



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 Gymraeg Tonyrefail
School Street
Tonyrefail
Porth
CF39 8LE**

Date of inspection: March 2012

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

This designated Welsh-medium school is situated in the centre of the village of Tonyrefail in Rhondda Cynon Taf. It serves the villages of Tonyrefail, Gilfach Goch, Trebanog, Edmundstown, Evanstown and Thomastown. The area is described as one that is neither prosperous nor under economic disadvantage, although part of the catchment area is in a Communities First area. Pupils' attainment varies greatly when they start school.

At present, there are 261 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll. They are admitted immediately after their third birthday. Pupil numbers have risen considerably over recent years. They are taught in five classes which include children of the same age and four mixed-age classes. Including the headteacher and the learning support teacher, there are nine full-time teachers and three part-time teachers at the school.

Nineteen point five per cent (19.5%) of pupils are entitled to free school meals – a figure that is higher than the county and national averages. Seventy-two pupils (about 27.5%) are on the additional learning needs register. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

Twenty-seven pupils (about 10%) come from homes where Welsh is spoken as a first language. Welsh is the medium of teaching and learning across the school, but a programme of studying English is introduced to key stage 2 pupils. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds at the school at present. Nearly all pupils come from homes where Welsh or English is the home language.

The school was last inspected in April 2006, and there have been considerable changes to the management of the school since then. The headteacher was appointed to her post in September 2011, after working as acting headteacher for two years previously. The current acting deputy has been in post since September 2009. Arrangements are in place for appointing a full-time deputy by September 2012.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail in 2011-2012 is £2,715. The maximum per pupil in Rhondda Cynon Taf primary schools is £6,499 and the minimum is £2,788. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail is in 105th place of the 114 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- pupils generally achieve good standards by the end of key stage 2;
- pupils use their literacy skills effectively to support their learning;
- nearly all pupils communicate confidently in Welsh from an early age, although most of them come from homes where English is spoken as a first language;
- many pupils develop into confident independent individuals, who contribute responsibly to school life;
- standards of teaching are generally good;
- the school provides a good range of learning experiences; and
- there is a good working relationship between teachers and pupils.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher knows the school well and has a clear vision that is shared effectively;
- the senior management team sets high expectations;
- the school has identified shortcomings and has raised standards in specific areas;
- there are appropriate priorities for ensuring improvement in the school development plan;
- there is a strong working relationship between the school and the governing body; and
- sharing good practice is part of the school's ethos.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

R1 raise boys' standards, especially in language;

R2 improve pupils' attendance;

R3 ensure that the teaching consistently presents an appropriate challenge to more able pupils; and

R4 develop and stabilise the strategic role of the school's leaders.

What happens next?

Within 45 days, the school will prepare an action plan that will give details of how it will address these issues.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils make appropriate progress during their time at the school. They listen attentively, co-operate well and work diligently in learning sessions. The majority of pupils can discuss their learning effectively and they have an increasing understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Although most pupils come from homes where English is spoken as a first language, nearly all pupils, from an early age, communicate confidently orally in Welsh and English. They can converse clearly and enthusiastically about their work and in various informal situations, using appropriate vocabulary.

Most pupils develop into effective readers. They can read fluently, accurately and intelligently in Welsh and English. They can discuss the content of books effectively, express an opinion about them, and use their reading skills to obtain information for their work in different subjects. They write at length successfully in Welsh and English across the curriculum.

Pupils who have additional learning needs are making good progress against the targets set for them, and take a full part in their class activities.

Assessments of pupils show that their attainments are mixed when they start at the school. During key stage one, all pupils make appropriate progress, considering the starting point, and some pupils do better than expected.

At the end of key stage 1, the performance of teachers' assessments is consistently lower than the average for the family and the whole of Wales, although close to the expectations of it in 2011 in all the subjects. In comparison with the performance of similar schools in terms of the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school is consistently among the bottom 50%. Pupils who attain level 3 or higher in teachers' assessments are consistently high across the subjects.

There were fifteen pupils in the cohort at the end of key stage 2 in 2011, which was considerably lower than the usual number. Nine pupils were on the special needs register. The progress of nearly every pupil in the cohort from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 was in line with the expectations of them.

At the end of key stage 2, over a period of five years, the results of teachers' assessments have shown consistent and good progress in all subjects except Welsh. A decline in results for Welsh was seen in 2011. Within the family of schools, the school's performance in 2011 was considerably higher than expected in every subject except Welsh. In comparison with the performance of similar schools in terms of the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school compares favourably except for in Welsh in 2011, when it was among the bottom 25%. The number of pupils who attain level 5 or higher in teachers' assessments in all subjects decreased considerably in 2011, after a period of two years of very good results.

In key stage 2, girls perform consistently better than boys, especially in language. In key stage 1, the difference between boys and girls is more inconsistent.

By now, pupils who are entitled to free school meals attain the same standards as pupils who are not entitled.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel very safe at school and show good awareness of the importance of eating healthily and taking part in physical exercise regularly.

Pupils feel very free to voice an opinion and express concern. They show a willingness to turn to teachers and friends to ask help if needed, and they are proud of the 'Bytis' scheme, which shows their concern for other pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and they respect the school's 'golden rules'.

Attendance at the school for the last three years has been lower than the national average. In comparison with similar schools in terms of the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school has been in the bottom 25% since 2006. However, the attendance rates for the autumn term 2011 show some progress.

The school council, the ambassadors for the Children's Commissioner and the eco council act successfully on the suggestions of the school's pupils.

Pupils feel that they are part of the local community, and they play a regular part in community activities, by visiting the old people's home and taking part in concerts and sports events.

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

The school provides a good range of learning experiences that ensure a wealth of activities for pupils.

The teachers co-operate well to plan effectively, considering pupils' differing needs and providing appropriate activities and resources. There is effective provision for ensuring that pupils obtain numeracy, communication, and information technology and communication skills in cross-curricular activities. Teachers provide an appropriate variety of opportunities in order to develop reading, writing and problem-solving skills.

A firm priority is given to developing the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension, for example by holding a 'Welsh Week' and rewarding pupils for their efforts in using the Welsh language on every occasion.

Through activities such as recycling and growing vegetables, pupils have a good understanding of the values of sustainability. The contribution to global citizenship is appropriate through work on geography and humanitarian activities.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is good across the school.

In many lessons, there is a suitable pace, interesting tasks and probing questioning that extend pupils' understanding in a positive learning environment. In every class, the relationship between teachers and pupils is one that fosters a homely atmosphere and one of respect. Most of the teaching ensures that pupils are motivated and show interest.

In the majority of lessons, teachers encourage pupils to answer open questions and use a good range of imaginative and skilful teaching strategies. Teachers enable pupils to identify and contribute to setting targets for improvement and recording them in a variety of ways. Many teachers ensure consistent feedback to pupils on their progress and how they can improve. Teachers' expectations, on the whole, are high and they build on pupils' previous experiences. In a few lessons, the teaching does not ensure sufficient challenge and progress among the most able pupils.

There is a comprehensive and effective whole-school procedure for assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' progress. The teachers know the pupils well and use a number of suitable strategies in order to collect information and target particular individuals and groups.

Assessment for learning strategies operate effectively in many classes and learning aims and success criteria are shared with pupils in the majority of lessons. Teachers differentiate well for additional learning needs. The personal targets that have been set for most of these pupils focus on areas to be developed further and encourage pupils to try to improve their own performance. The assessment co-ordinator has very good knowledge of pupils' requirements and beneficial targets are set following analysis of the assessments.

Reports to parents meet statutory requirements, and provide appropriate information for parents on their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has an effective policy and arrangements for pupils' healthy living and well-being. By holding circle sessions, visits and extra-curricular activities, pupils are supported and praised for developing self-respect and courtesy.

Learning experiences such as the 'anti-bullying week' promote pupils' personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school co-operates effectively with key agencies to raise the standards of pupils' behaviour and raise the attendance percentage in the school.

Teachers identify pupils' learning needs when they start at the school and set appropriate individual plans for them. Provision for additional learning needs is good and the strategies have a positive influence on pupils' progress. The school meets statutory requirements by including pupils and parents when reviewing progress. The additional learning needs co-ordinator has good knowledge of pupils' needs and contributions by learning support assistants are used effectively in order to satisfy the needs.

The school has appropriate procedures and a policy for safeguarding.

Appropriate use is made of the support of external specialist services, including the education welfare, medical and emergency services.

Learning environment: Good

The school community is very caring and very inclusive. The school has a homely ethos and everyone has the same opportunities at all times, and in all activities. All staff at the school endeavour to ensure the best care for all pupils and respect them. High priority is given to identifying and respecting differences, and this is reflected in pupils' attitudes.

The school site is a combination of an old building and cabins on site on a slope, which offers a practical challenge in terms of moving around the site. Although parts of the main building are in poor condition, the site is kept neat and tidy, and the teachers overcome the difficulties very well. There are colourful, stimulating displays all around the learning areas and hallways. The external provision for Foundation Phase pupils offers excellent opportunities for pupils to develop into independent learners.

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

Although the headteacher was only appointed permanently to the post comparatively recently, she has conveyed a clear vision to the staff, pupils and governors. She knows the school well and leads it very effectively with the support of the acting deputy headteacher. All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Although the management team is not sufficiently stable at present, they undertake their duties successfully by setting high targets across the school. They have ensured improvement in pupils' standards of achievement in specific areas. For example, teachers' records show progress in reading standards during the last year, and attention is now on developing writing.

The school has appropriate performance management arrangements that help teaching staff to improve their practices.

The governors have a strong awareness of what happens in the school. Each one of them is linked to a class in the school. The governors' knowledge of the school's performance data over time is clear, and their role as a critical friend to challenge the school is developing effectively.

The school meets national priorities successfully, especially in the provision for the Foundation Phase and assessment for learning that is well-rooted throughout the school. The school undertakes the School Effectiveness Framework by establishing successful professional learning communities.

Improving quality: Good

The findings of the self-evaluation process feed the priorities of the school development plan appropriately. There is good use of evidence from lesson observations by the management team, results of listening to learners and evidence of scrutinising pupils' work. The self-evaluation report is of good quality, thorough and indicates clearly the areas to be developed within the school. All members of staff contribute to the self-evaluation.

The school development plan is an effective document. It is based on robust priorities and through reviewing the previous development plan. Staff responsibilities are indicated clearly, as well as success criteria and arrangements for monitoring the implementation of aims. The costs of the priorities are indicated clearly.

The school is part of networks of professional practice within the school and beyond. Internally, the school is working on improving mental mathematics skills and is working with a cluster of local schools on raising standards of literacy.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which the staff share good practice with one another regularly following training or courses. This has a clear impact on the staff's skills and confidence.

Partnership working: Good

The school co-operates effectively with a number of partners to improve pupils' learning experiences across the school and to take advantage of additional funding and resources.

The school's relationship with parents is good on the whole, but the process of communicating with parents about some specific issues is not always clear. For example, there are no formal opportunities for parents to express their opinions on the life and work of the school.

The headteacher has developed a strong relationship with the local nursery groups. The youngest children have an appropriate opportunity to settle in before starting at the school.

There is a very effective relationship between the school and the local secondary school and the transition arrangements prepare the pupils successfully for transferring to Year 7. Year 6 pupils get to know key members of staff at the secondary school at an early stage through specific meetings and lessons with teachers at the secondary school.

Appropriate arrangements are in place between the schools in the cluster and the secondary school for moderating and standardising work jointly regularly.

The school makes valuable use of the local community through regular visits to the library, the old people's day centre, local shops and the church. The school is also active in the community, for example when collecting litter during the 'Keep Wales Tidy' week.

Resource management: Good

The school has enough qualified staff to teach the curriculum effectively and it uses resources well.

There is good co-operation between teachers and support staff and this relationship is effective in ensuring appropriate support for the pupils and creating a stimulating learning environment throughout the school.

The governing body monitors expenditure in detail. The school spends its funding carefully, ensuring that every department in the school receives attention in turn. There was a considerable investment recently in information technology equipment.

Teachers make effective use of their time for planning, preparation and assessment. The school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Key stage 1

Pupils' basic assessments show that their attainments are mixed when they start at the school. During key stage one, all pupils make appropriate progress, considering their starting points, and some pupils do better than expected.

At the end of key stage 1, the school's performance in teachers' assessments has been consistently lower than the average for the family and the whole of Wales since 2007 in all of the core subjects and in the core subject indicator. Within the family of schools, the school's performance in 2011 was in line with expectations of it in every subject. The performance since 2007 has been, on average, a little lower than expected within the family.

In comparison with the performance of similar schools in terms of the number of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school is consistently among the bottom 25% or 50% in every subject. Pupils who attain level 3 or higher in teachers' assessments are consistently higher across the subjects.

Key stage 2

There were fifteen pupils in the cohort at the end of key stage 2 in 2011, which was considerably fewer than the usual number. There were nine pupils on the special needs register. The progress of nearly every pupil in the cohort from the end of key stage 1 until the end of key stage 2 was in line with expectations of them.

At the end of key stage 2, over a period of five years, results of teachers' assessments have shown consistent and good progress in every subject except Welsh. A decline in the results for Welsh was seen in 2011. Within the family of schools, the school's performance in 2011 was considerably higher than expected in every subject except Welsh. In comparison with the performance of similar schools in terms of the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school compares favourably consistently. English was among the top 25% in 2011, mathematics in the top 50% and Welsh was among the bottom 25% in 2011.

The percentage of pupils who reach level 5 or higher in teachers' assessments in all subjects dropped considerably in 2011, after a period of two years of very good results that placed the school among the top 25% in comparison with similar schools.

In key stage 2, girls performed better than boys consistently, especially in language. In key stage 1, the difference between boys is more inconsistent, and is not significant at all in Welsh.

By now, pupils who are entitled to free school meals attain the same standards as those who are not entitled.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to pupil questionnaires

One hundred responses were received by pupils, and the responses were very positive in general. Nearly all pupils believe that teachers and other adults help them to learn, and that the school teaches them how to keep healthy. They are also of the opinion that nearly all pupils behave well at play time and lunch time.

Most pupils say that they feel safe at school, and that the school deals well with any bullying. They know to whom to speak if they are worried or anxious or if they find their work difficult. Most also state that there are many opportunities to take regular physical exercise, and that there are enough books, equipment and computers for them to do their work.

In the opinion of many pupils, they are doing well at school, and their homework helps them to understand and improve their school work. They are also of the opinion that other children behave well without interfering with their ability to do their work.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirty-seven responses were received. All parents believe that the school's staff have high expectations of pupils. Almost all of them are satisfied with the school in general, and most say that their children like school and received good support when they starting there. They are of the opinion that their children are making good progress and are behaving well at school, and that teaching is good. The staff treat all children fairly and with respect, and they are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular physical exercise. They are of the opinion that their children are safe at school, and that they receive appropriate additional support when needed.

Most parents feel comfortable in asking a question or making suggestions to the school, and believe that the school helps their children to become more mature and to shoulder responsibility.

In the opinion of many parents, homework builds well on what children learn at school, and that they receive information about their children regularly. They understand the school's procedure for making complaints, and indicate that the school is well run. In addition, parents say that their children are prepared well for moving on to their next school, and that there is a good variety of activities in the school, including trips and visits.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Terwyn Tomos	Reporting Inspector
Michael Hayes	Team Inspector
Glenda Jones	Lay Inspector
Dylan Evans	Peer Inspector
Nia Downes	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority. If it is available, the data report can be seen on our website alongside this report.

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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FPYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	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

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.