



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 y Bannau
Penlan
Brecon
Powys
LD3 9SR**

Date of inspection: May 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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Ysgol y Bannau is situated in a pleasant area on the outskirts of the town of Brecon and is maintained by Powys local authority. It is a designated Welsh-medium school that serves a wide area, both rural as well as urban. The pupils' social background is mixed. They represent the full range of ability.

At present, there are 154 pupils between 4 and 11 years of age on the school register and they are admitted at the beginning of the term in which they have their fourth birthday. Three point nine (3.9) per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure that is lower than the county average of 11.6%, and significantly lower than the national figure of 20.1%. A total of 23 (15%) of the pupils are designated as having special educational needs. These include two pupils who are statemented because of their needs. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken as a first language. Welsh is the everyday language of the school and is the medium of teaching and learning.

The school was last inspected during 2005 and the present headteacher has been in post since 2007.

The individual school budget per pupil in 2010-2011 for Ysgol y Bannau is £3,511, which compares with a maximum of £11,812 and a minimum of £2,891 for primary schools in Powys. The school's budget per pupil is 52nd out of the 101 primary schools in Powys when they are listed according to total, starting with the highest.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is adequate because:

- the school promotes pupils' welfare well;
- the school provides a good range of learning experiences within and outside the school; and
- many of the pupils, including pupils with additional learning needs, reach the expected standards by the end of their period at the school.

However:

- in general, the school's performance, in comparison with similar schools, has not been good during the last three years; and
- in a significant minority, of lessons the pace of the lesson is too slow and this decreases the enthusiasm of some pupils.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- the school has developed self-evaluation processes that increasingly influence the school development plan;
- the governing body provides appropriate strategic direction for the school's work and undertakes its responsibilities well; and
- in general, there is evidence of progress in the standards of pupils' work during the present school year.

However:

- neither the role of the senior management team, nor the responsibilities of individuals within the team, are defined clearly enough to have sufficient impact on the areas for improvement; and
- in general, the evidence that derives from monitoring the standards and quality of the provision is not robust enough.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' standards of attainment across both key stages;
- R2 define more clearly the role and responsibility of the senior management team, especially in relation to raising standards;
- R3 develop suitable arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and sharing good practice;
- R4 strengthen its monitoring procedures in order to ensure more robust evidence for the self-evaluation; and
- R5 develop suitable strategies to meet the needs of more able and talented pupils.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Many of the pupils, including pupils with additional learning needs, reach the expected standards by the end of their period at the school and, in general, acceptable progress has been seen in the standards of pupils' work during the current school year. Many of the pupils are good listeners and they can express themselves orally effectively. Most of the pupils read to a good standard and can discuss their opinion and their logic, while referring to content. The majority of pupils use their writing skills successfully across the curriculum, with the rest doing this to a satisfactory standard. Most of the pupils are aware of the skills that they are developing through their lessons and are able to discuss them. Nearly all pupils are confident in oral Welsh and all of the pupils in the school are fluently bilingual by the time they leave the school. Considering the linguistic background of many of them, the standard of their writing and their Welsh language skills are robust.

In key stage 1, there has been a consistent downward trend in the number of pupils achieving the expected level, namely level 2, in mathematics since 2007. An improvement was seen in the percentage achieving this level in Welsh and in science, but in 2010 the school's performance in the three core subjects was the lowest of its family. The percentage of pupils achieving higher levels, namely level 3 or better, at the end of key stage 1, has been consistently below the average for the family in Welsh and in science since 2007. The percentage achieving higher levels in mathematics varied in comparison with the family average over this period. In comparison with the performance of other schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance has fallen from the second quarter in 2007 to the fourth quarter in 2010.

In general, in key stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level, namely level 4, in each of the core subjects has decreased during the past four years. There was progress in the performance in 2009 but in 2010 the performance in Welsh was the third lowest in its family and the second lowest in its family in English. The performance was the lowest in its family in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils achieving higher levels, namely level 5 or better, has been lower than the family average in the core subjects in three of the last four years. In 2009 the school's performance in comparison with other schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals was in the top quarter. However, in the other years since 2007, the corresponding performance was in the bottom quarter.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do in order to be healthy. Many of them take advantage of activities such as the fruit shop, sports clubs and teams, and the healthy lunchtime menu. Children feel safe and happy in the school and they know whom to approach if they have a problem. The school

council is enthusiastic and clearly understands its role. It meets regularly and can show clear evidence of how the pupils' voice has changed things within the school. Pupils' punctuality is good and attendance levels have improved since 2007. The percentage is now similar to the average for similar schools.

In general, most pupils are developing well as independent learners and they show respect towards their fellow pupils and towards adults. Nearly all pupils work well with other pupils to complete tasks effectively. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and most are developing suitably in order to move to the next stage of learning.

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

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a good range of learning experiences within and outside the school. These experiences meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and religious education. In general, lessons are planned well, using a range of activities that contribute to the pupils' understanding and enjoyment of learning. However, the planning for the needs of the most able children is not consistent throughout the school. The teachers work together effectively to ensure that the curriculum develops appropriately as pupils move from the Foundation Phase to key stage 2. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, educational trips and residential experiences develop and enrich the pupils' learning further.

The detailed and structured schemes of work boost the development of the range of skills across the curriculum. The planning procedure provides appropriate opportunities and leads to effective progression from one class to the next. The use of various projects and thematic work promotes and develops the skills. The Welsh language provision and the Welsh dimension is developed successfully through the majority of curriculum areas. A range of visits and visitors to the school offer valuable opportunities to develop the pupils' awareness and understanding of the cultural, historical and linguistic features of Wales. The provision and use of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is effective and opportunities are mapped thoroughly across the schemes of work. Most of the staff model language consistently well and this promotes the pupils' oral development effectively.

The school provides a variety of opportunities across the curriculum in order to expand their knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship. The school council works as an eco-committee and promotes eco issues effectively. For example, it was responsible for developing the school's Eco Code and for setting up recycling bins. The school has won the status of Eco School twice during recent years. The school has a positive attitude towards developing the pupils' understanding of other cultures. There is a strong emphasis on teaching the children about their responsibility towards the community and towards those less fortunate than themselves, and a number of valuable opportunities are arranged in order to raise money for charities working locally and abroad.

Teaching: Adequate

In the most effective lessons, resources are used well in order to stimulate the pupils' interest, paying attention to the aural as well as the visual. In these lessons most of the pupils are challenged through appropriate differentiated tasks and probing questions that extend individuals and groups in order to achieve their potential. However, in a significant minority of lessons the pace is too slow and this leads to a decrease in the interest of some pupils. In these lessons, the differentiation does not provide a sufficient challenge to satisfy the needs of all pupils, especially the most able. Most of the lessons are well planned with clear objectives, but in a minority the objectives were not comprehensible to a minority of the children nor were they achieved. The staff use classroom support staff effectively in most of the lessons and the staff have a good relationship with the pupils. In general, they use effective behaviour management strategies and this is reflected in the courteous and respectful response of the pupils in the whole school

Assessment for learning methods are embedded in the school. Aims and success criteria are used consistently and nearly all the pupils have personal targets. The use of self-evaluation and peer evaluation is developing but this is not consistent throughout the school. Most of the marking is comprehensive and constructive, but also there is inconsistency in complying with the school policy. In general, the pupils do not always respond effectively to marking and know what they need to do to improve.

The school assesses children consistently. On the whole, good use is made of the information in order to identify pupils who have additional learning needs, pupils who are to receive support through Basic Skills groups and more able and talented pupils.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school promotes the welfare of pupils well. Appropriate emphasis is placed on a healthy diet and physical activities in order to boost the pupils' physical welfare, and the school won healthy school status in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Knowledge and expertise are shared effectively with other agencies and schools and the contact with a local special school has been of particular benefit. The school's expectations regarding attendance are high and there are effective procedures in order to deal promptly with unexplained absences. There is an appropriate range of policies in place to boost children's welfare, including suitable arrangements for preventing bullying. The school has an appropriate policy and suitable procedures for safeguarding children. Suitable learning experiences are provided for the pupils' cultural and moral development, including effective opportunities for learning about other beliefs. The school's provision promotes pupils' development to work together and they, and the local community, benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provided.

The provision for additional learning needs complies with the Code of Practice and the co-ordinator has developed good ownership of the area. The school maintains effective links with specialist agencies that ensure benefits for the pupils. Good use is made of support staff to develop Basic Skills and additional learning needs groups.

Suitable individual education plans are provided and the progress reviews ensure appropriate input from stakeholders, including parents and outside agencies.

Learning environment: Good

All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and appropriate attention is paid to differences in background, culture and belief. The school has established, and maintains, an inclusive culture and it has appropriate policies and procedures to deal with inappropriate discrimination or unsuitable behaviour. It also has a strong culture of respect and good behaviour.

The comparatively new building and the extensive site provide an environment that promote learning and teaching. The building is well maintained and it is adequate for the number of pupils in the school. The extensive range of resources are of good standard and meet the pupils' needs.

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

Leadership: Adequate

The headteacher is an enthusiastic leader who promotes a positive ethos and conveys his vision and values successfully. This is done within a supportive atmosphere. The recent appointment of a deputy headteacher has strengthened and enriched the capacity of the senior management team. However, neither the role of the senior management team nor the responsibility of individuals within the team are defined clearly enough to have a sufficient effect on areas to be developed. The senior management team meet regularly in order to share information. However, the focus is not specific enough on standards, the quality of teaching and the areas to be improved.

The governing body provides appropriate strategic direction for the work of the school and undertakes its responsibilities well. It has detailed knowledge of how the school is performing in comparison with similar schools and it is aware of the strengths and the areas to be improved. Recently, a standards sub-committee was established, which has had a positive effect on the information that is communicated to the governors. The governing body is developing its role as a critical friend.

The school shows a clear commitment to addressing national priorities. Appropriate attention has been given to the developments of the Foundation Phase and the School Effectiveness Framework, and to developing the pupils' thinking skills throughout the school.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school has developed self-evaluation processes that increasingly influence the school development plan. However, these processes do not include a thorough review of all aspects of school life, including the quality of teaching. In general, the evidence that comes from monitoring standards and quality is not robust enough. The staff, parents and governors have an input into the content of the report through questionnaires and informal discussions. The school has a good range of

information for tracking pupils' progress but there is not a specific enough overview of the use made of it to plan for improvement. The school has not fully implemented a minority of recommendations from the last inspection.

The school's professional development arrangements provide appropriate opportunities for staff development. There is a suitable link between the training and responsibilities of staff but there is not sufficient co-ordination between these activities and the priorities of the school development plan. The school has an appropriate procedure for performance management that offers opportunities for continuous professional development. Recently, performance management targets were agreed upon that are more challenging in order to ensure improvement.

The school continues to develop the element of internal and external networking. It is developing valid contacts with other schools and it has benefitted from members of the staff being involved with the professional teaching community, focussing on improving pupils' basic skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has effective and constructive partnerships with parents and carers. The parents' association is an active group that enriches the pupils' experiences. There are good links and appropriate transfer arrangements between the school and secondary schools in the area and a number of transition activities are arranged. The arrangements for standardising and moderating teachers' end of key stage assessments are effective. The partnership between the pre-school setting "Bobl Bach y Bannau" and the school's nursery class is good. As a result, the children who transfer settle easily and quickly to primary school life.

The school has a range of beneficial partnerships with the community, theatre companies, employers, charity groups and other organisations within the area and beyond. The wide range of experiences that arise from this, increasingly through the medium of Welsh, enriches the provision for the pupils. The school is aware of the importance of its relationship with relevant services in the local authority and the collaboration with them is effective.

Resource management: Adequate

The school is staffed appropriately in order to teach the curriculum effectively. In general, appropriate use is made of the staff's time, experience and expertise and the co-operation between teachers and learning support staff is good. Effective arrangements are in place in order to identify staff development needs and appropriate use is made of preparation, planning and assessment time.

The pupils have a wide range of good quality learning resources. On the whole, financial management is good and the relevant decisions are based on improvement needs. Given its outcomes, the school offers value for money with regard to the use made of the budget allocated to it.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Nearly all the learners in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire and the team spoke to the pupils during the inspection. They all say that they feel safe in school and that they know to whom they can speak if they are worried or if they find their work difficult. All of the children feel that the school teaches them how to be healthy and almost all feel that there are many opportunities in the school for them to do physical exercise regularly. All of the pupils are of the opinion that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress, and nearly all feel that they are doing well at school. Nearly all of the pupils feel that the other children behave well at playtime and lunchtime and a similar number feel that children's behaviour does not impair their ability to do their work.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Sixteen questionnaires were received and most of them are satisfied or very satisfied with the school, in general. They say that their children like school and feel safe there. Nearly all also believe that the pupils' behaviour is good, that the pupils are respected and treated fairly, and that they develop to be more mature and to shoulder responsibilities. Many of the parents feel that the teaching is good and most feel that their children are making good progress at school. However, a minority feel that they do not receive regular information about their children's progress and a few indicated that they do not feel comfortable asking the school a question, making a suggestion or raising a problem. Most of the parents are of the opinion that the school is run well or very well.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Iwan Roberts | Reporting Inspector |
| Catherine Evans | Team Inspector |
| Ruth Rhydderch | Lay Inspector |
| Owain Roberts | Peer Inspector |
| Emyr Jones | 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 |