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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Drefach Primary School,
Heol Blaenhirwaun,
Llanelli,
Carmarthenshire.
SA14 7AN**

Date of inspection: November 2011

by

Dr David Gareth Evans

for

**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

Drefach Primary School is located on the edge of Drefach village in the Gwendraeth valley. The area is neither prosperous nor economically or socially disadvantaged. The area is a Welsh-speaking area, but the percentage of the population who use Welsh is gradually declining. The school is on the main road between Cross Hands and Llanddarog.

At present there are 34 pupils on roll, and the numbers have declined substantially over the last few years. The majority of pupils come from the school's catchment area with a small percentage coming from outside the village. Houses in the catchment area are a mixture of privately-owned and rented properties. Approximately 26% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals and this figure is higher than the local and national averages. No pupil is looked after by the local authority. Approximately 16% of pupils have additional learning needs (ALN), which is lower than local and national percentages. No pupil has a statutory statement of ALN.

Within the catchment there is a refuge centre for women and their children. Children who join the school from the refuge centre come and go on a fairly regular basis. The majority of children who start at the school transfer from the local nursery group, and later at the end of key stage 2 they have a choice of transferring to one of two secondary schools in the catchment area.

Although Drefach School is a traditional Welsh school, only 17% of the pupils speak Welsh at home. There is an arrangement for the increasing numbers who move to the area to attend the Welsh Language Centre where an intensive Welsh course is provided for them. At present 13% of pupils from the school attend the Centre.

The school is led by an acting head teacher who is also head teacher of another neighbouring primary school. This arrangement started at the beginning of the summer term 2011 as an informal federation to begin with. All the teachers were appointed to their posts at the start of the inspection term.

The school was last inspected in October 2005.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Drefach School is £3,956, which compares with a maximum of £17,415 and a minimum of £3,014 for primary schools in Carmarthenshire. The school has the 39th highest budget per pupil out of the 114 primary schools in Carmarthenshire

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is adequate because;

- all pupils are courteous and well behaved;
- the school provides a wide range of valuable learning experiences;
- the quality of teaching is good;
- pupils achieve good standards of well-being; and
- there is close and effective collaboration between the school, parents and the local community.

However:

- there is not enough progress in pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the school;
- the provision for more able pupils is not sufficiently developed; and
- only very few pupils attain or achieve well.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the new acting head teacher has in a short time given decisive direction and clear vision for the school and has managed change very effectively;
- the self-evaluation report is comprehensive, very honest and includes a detailed analysis of data that shows that the school knows itself well;
- the school development plan has identified correctly the school's need to raise standards and has prioritized this appropriately;
- clear and practical management processes are consistently implemented across the school; and
- rapid progress has been made in important areas such as the school's ethos, links with parents and the community and creating effective teaching strategies.

Recommendations

In order to improve the schools needs to:

R1 improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT standards;

R2 continue to develop the best assessment practices across the school;

R3 ensure that the provision meets the needs of every pupil, including the more able ones; and

R4 ensure stability in the leadership of the school.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by Estyn.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

The number of pupils that are assessed annually at the end of both key stages varies, and is often very low. This means that one or two pupils' results at times can impact on the cohort's performance. Due to the fact there are so few pupils in the cohorts, it is very difficult to see any clear patterns in the performance over time of those pupils entitled to free school meals.

Pupils' attainment levels when they start at the school are about average and, by the end of the Foundation Phase, standards in all skills, especially oral communication skills, show adequate progress when compared with original assessment results.

During the last few years, in both key stages 1 and 2 pupils have attained at a low level when compared with local, national and family benchmarks and when compared with similar schools. In 2011 pupils' performance in key stage 1 improved in mathematics and science. Overall, girls performed better than boys in key stage 2.

In lessons, most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to the learning activities and generally they work productively and make appropriate progress. Pupils with ALN make suitable progress. However, in the majority of lessons, the more able ones are not making adequate progress. As a result, they are not able to attain the higher levels in assessments at the end of the key stages.

By the end of the Foundation Phase nearly all pupils are able to communicate effectively in Welsh. Their oral skills develop well and they make appropriate use of their reading and writing skills across the curriculum. Many pupils in key stage 2 are able to talk about their work with increased confidence. However, there is not enough progress in lessons in pupils' ability to contribute more extensively orally and to exchange ideas.

By year 6 most pupils make adequate progress in their literacy skills in Welsh and English and writing skills are generally good in Welsh by the end of year six. However, most pupils' reading standards are adequate only.

Most pupils' achievement in learning and progress in lessons across the school are generally appropriate and commensurate with their ability. Many can recall previous learning for a purpose and are able to build upon it appropriately. Overall, pupils collaborate well, respond appropriately to tasks set and to the questions asked by teachers. By year six, pupils' thinking skills and their ability to work independently are gradually developing. Overall, most pupils use their numeracy and ICT skills appropriately across the school.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of health and fitness and they achieve well in their personal, social and cultural development. They feel safe in school and know how they can keep healthy by eating sensibly and exercising their bodies in physical education lessons and other activities.

Most pupils are contented and enjoy school life and their lessons. Behaviour is good across the school and nearly all pupils are courteous and respond respectfully to adults and peers. Nearly all show care and respect for each other.

The attendance rate, which is approximately 94%, is higher than national and local averages and nearly all pupils are punctual. Members of the school council and the eco committee take an active part by making appropriate decisions about school life. These pupils enjoy their responsibilities and they appreciate that they can influence the daily life and activities of the school. Their participation in extra-curricular activities and their commitment to the village and the local community are very positive.

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

The recent planning across the school has resulted in distinct improvements and deals effectively with National Curriculum and Foundation Phase requirements.

Provision to ensure that pupils acquire literacy, communication, numeracy, and ICT skills is adequate and the new systems, which have been recently implemented, have not had time to become established. Provision to develop independent learning and thinking skills receives appropriate and constant attention. These skills are now distinct and effective aspects of the daily life of the school and of pupils' work.

The school successfully promotes pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. Full advantage is taken of the sustainable nature of the building and the site to promote pupils' understanding of the best practices to protect the earth. Considerable attention is given to other cultures, mainly as the result of the links with Lesotho. Collective worship is used appropriately to emphasise respect for others and personal and social education.

Provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is very effectively developed across the school by means of lessons, creative activities and appropriate celebrations. When required, the local authority's language unit is used effectively to support the Welsh provision for latecomers to the school.

Teaching: Good

Teaching in the school is good and teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan a range of interesting activities that stimulate pupils. Almost without exception, the relationship between teachers and pupils is one that encourages courtesy and respect. Teachers' expectations are high and they prepare activities which effectively build upon pupils' previous experience. Learning aims and success criteria are shared with pupils in the majority of lessons.

By fostering a caring and supportive ethos pupils' behaviour is managed well. Effective collaboration between the teaching and support staff enriches and augments experiences within the classes.

On the whole, detailed marking and constructive feedback to pupils' work helps them to understand how to develop their written work further.

The school's assessment and recording systems are developing appropriately with assessment for learning strategies beginning to become established in classes. Targets are set for end-of-year results and these are regularly checked. A new system of tracking pupil progress is becoming established and the school is developing new ways of reporting to parents.

Care, support and guidance: Good

This is a very caring school which promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school takes advantage of every opportunity to offer high quality pastoral support to pupils. Appropriate use is made of specialist services to support pupils' emotional and personal health across the school. There are specific plans at individual class level for developing personal and social education.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding. Members of staff have received specific training as part of these arrangements. The school's ethos ensures that pupils understand their right to be safe. They know how to respond if there are any instances of bullying or injustice.

The school's overall provision for pupils with ALN is developing adequately. Pupils with ALN are identified early by regular observation, discussions with parents and through formal and informal assessments. Teachers have started tracking pupil progress and plan relevant work in response to pupils' needs. They also identify more able pupils and provide for them appropriately.

Learning environment: Good

The school's ethos reflects the open and all inclusive atmosphere. A special feature is the family ethos that is based on implementing policies that respect every individual's rights within the school community. The promotion of equality, equal opportunity, as well as a sense of fairness for all, is very evident in the school's activities.

The school makes good contributions to raise pupils' awareness of different cultures, ethnic and religious differences that exist in society.

The school is situated on an extensive site and provides plenty of space. The building offers a welcoming atmosphere for pupils, and is safe and attractive. Rooms are used creatively and effectively to support teaching and learning and the development of the outside areas has been extremely effective.

The resources are of a high standard. The school buildings and site are well maintained.

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

Since the acting head teacher was appointed in May 2011 rapid progress has been made in a short time in important areas and change has been managed very well. The acting head teacher collaborates very effectively with the staff of the school to create a positive ethos and a clear vision for the future. As a result, there is an improvement in strategic planning, which now concentrates clearly on raising standards and improving the quality of the provision and the learning environment. Although not all activities have had sufficient time to impact fully on pupils' standards across the school, strong foundations have been laid for future improvement.

A comprehensive and balanced review has been produced of the provision, which gives a clear direction for the development of the school. Every member of staff has a specific job description that ensures that they understand their role in implementing school plans. Nevertheless, uncertainty at the leadership and management level of the school continues.

Appropriate attention is given to national and local priorities. The Foundation Phase has been very successfully established, ensuring appropriate resources that are managed effectively. Assessment for learning is now becoming established within lessons and contributes appropriately to raising standards.

Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and are increasingly aware of their responsibilities. Members of the governing body are beginning to monitor teaching regularly across curricular areas and they play an appropriate role in managing the head teacher's performance. They are beginning to use data more effectively to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the life and work of the school. Their role as critical friends of the school is developing appropriately.

Improving quality: Good

The school knows itself well and there is a strong commitment to promote improvement across the school. Comparative data is analysed well. By now, there are effective arrangements to consider the views of pupils and parents, as well as the recommendations of the local authority's education service officers, when determining priorities for improvement.

There are appropriate arrangements for monitoring provision. There are clear systems in place for observing teaching, scrutinising pupil work and discussing and questioning pupils and staff. The information is effectively recorded and transferred to the self-evaluation report.

The self-evaluation report is comprehensive, evaluative and draws due attention to the school's strengths and aspects that require further attention. All members of staff take part in producing the report and pupils have an input through the school council.

Parent questionnaires are used purposefully to seek their views and they receive full consideration. The outcomes of the self-evaluation process form the basis for the priorities set out in the school development plan.

The school has effective professional development arrangements that are relevant to individual staff needs and there are strong link to the priorities in the development plan. There is an appropriate arrangement for managing staff performance, which offers opportunities for continuous professional development.

The school is continuing to develop the aspect of internal networking by sharing the good practices of teaching, moderating work and discussing and offering developments for improving the learning. The school also collaborates well with other local schools to plan and implement developments.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established a good range of partnerships with the local authority, the local community, support services, the nursery group, which is held on the school site, and the local cluster of schools. In the same manner, arrangements for transferring pupils to the local secondary schools prepare older pupils well for the next stage in their education. Every one of these partnerships has a strong impact on pupils' achievement, standards and well-being.

There is good communication with parents and they feel they are part of the life of the school. Parents and visitors from the community make a positive contribution to enriching pupils' experiences in the school and in the local area. There are well established and effective arrangements in place to enable pupils to transfer successfully to secondary education.

The school collaborates well with the cluster schools and the comprehensive schools to moderate standards at key stage 2.

Resource management: Good

The school has sufficient qualified teachers and support staff. They are used effectively and the training they receive is clearly linked to school priorities. Senior managers and the governing body manage the school budget and resources well and review the expenditure appropriately.

Arrangements for teacher planning, preparation and assessment time and the work load agreement have been well organised. Teachers use these opportunities effectively.

Expenditure in the school development plans is carefully planned and recorded, especially for staffing requirements. The school provides good value for money in view of the quality of the teaching, the care, support and guidance and the strong quality of the leadership.

Appendix 1

Comments on performance data

In key stage 1, generally, teacher assessment results in Welsh, mathematics and science have been well below national and local averages over the last few years. The core subject indicator, which is the percentage of pupils attaining at least level two in Welsh, mathematics and science in combination, is also lower than national and local averages. When key stage 1 results are compared with other similar schools, using the free school meal indicator, results in Welsh, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator were usually in the fourth quartile over the last four years.

When comparing with schools from the same family, results in the three core subjects and the core subject indicator generally have been well below the family average for the four years. The number of pupils attaining the higher level 3 in the core subjects is also lower than the family averages. Usually, boys have performed better than girls over a period of time.

In key stage 2, there is a similar pattern to key stage 1 over the last four years. Results in Welsh, English, mathematics and science have been far lower than national, local and the family of schools' averages. When key stage 2 results are compared with other similar schools, using the free school meals indicator, results in Welsh, English, mathematics and science were usually in the fourth or third quartile over the last four years.

When comparing with the family of schools, the results of the three core subjects and the core subject indicator generally have been lower than the family's averages for the last three years. The number of pupils attaining the higher level 5 has also been far lower than comparative averages during the same period.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Five parents or carers responded to the questionnaire. They were all satisfied with the school; all agreed that their children liked the school and all agreed that their children received help to settle down well when they started at school. All agreed that staff treated their children fairly and with respect; and all received regular information about their child's progress. All felt that staff expected their children to work hard and to do their best, that homework builds well upon what their children learn in school and they feel that their children are making good progress.

All feel that their children are safe in school; that pupils behave well and that teaching is good. Also, they all feel that their children are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise. They also feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, making suggestions or noting a problem. They feel that the school helps their children to become more mature and to accept responsibilities; that their children had been well prepared for moving on to the next school; and that the school was well run. All thought that there was appropriate additional support in relation to any specific individual needs.

Many understand the school's arrangement for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fourteen key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire and the team spoke to pupils during the inspection. All feel safe in the school; they state that there a number of opportunities to take regular exercise, that they had sufficient books, equipment and computers to do their work and that they know what to do and with whom to speak if they find the work difficult. Nearly all say that the teachers teach them effectively and help them to make progress. Nearly all say that the school deals well with any bullying and teach them how to stay healthy. Many state that they are doing well in school.

Only approximately 57% of pupils felt that behaviour was good during play times and lunch times and 71% responded that other children behaved well in school and that there is no misbehaviour that affects their ability to work. These are not the inspection team's finding after observing pupils' behaviour in classes, during play times and as a result of asking them face to face.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Dr David Gareth Evans	Reporting Inspector
Mr Enir R. Morgan	Team Inspector
Mr Gwilym Davies	Lay Inspector
Mr Terry L. Williams	Peer Inspector
Mrs Manon W. 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