



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 Gynradd Maesincla
Maesincla
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1DF**

Date of inspection: June 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 Maesincla is located in the town of Caernarfon in Gwynedd, and has 270 pupils aged between 3 and 11 on the register, including nursery age children. The school is under the voluntary control of the Church in Wales.

The school serves the local urban community. The area is under considerable economic disadvantage and has been designated as an Objective One area. Almost all the pupils live in one of the 20% most disadvantaged areas in Wales. Forty-four per cent (44%) of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much higher than the national figure. Between 30% and 40% of the pupils are from one parent homes, and a few of the pupils in key stage 2 are young carers.

Ysgol Maesincla has the highest level of challenge in the family of schools. The level of free school meals is about twice as high as in every other school in the family.

Very few of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with 74% of the pupils speaking Welsh at home. Forty per cent (40%) of the pupils at the school are on the special educational needs register, which is higher than the national figure, with 4% being statemented.

The school has been part of a pilot scheme for the Foundation Phase. Because of that, there are no results of teacher assessments for seven year old pupils in 2010.

The present headteacher has been in post since September 1999.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Maesincla in 2010-2011 is £3,975 which compares with a maximum of £8,442 and a minimum of £2,717 for primary schools in Gwynedd. The school has the 32nd highest budget per pupil out of the 103 primary schools in Gwynedd.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- the pupils work well and take interest in their work and show high levels of motivation;
- attendance and standards of behaviour are very good;
- the learning experiences and the teaching relate well to the pupils' needs;
- effective systems have been established to track pupils' progress and provide additional support as needed; and
- an atmosphere of care and support pervades all of the school's life and work.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because of:

- the firm foundations that have been laid in relation to pupils' welfare;
- the continued commitment to improving support for vulnerable groups and satisfying pupils' needs;
- the pattern of significant improvement in the pupils' standards of literacy;
- the way in which the school works with a range of partners; and
- the appropriate priorities for further development in the school development plan.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 ensure further improvements in the pupils' standards of literacy;
- R2 improve boys' achievements;
- R3 spread the good practice in the quality of marking;
- R4 ensure that the planning for learning activities across the curriculum shows the progression and progress in the skills clearly; and
- R5 strengthen the self-evaluation arrangements, in order to address inconsistencies in the pupils' achievements in lessons and in their written work.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Progress against the recommendations will be monitored by the local authority.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Adequate

The pupils, including those who have free school meals, are making consistent progress, and, in general, achieve well in lessons according to their age and ability. This is a significant achievement, considering the high levels of deprivation and low skills of most of the children when they start at the school.

The pupils listen well to their teachers and respect one another's contributions. In general, they make clear progress in their speaking skills. They use Welsh naturally in the classes and when playing and communicating with one another. However, at times, pupils do not develop their ideas adequately as they are not challenged enough to think and improve the quality of their contributions. In a few lessons, pupils of greater ability do not achieve as well as they could because of a lack of challenge.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, pupils are writing a sequence of sentences in their own words and are showing a grasp of basic punctuation. During key stage 2, pupils make constant use of the web and other sources to search for information. They also make clear progress in their ability to write in an extended way for different purposes in Welsh and English. There has had been significant improvement in the achievements of pupils in writing at the end of key stage 2. In 2010, the percentage reaching level 4 or higher was very close to average of the family of schools. However, there is some inconsistency between classes in the quality of work in terms of the content and accuracy of expression.

In both key stages, pupils read aloud meaningfully and confidently in Welsh and English. There has been a pattern of great improvement during the last four years in the numbers of pupils who reach the expected level in reading at the end of key stage 2. However, the results of reading tests show that too many 11 year old pupils still have not made the expected progress in terms of accuracy of reading. Pupils who receive additional support make good progress.

Despite the increase in achievements at the end of key stage 2 during the last four years, the performance of pupils at seven and 11 years old continues to be among the lowest half or the lowest 25% in comparison with similar schools nationally and in the family of schools. Over a period of time, not enough pupils have reached the higher level at the end of key stages 1 and 2, although there has been improvement.

The boys do not do as well as girls, especially in reading and writing, at 11 years old. The boys' performance is significantly lower than expected, in comparison with the other schools in the family and national figures.

Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress in relation to their individual educational goals. Pupils who have a statement of special needs make

significant progress in terms of the national curriculum levels by the end of key stage 2.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Considering the high levels of deprivation and the pupils' range of needs, what the school achieves in pupils' development as complete and responsible individuals is considerable.

Nearly all the pupils feel safe in the school and agree that the school teaches them to stay healthy. Many of the pupils take advantage of the programme of extra-curricular sports activities.

Pupils' attendance compares very favourably with schools with similar levels of free school meals, and the school is among the highest 25%. Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate fully in its life and work. They are very proud of their school and very polite in their dealings with the school staff and visitors. The pupils show positive attitudes towards learning and an interest in their work. Standards of behaviour are very good, and the number of exclusions are low.

Pupils respond well to the opportunities to offer ideas and make decisions. The school council is active and commits itself enthusiastically to finding out the opinions of its fellow pupils. The council has played a leading part in its work to raise money towards the cost of creating a new kitchen for the school and raising the awareness of fellow pupils on how to eat healthily. Following the work of the sports council, pupils play an active part in organising the yard games and collecting feedback on after-school clubs. The eco committee leads the weekly recycling work and is part of the efforts to save energy and water.

Pupils who are part of the nurture group and the life skills group make considerable progress in their social and life skills. They express their feelings and concerns regularly and the school can show clear evidence of great improvement in the pupils' attitudes to learning and their self-image. The 'Ciw Clên' scheme in Year 6 nurtures the older pupils' care for others, and the pupils respond in a mature manner to their responsibilities in organising and leading yard games for the younger children.

Pupils show positive attitudes to improving their own learning and work together with a high level of maturity. Most of the pupils develop as independent learners and confident and responsible individuals with firm foundations being established for lifelong learning.

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

The range of learning experiences meets the needs of pupils, employees and the community successfully. The way in which learning experiences fulfil the specific needs of groups and individual pupils is a strength of the provision. The 'pleasant afternoons' for one afternoon a week in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is an excellent feature of the provision that is shared with other schools. This initiative

gives the pupils the opportunity to learn to use skills in a wide range of practical contexts, including cooking, orienteering, photography and producing cards of commercial standard as part of developing enterprise and business skills.

Schemes of work identify the subject skills and the key skills that will receive attention in the learning experiences. However, the progression in the skills is not identified clearly enough to ensure progress in the key skills in the work across the curriculum's subjects and learning areas. The curriculum, along with the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided, helps pupils to develop a range of personal and social skills.

Visits to the school by poets, artists in residence, actors and nationally famous people does much to promote a Welsh identity among the pupils. The Welsh dimension and visits as part of the learning themes are a core part of the provision and successfully promote the pupils' awareness of the local area.

A variety of activities and learning experiences contribute well to the pupils' awareness and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship. For example, the pupils grow vegetables and recycle paper and cardboard. The work to raise money for the 'Send a Cow' initiative, along with international themes, raises the pupils' awareness of the global dimension.

Teaching: Good

There is a good interrelationship between teachers and pupils and lessons are planned effectively to ensure that the pupils are working and making productive use of their time. The teachers offer good language models. Usually, learning tasks set appropriate expectations, although at times there is not sufficient challenge to ensure that more able pupils achieve as well as they can.

The teachers have good subject knowledge and they use a good range of learning methods and resources. Sometimes, there is not enough intervention to ensure progress in pupils' reading skills and their ability to think and reason. The way in which the school makes extensive use of learning assistants and their specialisms is a strong feature of the provision.

In lessons, teachers give clear guidance to pupils on what to do to succeed in their tasks and produce good work. Pupils have a good understanding of their personal targets. There are examples of thorough marking that shows the pupils clearly what to do to improve the standard of their work. But in general, there is too much variation in the quality of the marking.

A variety of strategies are in place to track pupils' progress and to provide information which is used well to help pupils who need additional support.

Parents receive good information on their children's progress and constant opportunities to discuss with teachers.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The care for pupils' welfare and their personal needs is a strength of the school.

The school has detailed information on the pupils' backgrounds and the way in which deprivation affects their academic and social development. Regular and effective use is made of initiatives such as 'circle time', 'Caleb time' and 'Dina's school' to give pupils the opportunity to express concerns about a variety of issues that affect them. The full-time welfare assistant visits the classes regularly in order to collate concerns about individual pupils and their welfare and bring information to the attention of appropriate agencies, as needed.

The school offers parenting courses on 'school readiness' for the parents of nursery children for starting full-time at school. The 'fostering group' provides effectively for pupils' specific needs in year 5 and 6.

The school has very thorough systems for identifying pupils who have additional support needs. The support for pupils with special educational needs in the mainstream, and in separate groups, is effective.

The school works extensively with welfare and care agencies. The additional support is clearly targeted for individuals and groups of vulnerable pupils and this has led to the personal and educational progress of a number of pupils. The school holds progress reviews regularly and consults well with parents and carers.

The school promotes pupils' moral, social and cultural development effectively.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a close and supportive community that promotes positive attitudes towards others and their needs. Clear emphasis is placed upon recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity and creating an ethos that fosters care and tolerance. Pupils' backgrounds are appreciated and procedures for preventing oppressive behaviour are very effective.

The building offers extensive facilities and space and is in good condition. The school makes full use of the rooms that are available, including rooms that are not classrooms. A good feature of the learning environment is the good use of stimulating and interesting displays. The site is extensive and includes specific places for a range of appropriate outdoor activities in the Foundation Phase.

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

The school's leaders have a clear understanding of the challenges that face the school in terms of the pupils' deprivation.

The headteacher shares her vision with staff, governors and parents, and staff responsibilities are clearly defined. The staff co-operate closely with each other as a team in order to improve pupils' outcomes. A number of recent initiatives and projects have had a substantial effect on the pupils' welfare. Steps to improve the provision for literacy have also led to significant improvement in the pupils' achievements. Appropriate arrangements are in place for managing staff performance.

The governing body contributes to setting the school's priorities and knows about aspects of the school's performance that need to be improved. Specific curricular responsibilities have been set for members of the governing body. However, the nature of the contact varies across the subjects. These, along with the use of performance data to challenge underachievement, are aspects that have not been developed fully.

The school pays appropriate attention to local and national priorities. It is acting as a pilot school for the Foundation Phase and has established a link with another school in the family of schools in order to discuss issues concerning pupils' welfare and raising standards. Appropriate attention is being paid to raising the standards of literacy and numeracy and developing assessment for learning strategies. These are beginning to have a positive effect on improving pupils' outcomes.

Improving quality: Adequate

The arrangements for improving quality are based on using a range of evidence that includes data analysis and a programme of observation visits in classes. This has led to identifying appropriate priorities in the school development plan and improvements in important aspects of the school's performance. However, not enough has been done to identify and address some aspects where there are inconsistencies in the teaching and marking and in the pupils' written work.

There are appropriate opportunities for parents and pupils to express their viewpoints on the life and work of the school through questionnaires.

The self-evaluation report is a useful document that offers evaluations on a wide range of aspects. The data analysis does not make enough use of performance trends over time in the main indicators to identify aspects where improvement is needed. This is especially true in the use of comparisons with similar schools. For example, the considerable gap between the achievements of the boys and the girls has not received sufficient attention.

There is good emphasis on developing the school as a learning community, along with increasing opportunities for staff to take part in wider professional networks.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively with a wide range of partners in order to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs are fully satisfied.

The school takes good advantage of sharing the site with the pre-school referral unit, along with the integrated centre for the early years, 'Plas Pawb', to hold multi-agency discussions. This leads to early intervention in the case of children who have a variety of needs and establishing appropriate provision for them. The school is also part of a research project at Bangor University's Psychology department that evaluates aspects of support for pupils with severe needs in behaviour and learning.

Constructive partnerships have been established with a variety of social organisations such as the police, and the health and welfare service. Members of the community are often invited to come to the school to work with the pupils on community and vocational matters.

There are appropriate links with Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen to jointly standardise work and Baccalaureate pupils in the sixth form work in the school gardens as part of their community development. There are also many links with local primary schools.

The school communicates regularly with parents and carers and is very willing to listen and to respond to any issue that arises.

The school works in partnership with a number of post-16 education organisations. This includes working with Coleg Menai to provide family literacy and numeracy courses.

Resource management: Good

The school is staffed appropriately and makes effective use of staff time, expertise and experience, including the extensive team of learning support staff. The school has a good range of resources for learning and teaching and it makes effective use of them.

The governors monitor expenditure and keep an appropriate portion of the budget in reserve. Specific sums have been allocated for implementing the intentions of the school development plan.

Given the improvement in standards in key stage 2, along with the excellent outcomes in pupils' welfare, the school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Pupil questionnaires

One hundred and thirteen (113) key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire. In general, nearly all the pupils' responses to nearly all the questions were positive. A minority of pupils disagreed that standards of behaviour are good in lessons and at break and lunch times.

Parent questionnaires

Almost sixty parents or carers completed the questionnaire. The parents' satisfaction levels with the school are high. Every one of the parents/carers indicated that they agreed or agreed strongly that their children have settled well at school and that they are making good progress. Every parent/carer agrees or agrees strongly that their children are safe at school and that they are encouraged to stay healthy. Almost all parents say that their children receive individual additional support according to need and in order to develop into mature and responsible individuals. Almost all the parents/carers are comfortable in asking a question, making suggestions or identifying a problem. Most state that they understand the school complaints procedure and that they receive regular information about their children's progress. A few of the parents/carers are of the opinion that the behaviour of the school's pupils is not good.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Iolo Dafydd	Reporting Inspector
Ray Owen	Team Inspector
Jeremy Turner	Lay Inspector
Geraint Wyn Davies	Peer Inspector
Lisabeth Roberts	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