



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 Dyffryn Dulas
Corris
Machynlleth
Powys
SY20 9TQ**

Date of inspection: December 2013

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas is situated in the rural village of Corris, which is about six miles to the north of Machynlleth in Powys. The school is part of the Dyffryn Dulas and Pennal federation of schools, which was established in 2012. The school serves the village and nearby areas.

The school admits pupils to the school on a part-time basis in the September following their third birthday, and full-time following their fourth birthday. The number of pupils who start at the school has fallen a little during the last five years. There are 47 pupils on roll at present. The children are taught in three mixed-age classes in the morning and two classes in the afternoon. The expertise of staff from both schools is shared in order to teach some of the basic subjects.

Twelve per cent of pupils at the school are entitled to free school meals at present, which is lower than the average for Wales, namely 21%.

National figures indicate that 22% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. However, the school indicates that 6% of pupils come from homes where Welsh is the main language. Welsh is the medium of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. In key stage 2, pupils are taught through the medium of Welsh and English, with the aim of making them bilingual by the time they transfer to the secondary school at 11 years of age.

About 23% of pupils are on the additional learning needs register, including a very few pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. These figures are similar to the national averages.

The school was last inspected in October 2007.

Over the last 18 months, there has been some instability among staff and leaders at the school. The school's acting strategic headteacher has led and managed Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas and Ysgol Pennal since September 2013.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Dyffryn Dulas in 2013-2014 is £4,630. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in Gwynedd is £10,616 and the minimum is £2,936. Ysgol Gynradd Dyffryn Dulas is in 37th position of the 103 primary schools in Gwynedd in terms of the school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is adequate because:

- most pupils make appropriate progress in line with their ability.
- the oral skills of many pupils who come from non Welsh-speaking homes develop quickly;
- the standard of teaching in the majority of lessons that were observed was good in general, with very good elements in the Foundation Phase;
- the school's attendance rate compares favourably with the averages for the family and Wales; and
- pupils at the school show respect, care and concern for others constantly.

However:

- key stage 2 pupils do not write at enough length across a range of subjects in both languages;
- literacy and numeracy skills have not been planned in enough detail across the curriculum;
- tasks do not challenge pupils of higher ability or provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop into independent learners in key stage 2; and
- the school's assessment procedures have not been developed fully to ensure effective levelling of work or to track pupils' progress successfully enough.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- the acting strategic headteacher gives the school clear and robust leadership;
- the acting strategic headteacher has high expectations and a clear vision;
- the governing body of the federal schools are dedicated and aware of their responsibilities;
- the strategic headteacher has created an accurate and perceptive evaluation of the school's current situation; and
- the school's development plan focuses appropriately on raising standards.

However:

- leadership across the school has not been developed fully to ensure that pupils attain the higher levels, especially in Welsh;
- the school's leaders do not act effectively enough on information that arises from monitoring in order to address weaknesses in teaching and assessment; and
- arrangements to standardise and moderate pupils' work have not been developed fully in order to ensure the validity of teachers' assessment levels.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards of writing in both languages across the curriculum in key stage 2
- R2 Ensure that there is detailed planning for literacy and numeracy skills in key stage 2
- R3 Extend the level of challenge for pupils of higher ability across the school and develop the ability of key stage 2 pupils to be independent learners
- R4 Improve processes for assessment and tracking pupils' progress
- R5 Ensure that the school's leaders implement the school's processes more effectively in order to improve pupils' achievements

What happens next?

Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas will produce an action plan that shows 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

Most pupils across the school listen attentively, and many of them contribute enthusiastically to classroom activities. Overall, most pupils make appropriate progress in line with their ability. However, a minority of pupils of higher ability do not achieve as well as they should, especially in key stage 2.

Pupils who have additional learning needs make good progress against their targets.

Across the school, many pupils make appropriate progress in their use of Welsh from the time they start at the school. The oral skills of many pupils who come from non Welsh-speaking homes develop quickly. Many pupils in the Foundation Phase communicate successfully in Welsh and use vocabulary that is appropriate to their age and ability. Most respond confidently to instructions and speak appropriately, and show an increasing grasp of Welsh syntax. Many key stage 2 pupils converse confidently about their work and their vocabulary is developing appropriately. Most are bilingual by the end of the key stage.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils read with expression and use a range of reading strategies effectively when reading unfamiliar words. By the end of the Foundation Phase, a few pupils are able to discuss content meaningfully and refer to events and characters in the books they read. Many pupils make appropriate progress in their writing. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many are able to write a sequence of sentences and show an appropriate grasp of basic punctuation and robust language patterns. A few more able pupils write imaginatively and independently and use wider vocabulary to create effects.

In key stage 2, the majority of pupils read a range of reading materials appropriately in Welsh and English and their understanding of reading is developing well. The majority use higher reading skills effectively in order to acquire specific information from a text. The best pupils discuss a range of reading materials in a mature way and express an opinion about their favourite authors. However, a few pupils read with less fluency and expression in Welsh.

Overall, the majority of key stage 2 pupils write intelligently in a range of written forms in both languages and show a suitable awareness of punctuation and paragraphing. However, there is not enough progress in the written work of the majority of pupils. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils make appropriate progress in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In the Foundation Phase, many develop their numeracy skills appropriately across learning areas, for example when dealing with number patterns in art work. A few examples were seen of the school's oldest pupils using their numeracy skills at the appropriate level in science and geography, for example handling data when recording the results of a friction experiment. However, key stage 2 pupils' numeracy skills have not been developed fully across a range of subjects.

There are small numbers of pupils in each year group, which can have a significant effect on the school's overall performance in assessments at the end of a key stage in comparison with national benchmarks from one year to the next.

The small numbers that are assessed at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 must be taken into consideration when analysing the school's performance data.

Pupils' achievements at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2013 are lower than the figures for the family and Wales at the expected outcome and the higher outcome. In general, pupils' achievements at the expected outcome in 2012 compared more favourably with the figures for Wales. In comparison with schools that have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, the school's performance has placed it among the lower 50% or the bottom 25% at the higher outcome over the past two years.

At the end of key stage 2, performance at the expected level in Welsh, English, mathematics and science were higher than the figures for the family and Wales in 2013. Overall, the pattern is the same for the last four years, except in 2012, when pupils' achievements were lower in every subject. No pupil has attained the higher levels in Welsh in the last four years.

In comparison with similar schools in terms of levels of entitlement to free school meals, the school's performance at the expected level has varied but, in general, has placed the school in either the top 25% or the higher 50%. In 2013, the school's performance at the higher levels placed the school in the lower 50% in comparison with similar schools in terms of levels of entitlement to free school meals, except in mathematics, where the school's performance placed it in the top 25%.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe at the school and know to whom to turn if they feel anxious. Most pupils are aware of the importance of fitness and healthy eating and drinking. By taking part regularly in physical activities, pupils' fitness is developing well.

The school's attendance percentage has been consistently higher than it is in similar schools for the last four years and has placed the school among the upper 50% over the last two years in comparison with similar schools in terms of levels of entitlement to free school meals.

Most pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils show respect, care and concern for others consistently. Most pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They co-operate effectively with each other in their lessons and on the yard.

Members of the school council meet regularly and take their responsibilities seriously. They share their ideas and contribute to decisions. An example of this is the way in which pupils have had an input into decorating the building. Many links with the community, such as an Italian evening and harvest festivals, promote a positive relationship with the local area.

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

The school provides experiences that respond fully to the principles of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and religious education. A number of visits and visitors to the school enrich pupils' experiences successfully.

The Foundation Phase's schemes of work are detailed and ensure stimulating experiences. Pupils have opportunities to contribute their ideas to what they are learning. The school is in the process of adapting key stage 2 schemes of work in relation to implementing the requirements of the Numeracy and Literacy Framework. However, the current schemes do not identify opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills consistently across the curriculum, including opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects in both languages. There are not enough opportunities for key stage 2 pupils to develop into independent learners.

Provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is good. The school plans appropriately for developing pupils' understanding of the culture and history of the local area and Wales. An example of this is work on Welsh folklore and the Bro Ddyfi biosphere project.

Provision for promoting sustainable development promotes pupils' understanding of acting sustainably effectively. However, not enough attention is paid to developing aspects of global citizenship.

Teaching: Adequate

The standard of teaching in the majority of lessons that were observed is generally good with very good elements in the Foundation Phase. Most teachers model good language and manage pupils' behaviour effectively.

In the majority of lessons, presentations are lively and activities gain the interest of pupils successfully. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and they question effectively in order to encourage extended responses from pupils.

In a minority of key stage 2 lessons, in which teaching is not as good, tasks do not challenge pupils of higher ability or offer enough opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners.

The school uses standardised tests and teachers' assessments appropriately when assessing pupils' work. However, the school does not use the information that arises from assessments successfully enough to track pupils' progress, in order to plan the next stage in their learning. There is a lack of structure and consistency in the way the school assesses pupils' work, and there are no effective arrangements in place to standardise pupils' work.

In a majority of classes, teachers use assessment for learning strategies suitably. On the whole, teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, comments do not

always give enough guidance to pupils about how to improve the standard of their work.

Written reports to parents on their children's progress meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy, caring community that ensures that pupils feel safe. It promotes pupils' health and wellbeing successfully and there are robust policies in place. The school provides various opportunities to promote pupils' health and fitness during school hours and outside them. The school makes appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully by providing opportunities to reflect in regular assemblies and in local places of worship.

The school has beneficial links with specialist agencies, such as the authority's welfare service, health agencies and the police. Recent plans to improve behaviour have had a positive effect.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Provision for pupils who have additional learning needs is effective. The co-ordinator identifies pupils' specific needs early on, and provides robust support that has contributed to an improvement in pupils' standards of achievement. Pupils' individual education plans include clear targets, which are reviewed regularly.

Learning environment: Adequate

Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas is an inclusive community in which pupils play a full part in its life and work.

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring equal opportunities and social inclusion for every child and for all stakeholders. This ensures full access to all the school's activities.

There is enough room inside the building and the school makes every effort to provide a motivating, attractive and stimulating learning environment during a period of repair and building work. The Foundation Phase's indoor learning area promotes rich and interesting experiences for the school's youngest pupils. The school has a range of effective resources to support teaching and learning.

Displays around the school celebrate pupils' work and successes well. The building is kept tidy under difficult circumstances. The new toilets are accessible for individuals who have disabilities.

Leadership: Adequate

In the short time since her appointment, the strategic headteacher has given the school clear and robust leadership. She has high expectations and a clear vision. Recent arrangements focus specifically on raising the standards of pupils' work and refining the school's systems. However, the improvement strategies that have been put in place have not been implemented effectively enough in order to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can at the higher levels, especially in Welsh.

Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The senior management team meet regularly and they are beginning to take a more active role in the school's improvement strategies. An example of this is the plan that is in place to respond to the Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

The federal schools' governing body has an increasing understanding of performance data and individual members visit the school regularly. They are aware of the school's strengths and areas that need to be developed. However, their role in the school's strategic processes has not developed fully in order to challenge the school about its performance.

The school responds appropriately to local and national priorities, such as the Foundation Phase and assessment for learning.

Improving quality: Adequate

The strategic headteacher and the teaching staff have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses based on robust evidence, and they are aware of what must be done to raise standards. However, the effect of this cannot be seen in the pupils' achievement and the school's performance.

The school's recent self-evaluation report is a detailed document that makes appropriate use of data analyses and evaluations of standards of pupils' work. In a short time, the headteacher has produced an accurate evaluation of the school's current situation, in addition to setting attainable targets for improvement. Areas for development link clearly with the priorities of the school improvement plan, for example arrangements to raise standards of writing and develop pupils' ability to be independent learners. However, the school's leaders do not act effectively enough on information that arises from the monitoring in order to address weaknesses in teaching and assessment.

The school development plan is a comprehensive document that provides details of suitable strategies to ensure improvements. It sets lead responsibilities and success indicators, as well as a specific timetable and implications of expenditure.

Partnership working: Good

The school has effective strategic partnerships that contribute to improving pupils' standards and wellbeing and that offer valuable learning experiences. It has a strong

relationship with parents and friends, and considerable funds are contributed by them in order to purchase resources and additional useful equipment. Links with the community are effective and offer valuable experiences to pupils.

There are appropriate links with the nursery group that meets in the school, and this ensures that pupils settle quickly in the Foundation Phase.

The school has appropriate partnerships with local secondary schools and effective transition arrangements and visits from staff and pupils ensure smooth transfer.

The school co-operates effectively with schools in the cluster and secondary schools as part of the authority's arrangements to standardise and moderate teachers' assessments of pupils' work. However, this has not had enough of an effect on the quality of the school's internal arrangements for standardising and moderation.

A productive partnership is developing with Ysgol Pennal, which is beginning to have an effect on pupils' standards and progress, for example in relation to the arrangements for pupils who have additional learning needs.

The beneficial co-operation between the schools in the federation to develop the current plans has begun. However, it is too early to see their effects on pupils' achievements.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has enough teaching staff and assistants and they are used effectively to deliver the Foundation Phase and the National Curriculum, and to give appropriate support to individuals.

Following the federalisation of Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas and Ysgol Pennal in September 2012, full advantage is taken of the expertise of the staff of both schools to support specific aspects of the curriculum, such as in geography and physical education. The instability among staff and the school's leadership over the last 18 months has had an effect on the school's ability to ensure consistency in terms of teaching and raising standards.

A statutory performance management system is in place for teachers and assistants at the school. This has resulted appropriately in meeting staff's professional development needs. The school co-operates successfully in a professional learning community to develop aspects of reading in the Foundation Phase. The effect of this can be seen on the standards of reading of pupils at the school.

The headteacher and governors manage the budget appropriately, and the finance sub-committee meet regularly to monitor expenditure. This ensures an appropriate supply of resources that respond to the school's needs.

Considering the standards of pupils' achievement, the school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The small numbers of pupils who are assessed at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 must be taken into consideration when analysing the school's performance data.

Over the last two years, at the end of the Foundation Phase, the school's performance at outcome 5 in Welsh language, literacy and communication skills has been lower than the figures for the family and nationally. However, there was a significant decline in mathematical development and personal and social development between 2012 and 2013. The percentage of pupils who achieved the Foundation Phase indicator and the other individual learning areas was lower than the averages for the family and Wales in 2013.

No pupils have attained the higher outcome in Welsh language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development over the last two years. In comparison with schools that have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, the school's performance has placed the school among the lower 50% and the bottom 25% at the higher outcome over the last two years. The pattern is similar at the expected outcome, except in 2012, when the school's performance placed it in the top 25% in mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

In key stage 2, performance at the expected level in Welsh, English, mathematics and science in 2013 was higher than the figures for the family and Wales. Overall, the pattern has been the same over the last four years, except in 2012, when pupils' achievement was lower in all subjects. The school's performance at the higher levels in Welsh and English is lower than the averages for the family and for Wales. Over a period of five years, pupils' achievement in writing at level 4 or higher has risen to 100%. No pupil has attained the higher levels in Welsh over the last four years. The school's performance at the expected level has varied but overall has placed the school in the top 25% to the higher 50%. In 2013, the school's performance at the higher levels placed it in the lower 50% in comparison with schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, except in mathematics where the school's performance placed it in the top 25%.

There is no significant pattern between the achievement of boys and girls in the Foundation Phase or key stage 2. There is no significant pattern over time either in terms of the achievement of pupils who are entitled to free school meals in comparison with the achievements of the remainder of the cohort.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Primary Survey (All Pupils)

Designating the benchmark – this is a total of all responses to date since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	
I feel safe in my school.	20	19 95%	1 5%	Rwy'n teimlo'n ddiogel yn fy ysgol.
		98%	2%	
The school deals well with any bullying.	19	19 100%	0 0%	Mae'r ysgol yn delio'n dda ag unrhyw fwlio.
		92%	8%	
I know who to talk to if I am worried or upset.	20	19 95%	1 5%	Rwy'n gwybod pwy i siarad ag ef/â hi os ydw i'n poeni neu'n gofidio.
		96%	4%	
The school teaches me how to keep healthy	20	20 100%	0 0%	Mae'r ysgol yn fy nysgu i sut i aros yn iach.
		98%	2%	
There are lots of chances at school for me to get regular exercise.	19	19 100%	0 0%	Mae llawer o gyfleoedd yn yr ysgol i mi gael ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		96%	4%	
I am doing well at school	18	17 94%	1 6%	Rwy'n gwneud yn dda yn yr ysgol.
		96%	4%	
The teachers and other adults in the school help me to learn and make progress.	19	19 100%	0 0%	Mae'r athrawon a'r oedolion eraill yn yr ysgol yn fy helpu i ddsygu a gwneud cynnydd.
		99%	1%	
I know what to do and who to ask if I find my work hard.	19	19 100%	0 0%	Rwy'n gwybod beth i'w wneud a gyda phwy i siarad os ydw i'n gweld fy ngwaith yn anodd.
		98%	2%	
My homework helps me to understand and improve my work in school.	19	16 84%	3 16%	Mae fy ngwaith cartref yn helpu i mi ddeall a gwella fy ngwaith yn yr ysgol.
		91%	9%	
I have enough books, equipment, and computers to do my work.	20	20 100%	0 0%	Mae gen i ddigon o lyfrau, offer a chyfrifiaduron i wneud fy ngwaith.
		95%	5%	
Other children behave well and I can get my work done.	19	17 89%	2 11%	Mae plant eraill yn ymddwyn yn dda ac rwy'n gallu gwneud fy ngwaith.
		78%	22%	
Nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunch time	20	19 95%	1 5%	Mae bron pob un o'r plant yn ymddwyn yn dda amser chwarae ac amser cinio.
		84%	16%	

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fewer than 10 responses were received. No data will be shown.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Anwen Griffith	Reporting Inspector
Hazel Hughes	Team Inspector
Glenda Jones	Lay Inspector
Alun Rees	Peer Inspector
Nia Edwards	Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

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

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms – Primary

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.