



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Llanfihangel Rhydithon C.P. School
Dolau
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5TW**

Date of inspection: May 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

Llanfihangel Rhydithon is a small rural school in Powys, eight miles to the north-east of Llandrindod Wells just off the A488 road from Penybont to Knighton.

The school caters for pupils between four and eleven years of age. There are currently 43 pupils on roll. Pupils enter the nursery on a part time basis in the term of their fourth birthday, leading to full time attendance by the time they are five.

Pupils represent the full ability range. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and approximately 25% of pupils are on the school's register of additional learning needs. The pupils are arranged into three classes.

According to the school, pupils come from a social background that is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Just over 6% of the pupils receive free school meals. This is below the national average.

All of the pupils are from English speaking backgrounds and English is the day-to-day language of the school.

No significant changes have occurred to the character of the school in recent years, although there has been one change in the teaching staff.

The current headteacher has been in post since September 1997. She has a teaching commitment equivalent to four days a week.

The individual school budget per pupil for Llanfihangel Rhydithon in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £4,713 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Powys is £14,685 and the minimum is £3,005. Llanfihangel Rhydithon is 17th out of the 101 primary schools in Powys in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The good features of the school include:

- pupils' well-developed social and life skills;
- the high level of care, support and guidance that has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour;
- a caring and inclusive ethos, which promotes respect and equality; and
- very productive partnerships with parents and the local community, which improve pupils' wellbeing.

However, current performance is judged as adequate because:

- standards vary too much;
- pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as they should be in all subjects;
- learning experiences do not challenge all pupils sufficiently; and
- planning for skills across the curriculum is not good enough.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- leadership has had a significant impact on developing a positive school ethos and improving pupils' wellbeing;
- governors are very supportive of many aspects of the school's life and work; and
- the school has established effective partnership working that has contributed to improving pupils' learning and wellbeing.

However, leadership has not ensured that:

- the school's processes for self-evaluation are robust enough;
- systems to review and track pupils' progress are sufficiently refined to bring about improvement;
- links between self-evaluation and development planning are clear; and
- governors hold the school to account well enough.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school needs to:

- R1 improve the standards achieved by the pupils across the school, especially in literacy;
- R2 develop the planning for skills across the curriculum, in particular to improve pupils' writing;
- R3 ensure that learning experiences are differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils, especially those of higher ability;
- R4 improve assessment to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work and to enable teachers to track pupils' progress more effectively;
- R5 develop the role of the governing body to set the strategic direction of the school and to act as a critical friend; and
- R6 put in place self-evaluation systems based on robust first-hand evidence and use the outcomes to inform improvement planning.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Across the school, pupils make steady progress in their learning. In lessons, many pupils recall information well and develop new knowledge and skills effectively. However, many pupils of higher ability do not make enough progress.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils make sound progress in their literacy skills. They develop their knowledge of letter and sound patterns appropriately and participate enthusiastically in story-telling. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils develop well the skills to write independently. They increase their vocabulary effectively and usually spell common words accurately.

By the end of key stage 2, most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. Many pupils make confident, articulate responses and are attentive to one another and to their teachers. They respond well to teachers' questions, expressing their opinions clearly.

Most pupils are enthusiastic readers. Many older pupils read with reasonable fluency and understanding. They know how to deal with unfamiliar words and discuss readily characters and plots.

In key stage 2, many pupils write at length and show an awareness of different purposes for writing. A minority of pupils write in a clear, organised and imaginative way. However, a majority of pupils make limited progress in writing for different audiences and purposes in subjects across the curriculum. They do not structure their work successfully and make too many spelling and punctuation errors. Many pupils do not present their work carefully enough.

Across the school, pupils work well together in pairs and in groups to explore ideas and to develop their understanding. Pupils of all ages set targets for their learning in particular tasks and a few pupils use these successfully to measure their progress.

Pupils with additional learning needs achieve appropriately in line with their abilities.

Only a minority of pupils are developing their skills to use the Welsh language confidently. The majority do not successfully build upon their skills as they move through the school.

At both key stages, in 2011, pupils' performance at the expected level in English, mathematics and science was very good and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools and at the top of its family of schools (a group of schools that face similar levels of challenge). These results are significantly higher than those of previous years. Over the last five years, the school's performance has been very variable at both key stages and overall, has not been good enough when compared to that of pupils in similar schools in Wales.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils feel safe in school and that the school deals well with bullying. Nearly all pupils behave very well in classes and around the school. They have well-developed social and life skills and are caring and respectful of one another. Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities, for example to act as 'buddies' for younger pupils. In lessons, pupils show interest in their work and cooperate well to develop their skills. Attendance is good and compares well to that in similar schools.

Most pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They know about healthy eating and take regular opportunities for exercise.

School council members are motivated and committed to their roles. They have contributed to a number of improvements to the school environment and are involved in the appointment of new members of staff. In addition, they successfully organise charity events, for example for Children in Need. However, pupils have yet to contribute strongly to school self-evaluation or to key school plans. Overall, pupils have too limited a say in what and how they learn.

Pupils contribute well to activities in the local community and all pupils participate in sports events and school plays. These activities develop their skills and confidence very effectively.

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

The school plans stimulating and interesting learning experiences for pupils. Flexible grouping arrangements enable the school to respond well to pupils' individual learning needs. However, curriculum planning does not fully ensure that pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills systematically as they move through the school. Planning for pupils' literacy development is not focused well enough on developing higher order writing skills. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently and to apply and make progress in their problem solving and investigative skills.

The school offers a range of suitable experiences to develop pupils' knowledge of sustainability. Pupils, for example, actively work to improve the school environment and have developed several garden areas within the school grounds. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible global citizens, through learning about the lives of people in other countries.

Educational visits, special events and visitors to the school provide exciting learning opportunities for pupils. Involvement with forest schools, eco schools, links with the local community, as well as a school in New Zealand, enrich pupils' learning experiences.

The provision and planning for Welsh language development are inconsistent. Teachers' use of Welsh is too sporadic throughout the school, resulting in missed opportunities to develop pupils' ability and confidence in using the Welsh language.

Teaching: Adequate

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They often plan well-structured lessons with clear objectives for pupils' learning. Teachers use a wide range of approaches to help pupils to understand key concepts and to develop their skills. They make skilful use of questioning to encourage pupils to consider ideas and to connect information. In the best practice, teachers plan to meet the differing needs of pupils. However, this practice is too variable. Work is not always sufficiently challenging for pupils of higher ability, or appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of less able pupils.

Teachers' written comments on pupils' work give praise and make recommendations, but do not give enough guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. Pupils are sometimes encouraged to evaluate their own work, but these opportunities are not structured or regular enough.

The school has a system for collecting pupils' work to demonstrate progress over time. However, pupils' progress is not analysed sufficiently to determine trends, or to fully inform whole-school planning. The school appropriately uses the local authority's baseline data and predictions of performance to set targets, but does not take enough account of teachers' assessments to refine or amend these targets. In too many cases, the assessment of pupils' work is not accurate enough.

Reports to parents are detailed, informative and identify pupils' strengths and areas for development clearly.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school develops pupils' health and wellbeing successfully and this has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Relationships between children and adults are good and are based on respect and courtesy. Nearly all parents and pupils feel able to approach staff for advice and help when required.

In spite of the small year group sizes, the school successfully participates in sports, music activities and competitions on a local and county level. This has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and skills.

The school cares well for all pupils and identifies their needs in an effective and timely way. It provides an appropriate range of intervention support programmes, which are responsive to pupils' needs additional learning needs. Teachers and support staff work as a team with a range of specialist services to ensure that pupils have full access to the curriculum. However, in a very few cases where pupils with additional learning needs are taught in mixed-ability groups, pupils' learning support needs are not fully met.

The school reviews regularly the progress of pupils with additional learning needs and keeps parents fully informed about their child's education. Parents and pupils are fully involved in developing and reviewing pupils' individual education plans.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. However, an issue relating to health and safety was brought to the attention of the school during the inspection.

Learning environment: Good

There is a caring and homely ethos within the school, which promotes a feeling of belonging, respect for one another and equality.

The school building and outside areas are well planned and maintained to a good standard and provide an appropriate environment for play and learning. Extensive use is made of the on-site community hall. This is an excellent additionally facility where pupils enjoy a variety of classes. The hall is also used for pre-school provision.

Resources are of good quality and are well matched to pupils' needs.

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

The headteacher and governing body work well together to promote successfully a positive school ethos where the pupils feel valued, happy and safe.

All staff have detailed job descriptions and teaching staff have responsibility for the development of specific areas of the curriculum. In general, staff have a good understanding of their roles within the school. However, leadership responsibilities are not sufficiently distributed. Many of the strategies to manage the school are not systematic enough and do not focus sufficiently on the evaluation of data and on raising pupil outcomes.

Performance management are in place for all staff, but targets set for do not always reflect priorities in the school development plan and do not relate sufficiently to raising standards.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations. The governors support the school well in many aspects of its work. Governors informed well about the school's day-to-day activities. However, they are not involved enough in the processes for self-evaluation and setting priorities within the school development plan. As a result, the role of the governing body in determining the strategic direction of the school and its capacity to act as a critical friend are under-developed.

The school pays suitable attention to local and national priorities. It has addressed some of the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework well, especially in the areas of pupils' wellbeing. Foundation Phase principles, thinking skills development and assessment for learning strategies are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

Improving quality: Adequate

Although the school's arrangements for self-evaluation draw upon a range of first hand evidence, they are not well developed. Procedures do not involve fully all members of staff or take good enough account of data or the views of pupils and parents. Formal monitoring procedures and the involvement of staff in evaluating progress against previously set targets are not well established. As a result, the school's self-evaluation report is descriptive rather than evaluative, and does not focus enough on raising standards. Links between the self-evaluation report and the school development plan are unclear.

The school development plan is, however, a detailed and useful document. It sets out clear priorities based on data analysis and advice provided by the local authority. The priorities identify important areas for improvement in standards. The plan refers appropriately to actions to be taken, sets out suitable timescales, and establishes appropriate success criteria.

Teachers are beginning to share their professional knowledge; for example, the headteacher is a member of a Foundation Phase network that meets to discuss best practice. All teachers have visited other schools to raise standards of teaching in literacy, and in personal and social education. These initiatives are beginning to impact positively on practice within the school

Partnership working: Good

The school has established effectively a range of partnerships that impact positively on pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Parents are very supportive of the school, and are productively involved in many aspects of the school's work. The school has an active 'friends of the school' association, which plays an important part in the school's life and provides significant additional funds, for example to improve the outdoor environment.

The school has valuable links with the local community. The local church, a senior citizens' care home and local businesses all contribute well to the work of the school. Local residents come to the school to talk about their work and experiences and pupils are taken on visits within the locality to enrich their learning experiences.

There is appropriate joint working with the local authority services to improve pupils' wellbeing.

The school has effective links with the local cluster of schools to develop teaching and learning. However, arrangements with other schools to support the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessments are less effective.

There are very successful transition arrangements with the local secondary school.

Relationships with the pre-school setting, based in the community hall, are particularly successful in ensuring a smooth transition into the Foundation Phase class.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has a sufficient number of appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum effectively and deploys teachers well to make best use of their expertise. Teachers and support staff work well together.

Curriculum resources are well managed and used appropriately by staff and pupils.

The school manages its budget well and has a planned surplus to respond to the possible effect of fluctuating pupil numbers on staffing. However, spending decisions are not always clearly linked to priorities for improvement and the school development plan does not identify necessary financial resources well enough.

Taking into account standards and pupils' progress overall, value for money is adequate.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

At both key stages, in 2011, pupils' performance at the expected level in English, mathematics and science was very good and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools and at the top of its family of schools (a group of schools that face similar levels of challenge). These results are significantly higher than those of previous years. Over the last five years, the school's performance has been very variable at both key stages when compared to that of the other schools in its family and in the same free schools meals band.

At key stage 1, in English, pupils' performance has fluctuated. Performance has been below the average for the family of schools and the Welsh average in three out of the last five years. Pupils' performance in mathematics was in the bottom 25% of that for similar schools and below the family average for the three years prior to 2011. In science, pupils' performance was below the family average and in the bottom 25% of that for similar schools for two years prior to 2011.

At key stage 2, in English and in science, following particularly strong results in 2008, that were well above the family and Welsh averages, performance in these subjects fell to the bottom 25% of that for similar schools in 2009 and 2010. In mathematics, performance was in the lower 50% of that for similar schools and below the family average in the three years prior to 2011.

More able pupils' performance at the higher levels in English has fluctuated, but has been above the family average for the last three years. In 2011, performance was second in the family. Performance in mathematics was below the family average for the four years prior to 2011. In 2011, performance in the higher levels in mathematics improved significantly to above the family average. Performance at the higher levels in science has been above the family average for the last four years. In 2011, performance was significantly above the family average.

The school has small cohorts and therefore differences in the relative performance of boys and girls, and those who are and who are not entitled to free school meals, cannot be analysed meaningfully.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Outcomes from the pupil questionnaire (23 responses)

All pupils say that they feel safe in school, that they have someone to turn to if they have any concerns and that the school deals well with bullying. All pupils say that they are doing well and that staff help them to learn and make progress. All pupils believe that they have enough books and equipment, and most say that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. Nearly all pupils agree that the school teaches them to be healthy and they have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise. Many pupils think that other pupils behave well in class and many say that this is also the case at break and lunchtimes.

The views of pupils are broadly in line with those of pupils in other primary schools throughout Wales.

Outcomes from the parents' questionnaire (22 responses)

Responses from the parents' questionnaires compare favourably with the responses of parents with pupils in primary schools across Wales. All parents state that they are satisfied with the school and that their child likes school. All parents feel that their child settled quickly into school life and that teaching is good with staff having high expectations of pupils. All parents say that their child is making good progress and that behaviour is good, and most agree that staff treat pupils fairly and with respect. All parents believe that homework is useful and that they are well informed about their child's progress. All parents agree that pupils are provided with appropriate individual support if needed. All parents say that children are helped to mature and take on responsibility and that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. All state that their child feels safe in school and that their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise. All agree that the school provides a good range of activities. All parents think that the school is well run and nearly all say that they are comfortable to approach staff with questions or suggestions. All parents say that they understand how to make a complaint should the need arise.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Lewis	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Roberts	Team Inspector
Dylan Jones	Lay Inspector
Dyfrig Ellis	Peer Inspector
Kate Jones	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.

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. FYear 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.