



*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 Acrefair  
Acrefair  
Wrexham  
LL14 3SH**

**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:

| <b>Judgement</b>      | <b>What the judgement means</b>   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Excellent</b>      | Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice |
| <b>Good</b>           | Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement   |
| <b>Adequate</b>       | Strengths outweigh areas for improvement                                  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory</b> | 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 Acrefair is situated in the village of Acrefair, near Ruabon in Wrexham local authority. The school provides education for pupils between three and 11 years of age. Children enter the nursery during the September after their third birthday. A pre-school playgroup is also located within the school. Many of the school's nursery pupils receive child care there in the afternoons.

There are currently 175 full time pupils on roll. In addition to this, 25 part time nursery pupils attend in the mornings only. Nearly all are of white British ethnic origin and speak English at home. Just fewer than 5% are from a minority ethnic background and 2% have Portuguese as their home language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Pupils are taught through the medium of English and Welsh is taught as a second language.

Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds, but about quarter of the school intake comes from one of the most socially and economically deprived areas in Wales. Just over 20% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is in line with the local authority and all-Wales average. In 2010, 15% of pupils were identified as having special educational needs, but this has now dropped to 11%.

The current headteacher was appointed in 2006. During the inspection, the headteacher was on maternity leave. An acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher were in post at the time of the inspection.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Acrefair is £2,914, which compares with a maximum of £9,122 and a minimum of £2,734 for primary schools in Wrexham. The school has the 55th highest budget per pupil out of the 62 primary schools in Wrexham.

## Summary

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>The school's current performance</b>       | <b>Good</b> |
| <b>The school's prospects for improvement</b> | <b>Good</b> |

### Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- most pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points;
- all pupils listen attentively and nearly all communicate confidently with adults and other children;
- relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and this contributes significantly to pupils' wellbeing, enthusiasm and participation in learning;
- behaviour is very good throughout the school; and
- the quality of teaching is consistently good.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the future of the school and they share this effectively with all members of staff and governors;
- self-evaluation draws on a wide range of information and this helps leaders to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- planning for improvement is clearly linked to the outcomes of self evaluation; and
- there is a good track record of securing improvement in the school which has improved standards in specific areas.

## Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' thinking and independent learning skills;
- R2 build on the work which has been done to improve standards in Welsh by extending opportunities for pupils to use the language across the curriculum;
- R3 refine the planning of skills development at key stage 2 to ensure continuity and progression for all pupils across the curriculum;
- R4 make better use of the very good outdoor provision to enhance the curriculum for all pupils; and
- R5 ensure that the governing body takes a more active role in the self-evaluation process.

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

Most pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school and achieve good standards in general. Pupils with additional learning needs achieve well in relation to their starting points. Those pupils who are entitled to free school meals achieve as well as other pupils. At key stage 1, there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Most recent key stage 2 assessments indicate that boys do not perform as well as girls, but this is attributed to the imbalance in the proportion of boys with special educational needs in 2010.

Since 2006, the performance of seven-year-olds at the end of key stage 1 has improved in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. These results have placed the school in the upper 50% of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 1 compare very favourably with those of other schools in the family. In 2010, the schools results were well above the family average in the three core subjects. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level three in English has improved consistently in recent years and is now well above the family average.

The performance of 11-year-olds at the end of key stage 2 has been variable over the last four years, when compared with that of other schools with similar rates of free school meals. Results have placed the school mainly in the second and third quarter of similar schools. However, in relation to its family of schools, key stage 2 results compare more favourably. The school is the most challenged in its family, but outcomes in English, mathematics and science in 2010 compare well and are at least in line with the family average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 5 in English and mathematics has increased significantly over the past few years and is now above the family average.

Pupil progress in lessons observed is good. Most pupils recall previous knowledge and understanding well and they relate it appropriately to new situations when required to do so.

Pupils' literacy skills are good. All pupils listen well and communicate successfully with adults and other children in a variety of contexts. Most read competently for their age and stage of development and use their reading skills effectively to access other areas of the curriculum. Many pupils write well in their English lessons in a wide range of genres. They use interesting words when setting a scene in a story and understand how to write persuasively when formulating an argument for a debate. When given appropriate opportunities, most pupils apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills appropriately across the curriculum. However, pupils' thinking and independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

Nursery pupils make an excellent start in developing their Welsh language skills, taking into consideration their linguistic backgrounds. Most understand and use a good range of everyday classroom vocabulary and commands. For instance, they describe the weather accurately and use a good range of colours, number and the days of the week to respond to simple questions. Foundation Phase pupils build successfully on this progress and achieve appropriate standards in oral communication in particular. However, older pupils do not use Welsh enough outside Welsh lessons and find it difficult to apply their language skills and understanding across the curriculum.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

All pupils are well motivated and participate enthusiastically in learning activities. Behaviour throughout the school is very good. All pupils are polite and courteous and show care and respect for one another. Pupils' confidence when speaking to adults reflects their positive attitudes to many aspects of school life.

Many pupils contribute effectively to decision-making in the school. This is particularly effective when pupils are involved in discussing and planning what and how they learn. Foundation Phase pupils plan and review activities across all areas of learning and key stage 2 pupils create topic webs and mind maps. Members of the school council understand that they represent the views of other pupils.

Members of the school council feel that teachers listen to them and take their opinions seriously. Most pupils feel safe in school and are confident that incidents of bullying or harassment are dealt with sensitively and effectively. Many pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise.

The attendance and punctuality of most pupils are good. However, a few persistent absentees reduce attendance to around 93%. This is slightly lower than average when compared to that of similar schools and the local authority, but in line with the all-Wales average.

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|---|-------------|
| <b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|---|-------------|

### **Learning experiences: Good**

Learning experiences meet the needs of most pupils well. Collaborative planning is used effectively to drive improvement in specific areas. For example, the introduction of a new literacy scheme has ensured that pupils' knowledge of phonic blends is secure by the end of key stage 1.

Planning for the development of skills within subjects and areas of learning is good. There are plenty of interesting opportunities for pupils of all ages to develop their communication skills across subject areas and these skills enhance pupils' learning effectively. Skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology are embedded into medium term subject planning and teachers take good account of these skills in their short term planning. However, the planning for skills development across subjects at key stage 2 does not always ensure continuity and progression.

The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. These activities are well attended and cater well for the needs of many key stage 2 pupils. Volunteers from the community take an active role in improving the learning experiences of pupils. A group of grandparents cook with pupils every week and this has improved pupils' understanding of developing healthy eating habits.

Provision and planning for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension are good. 'Phrase of the fortnight' and 'Siaradwr Cymraeg' certificates encourage pupils to speak through the medium of Welsh. Although the provision during timetabled Welsh language sessions is good, and in a few classes very good, pupils are not encouraged to use their Welsh enough in other areas of the curriculum.

The school promotes an understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship well through an appropriate range of curriculum activities and other experiences. Staff actively encourage pupils to become involved in recycling and conserving energy around the school and at home. Lessons often focus on pupils' responses to world news, such as earthquakes and deforestation, but pupils do not always link their local actions to these global events.

### **Teaching: Good**

Teaching in all observed sessions is consistently good. Staff use a wide variety of teaching approaches, in line with the school's Effective Learning Policy. The use of talking partners is a strong feature of most lessons and it promotes communication skills and the acquisition of new topic-specific vocabulary. Teachers and support staff have a very secure understanding of the Foundation Phase philosophy and curriculum, and their approach improves pupil performance successfully. In key stage 2, skills-based topic teaching is good in the majority of classes. Where it is less successful, cross-curricular links are not as well developed.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very good in all classes, and have a positive effect on motivating and engaging pupils. Staff set clear learning intentions, lessons are well paced and in many sessions questioning techniques are used effectively to support pupils and extend their understanding, and for assessment purposes.

Formative assessment is good in the majority of classes. It is a particularly strong feature in the Foundation Phase, where assessment clearly informs future short-term planning. Oral feedback in most sessions throughout the school is good and improves pupils' achievement. Where written feedback focuses appropriately on success criteria, it helps pupils know how well they have done and how to improve their work. However, occasionally in a very few classes, teachers' marking is not as effective as it could be in moving pupils forward in their learning.

Pupils set their own targets for improvement and consider how they might achieve them. Teachers send target sheets home every term so that parents can support their children's learning at home. This, along with homework projects in key stage 2 classes, strengthens links between learning at school and at home effectively.



Moderation and standardisation processes to ensure the consistency in assessment of learning between teachers and year groups within the school are good. These internal procedures are effectively supported by the moderation of key stage 2 assessments with other schools.

Annual reporting arrangements are in line with statutory requirements. Parents have appropriate opportunities to discuss their children's progress with teachers and respond to written reports.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school actively promotes healthy living and supports pupils' wellbeing effectively through the curriculum and special events. Staff use a local strategy for the development of pupils' wellbeing successfully to develop pupils' understanding of social and emotional issues. Pupil evaluations confirm that this strategy helps to improve their self-esteem. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well. As a result, all pupils show care and respect for one another.

Links with specialist services, including the schools' liaison police officer, educational psychologist and speech and language therapists are good, and their professional support and advice enhances pupils' learning experiences. Staff use the information received from support services effectively to improve outcomes for vulnerable pupils.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Appropriate systems are in place for identifying and planning for pupils with additional learning needs. Staff monitor and review individual education plans regularly, although in a very few instances written evaluations are not as detailed as they could be. Detailed information is shared with parents regularly. Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups of pupils in class and in group activities.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school has a very positive ethos. It is calm and welcoming and provides pupils with a very safe and supportive learning environment. It is an inclusive community that promotes equal opportunities for all. Mutual respect and sharing success is a way of life within the school. The school's policies and procedures for equal opportunities, race equality and disability equality are appropriate and are in line with requirements.

The accommodation is of good quality and is well maintained, both internally and externally. Permanent and temporary wall displays are attractive and enhance the positive atmosphere in the building. Resources are plentiful and are well matched to the needs of pupils.

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| <b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b> |
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|             |
|-------------|
| <b>Good</b> |
|-------------|

### **Leadership: Good**

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the school which they successfully convey to staff and governors. They provide an effective strategic direction which creates a stimulating learning environment and focuses on raising standards for pupils.

Teaching and support staff have clearly defined roles which they carry out well. Regular staff and senior team meetings are held to review existing practice and to plan ways of further improving teaching.

The governing body carries out its duties conscientiously and supports the school well. Governors hold meetings regularly to discuss the implementation of the school's priorities within the school's development plan. The governing body receives relevant information from the headteacher about the school's achievements and about the end of key stage data. However, governors do not always take an active enough role in the school's self-evaluation process, particularly in the evaluation of data.

The school pays good attention to meeting national and local priorities. The Foundation Phase has been implemented effectively and is having a positive impact on standards for younger pupils. Staff have taken lead roles in setting up professional learning communities using School Effectiveness Framework principles. The promotion of healthy living and wellbeing through the Healthy Schools and Appetite for Life programme is a key feature of the school's work.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school has created an extensive and generally effective range of self-evaluation procedures. These procedures include the monitoring of lessons, reviewing of planning, and evaluating pupils' achievements and progress. Senior leaders also obtain the views of parents and pupils by the regular use of questionnaires. Senior leaders evaluate the responses to these questionnaires critically and use the outcomes appropriately to identify further issues for improvement. Staff share information gathered from the monitoring process and analyse relevant data methodically. However there is not always enough focus placed on the scrutiny of pupils' work.

The self-evaluation report is informative and evaluative, and highlights the school's strengths and areas for improvement successfully. The school improvement plan is a detailed document which links well to these areas for further development. It clearly identifies priorities, allocates responsibilities and highlights success criteria and monitoring methods. These developments are funded by the effective use of funds from the school budget.

The school has successfully established a range of professional learning communities which focus on sharing best practice in learning and teaching, and raising standards. Staff receive training based on the outcomes of performance

management interviews and the needs of the school. Staff observe lessons in order to share good practice. This enables them to reflect on their strengths and areas for development. The school has close links with the cluster schools, particularly in relation to the moderation of assessment and transition. These initiatives have a positive impact on the development of best practice and the attainment of pupils.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has an active parent, teacher and friends association which plays an important part in the life of the school and provides significant additional funds. Family assemblies and family learning activities help to form and sustain close links with parents and carers.

The school uses the local community and its people well to enhance pupils' learning experiences. There is appropriate joint working with the health service, social services and the educational psychologist. The school has developed effective partnerships with the initial teacher training departments of Glyndwr and Bangor Universities.

Relationships with the pre-school setting on the school site are particularly successful in ensuring a smooth transition into the nursery class. There are well established links with the Ruabon cluster of schools. The cluster schools work effectively together on projects which aim to ensure consistency of experience for pupils before they move to secondary school, such as the recent development of skill-based homework.

The school has taken a lead role in several successful joint resourcing projects, such as the use of cluster funding for in-service training and establishing the community focused schools initiative.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school has sufficient appropriately qualified staff to carry out its work effectively. Staff work together diligently to create a stimulating and interesting learning environment. Resources are generally used effectively to enhance pupils' learning. However, staff do not yet make enough use of the recently created outside learning facility and forest school area.

The governing body manages and allocates funding appropriately, in accordance with the priorities within the school development plan. The use of shared financial resources through efficient partnership work with other schools is a particularly good feature as it provides training for staff and improved outcomes for pupils which the school alone could not provide.

The school secures appropriate outcomes for pupils and makes good use of its budget. In view of the good outcomes achieved by most pupils, it provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Fourteen parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Generally they expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. All parents feel that staff treat their children with respect and that their children were helped to settle when they joined the school. All agree that teaching is good and that teachers expect their children to do their best. All parents think that homework builds successfully on what children learn in school. They feel that teachers help their children to become more mature and take on responsibility and are confident that their children will be well prepared for the move to the secondary school. They all say that they understand the process for dealing with complaints. Most parents agree that their children enjoy school and are safe there. They are sure that their children are making good progress and feel well informed about their children's achievements. Most believe that pupils behave well. They are happy with the support their children receive for their additional learning needs. They agree that the school is well run and they feel comfortable to approach staff if they have any questions or concerns.

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety-three pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire and most were very positive. Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school and they know who to talk to if they are worried or upset or are finding their work difficult. Most think that bullying is dealt with effectively. Nearly all pupils agree that the school helps them to keep healthy and think that there are plenty of chances for them to be physically active. Most feel that they are doing well at school and all agree that the teachers and support staff help them to progress in their learning. Nearly all think that there are enough resources to enable them to learn effectively. A minority of pupils do not feel that homework helps them to improve on their work in school. A few think that the behaviour of others prevents them from getting their work done as well as they could, and think that behaviour at playtime and lunch time is not as good as it could be.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

|                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Sarah Morgan               | Reporting Inspector |
| Glyn Roberts               | Team Inspector      |
| Andrew Brazier             | Lay Inspector       |
| Mari Gaskell               | Peer Inspector      |
| Lisa Roberts (Headteacher) | 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 |