupils and staff. They have a clear vision for the school which is conveyed effectively. However, the lack of a recognised management team and delegation of leadership responsibilities puts a significant burden of responsibilities on the headteacher.

Regular staff meetings concentrate appropriately on issues relating to improving performance, including priorities for improvement. In general, staff understand and fulfil their roles in relation to the school's aims and plans effectively. Data is used well to analyse and monitor performance.

The school has appropriate performance management arrangements that help staff to improve their practices. These arrangements lead to suitable targets that include training needs and individual development along with whole-school priorities. Arrangements extend appropriately to all teaching and support staff at the school.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's performance. Members understand the issues that arise by comparing performance with that of similar schools. The body contributes appropriately to self-evaluation arrangements and prioritising improvements. Members have a suitable range of experience and advantage is taken of training provision inside and outside the local authority to

develop relevant expertise. The body supports the school effectively as a critical friend and suitable arrangements are in place for reporting to parents and dealing with complaints.

The school has established the principles of the Foundation Phase well and appropriate plans are in place for further development in September 2011. The school develops some of the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework in its current development plan. Developing 'Grŵp Enfys' (Rainbow Group), namely provision to foster pupils' emotional welfare, has enriched pupils' welfare effectively.

Improving quality: Adequate

In general, self-evaluation arrangements are adequate and are embedded in the school's strategic planning. Comparative data is analysed effectively to identify priorities for improvement, along with standardised test results. Full consideration is given to continuous evaluations of pupils' welfare. Self-evaluation arrangements also give appropriate consideration to the opinions of pupils and parents, as well as the recommendations of officers from the local authority's education service. However, the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are not adequately developed within the plan.

Priorities for improvement that derive from the self-evaluation procedure link well with the school improvement plan and strategies for meeting the necessary improvements have been developed appropriately. These include a range of procedures that determine staff members' lead responsibility for co-ordinating them. They also include success indicators, specific timescales and a record of the allocated resources. However, the timetable of the work programme in the current improvement plan is too challenging to ensure appropriate progress against the substantial number of priorities that are included.

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

The school's involvement with professional learning communities is developing well. Involvement with a local network of four schools has made a beneficial contribution towards developing thinking skills and assessment for learning. This contributes effectively towards 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 support service, including the education welfare service and social services. During the last two years, there has been a particular focus on the partnership with the building services that led to re-modelling parts of the school. The school works closely with a university and local further education institutions to train teachers and support staff. It also accepts students and work experience pupils from three secondary schools.

The continuous contact with parents maintains the effective and supportive partnership that exists with them. Involving parents in plans such as promoting reading has a positive effect on standards. The partnership also benefits from parents' expert contributions towards enriching pupils' learning experiences. The school benefits financially and socially from the support of the active 'Ffrindiau'r Ffin' association.

The school plans jointly with a range of partners to deliver programmes that improve pupils' outcomes and welfare. For example, work with an association relating to safety on school transport led to a workshop that raised pupils' awareness of the dangers that can arise when travelling to school. Close links with the police service has increased pupils' awareness of the dangers associated with drugs and alcohol. Transition arrangements with the secondary school are good and include appropriate opportunities to jointly moderate pupils' work. An effective partnership has also been established with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and local playgroups. This ensures effective transition arrangements to the school's nursery classes.

Resource management: Good

The school is appropriately staffed to teach pupils and, in general, the time, expertise and experience of staff members are used effectively. Good use is made of learning assistants throughout the school, including in the Foundation Phase and in supporting pupils with additional learning needs. Teachers use planning, preparation and assessment time effectively and the school satisfies the statutory requirements relating to workload. In general, the school has a good supply of resources which are managed appropriately.

Funds for implementing the school's improvement needs are allocated effectively. Procedures for monitoring the school's budget are appropriate and help to ensure that all resources that are available to the school are allocated in a cost-effective way.

Considering the good standards and the use that is made of the budget allocated to it, the school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

The opinions of 49 pupils were received.

Almost all of them feel that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress.

Most feel safe at school and know whom to turn to when they are worried or upset. They also believe that the school teaches them how to stay healthy and that they are given many opportunities to exercise regularly. Most also feel that they are doing well at school and that there are enough books, equipment and computers available for them to do their work.

Many pupils believe that their homework helps them to understand and improve their school work and that the school deals with any instances of bullying. They also believe that other children behave well in lessons, at playtime and at lunch time, and they know what to do and whom to approach if they find the work difficult.

Responses to parent and carer questionnaires

The opinions of 32 parents were received.

Almost all parents and carers are satisfied with the school in general and feel that the school encourages its pupils to stay healthy and do regular exercise. Almost all of them feel that their child was supported to settle well when starting at the school.

Most state that the teaching is good, that their child enjoys school and makes good progress there. They also feel that staff have high expectations of the pupils, that the homework that is set builds well on what the pupils learn at school and that staff treat all the children fairly and with respect. They feel that their children are safe at school, that they feel comfortable asking questions, making suggestions or identifying problems and that the school helps their children become more mature and to take on responsibilities. Most also believe that the school provides a good variety of activities, including trips and visits.

Many parents and carers are satisfied that their child is given appropriate additional support with regard to any specific individual needs, and that they receive regular information about their child's progress. Many are also satisfied that they understand the school's procedure for dealing with any complaints, that their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school and that the school is well ran.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Huw Watkins	Reporting Inspector
Iwan Roberts	Team Inspector
Glenda Jones	Lay Inspector
Gwyneth Hughes	Peer Inspector
Diane Ebo	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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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