



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 Abererch
Pwllheli
Gwynedd
LL53 6YU**

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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Context

Ysgol Gynradd Abererch, which is situated in the small village of Abererch, near Pwllheli in Gwynedd, serves the village and the surrounding rural area. In addition, about a quarter of the pupils come from areas outside the school's catchment area.

Pupils who come to the school are considered to come from neither privileged nor underprivileged backgrounds. About half of them come from Welsh-speaking households. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds at the school.

Children are admitted to the school, part-time to the nursery class, in the September following their third birthday, and full-time in the September following their fourth birthday. During the inspection, there were 53 pupils between of 4 and 11 years of age on roll. They are taught, mainly in Welsh, by two full-time teachers and two part-time teachers.

The percentage of pupils (12%) who are entitled to receive free school meals is lower than the average for Gwynedd and for Wales. Thirteen (25%) pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, and four (7%) have a statement. These figures are higher than the national averages.

The current headteacher was appointed to her post in March 2012. She has been in charge of the school since July 2011.

The school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Abererch in 2011-2012 is £3,400. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in Gwynedd is £7,732 and the minimum is £2,745. Ysgol Gynradd Abererch is 52nd out of the 102 primary schools in Gwynedd in terms of school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol Abererch's performance is good because:

- most pupils make good progress during their time at the school;
- levels of motivation for almost all are high;
- there is a wide range of rich learning experiences that captures the interest of most pupils;
- there is effective provision to promote wellbeing and an inclusive, homely ethos in which pupils feel happy and safe;
- there is an element of excellence in the way in which staff provide for pupils with profound needs; and
- the expedient and effective co-operation of the whole staff and a range of partnerships have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations that have been conveyed successfully to staff, pupils, governors and parents;
- appropriate priorities have been established that give prominent attention to improving standards;
- there is clear evidence of improvement in important areas in a short time; and
- the governing body is supportive and aware of the way in which the school is performing in comparison with similar schools.

Recommendations

The school should:

- R1 ensure that more pupils achieve at higher levels at the end of key stage 2;
- R2 raise standards of writing in both languages in key stage 2;
- R3 ensure that curriculum planning in key stage 2 meets the needs of every pupil;
- R4 provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning; and
- R5 ensure that targets in the school development plan are specific and measurable.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the implementation of the plan and will report to Estyn on progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In the Foundation Phase in 2011, every pupil achieved the expected level (level 2) in Welsh, mathematics and science. Over a period of four years, apart from 2011, the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level in the three subjects has been higher than the average figures for Wales and for the family of similar schools. In comparison with that of schools with similar levels of entitlement to receive free school meals, the school's performance in 2011 was among the top 25% in Wales. It had been among the bottom 25% in the previous three years.

In key stage 2, the percentage of 11-year-old pupils who achieve the expected level (level 4) in Welsh, English, mathematics and science in combination has varied over a period of four years. It was higher than family and Wales averages in two of those years and lower in two others. In 2011, the school's performance was among the bottom 25% of that for similar schools in terms of entitlement to receive free school meals. It had been among the upper 50% in the three previous years and in the top 25% in two of them.

In both key stages the percentage of pupils who achieve at the higher level has varied over the last four years but tends to be lower than family and Wales average figures.

In lessons and over time, most pupils are making good progress in relation to their ability and their previous performance. This good progress is seen in pupils' achievement in their work, in their books and in lessons. They recall previous learning well and show good knowledge and understanding of what they have learnt in several subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in line with their age and ability. In some aspects of their work, pupils of higher ability are not achieving as well as they could. There is no significant pattern in terms of difference between the achievement of girls and boys.

Nearly all pupils across the school listen well to their teachers and are very willing to offer answers or comments when speaking about their work. They make good progress in their use of the Welsh language from the time they start at school. They develop a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and use it clearly and accurately when speaking about their work. The oral skills of pupils who come from non Welsh-speaking homes are developing very quickly. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils communicate freely and confidently in Welsh and English. Most older pupils use translanguaging fluently and effectively to discuss various subjects confidently.

Most pupils are making good progress in their reading skills in Welsh. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils read simple texts with increasing confidence and accuracy, using appropriate strategies when reading unfamiliar words. By the end of the Foundation Phase, nearly all read confidently for different purposes, including looking for information. In key stage 2, many are reading accurately and

meaningfully in Welsh and English. The best are reading aloud with clear expression. Many older pupils are using their reading skills effectively to obtain and present information by using their skills of using both languages concurrently skilfully to present the information.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils are making good progress in their ability to write independently. They use increasing vocabulary and phrases, beginning to vary sentences and using correct punctuation. In key stage 2, many are making good progress in their ability to write for a number of purposes. By the end of the key stage, their work shows a good awareness of the features of different forms of writing. They use their writing skills effectively in other subjects, making increasing use of specialist terms. The work of many older pupils shows good standards of accuracy of language in Welsh. However, only a minority are writing in English with the same accuracy, mainly because of spelling mistakes. Examples of extended writing in either language are scarce.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have a good awareness of the need to foster healthy personal habits, including fitness. They feel safe and happy in school and know to whom to turn for support and advice.

The motivation levels of almost all pupils are high. They co-operate effectively with each other in their lessons and activities. However, key stage 2 pupils' skills in improving their own work are only beginning to develop. Only a few have the confidence and ability to assess their own work.

All pupils get on well together and standards of behaviour are high. Pupils of all ages play together happily at break time and lunch time. They show maturity and care when dealing with other children.

Over recent years, levels of attendance have been lower than those of similar schools. The robust steps that have been taken recently to raise attendance percentages and ensure punctuality have been successful. Attendance rates are now over 95% and nearly all pupils reach school punctually.

The pupils' voice has a prominent place in the school's activities and decisions. Members of the school council are enthusiastic and pupils' viewpoints and ideas are considered seriously. The recent accreditation by the external agency 'Clywed' confirms that this is a strong feature of the school.

Through a range of activities, inside and outside the school, pupils are developing a good range of social and life skills. They foster a good understanding of global citizenship. A good example of this is their commitment in promoting aspects of fair trade.

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

The school provides a wide range of rich learning experiences that meet the needs of most pupils well. Learning experiences in the Foundation Phase offer stimulating and challenging activities to all pupils, which ensure consistent and obvious progress. In key stage 2, the interesting learning experiences deal appropriately with the requirements of the National Curriculum and capture the interest of most pupils. However, the schemes of work do not offer sufficient guidance to ensure progression and continuity in all pupils' learning experiences, especially those of higher ability.

Planning for skills has a prominent place across the school. Clear and effective emphasis is placed on fostering pupils' speaking skills, discussion skills and skills of expressing an opinion across the school. Provision for developing Foundation Phase pupils' writing skills is successful but planning for developing key stage 2 pupils' writing skills is not as effective. Teachers have started to incorporate activities in the schemes of work that motivate pupils to think and develop their independent learning skills.

All the school's staff model polished language very effectively. This has a very positive effect on pupils' oral skills. In addition, the school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn about their local area and about Welsh art, music and culture.

By promoting schemes such as Fair Trade successfully, the school develops pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship effectively.

Teaching: Good

There is a good working relationship between staff and pupils in every class and the adults create an industrious, supportive ethos. Praise is used constantly to encourage less confident pupils.

In most lessons, teachers make effective use of a range of teaching methods and ensure that pupils are aware of the purpose of the lesson. They use a good range of resources and give appropriate attention to developing key skills. Teachers have a good understanding of the curriculum and explain new concepts clearly. Appropriate pace and enterprising questioning extend the understanding of most pupils effectively. In the few lessons that have excellent elements, pupils in the Foundation Phase are encouraged to discuss with maturity sensitive issues in a supportive atmosphere. In the few lessons where teaching is less effective, learning tasks do not offer enough of a challenge to the age and ability range in key stage 2.

Teachers offer supportive feedback during lessons and written work is marked regularly. Comments do not always identify clearly what pupils need to do in order to improve.

There is an effective tracking system in the Foundation Phase. Recently, appropriate arrangements were established for assessing pupils' progress across the school, and these include regular use of standardised tests.

Through termly reports and meetings, pupils receive clear information about their children's achievements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Effective arrangements exist to support pupils' health and wellbeing and to encourage their involvement in their school and the wider community. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and through physical activities and after-school clubs, they have a wide variety of opportunities to increase their fitness and health levels.

The inclusive ethos and numerous experiences promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. Courtesy and respect are prominent qualities at the school and they are fostered daily.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Provision for pupils who have additional learning needs is a strong feature. There is an element of excellence in the way in which staff provide for pupils with profound needs. A very effective example of this is the way in which teachers and support staff at the school and the special school observe one another in order to share good practice, to ensure progression for pupils who go to both places.

All pupils take advantage of all areas of the curriculum and staff are progressive in working closely with a number of external agencies regularly in order to give the correct support to these pupils. Pupils' needs are identified early and there are good quality individual education plans for them. They are reviewed regularly in consultation with parents, pupils and appropriate specialist agencies.

Learning environment: Good

There is obvious attention to and emphasis on creating a safe, caring environment, and this is seen in the close-knit, sociable nature of the school.

The school operates as a very inclusive community in which everyone is respected well. A clear emphasis is placed upon recognising and celebrating diversity. There are equal opportunities for all.

There are plenty of good resources that match pupils' needs appropriately, and good use is made of them. The learning environment in all classes is attractive, with colourful displays that show respect for pupils' work. The school building and grounds are used effectively and are well maintained.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and she conveys this successfully to staff, governors and pupils. She knows the school well and offers a strong strategic direction for the life and work of the school. There is a positive ethos here that focuses on raising standards.

Following a period of uncertainty and a change in the school's staff, strategies were implemented in a short time which have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes and standards. There is rapid progress in many important areas, especially in ensuring the obvious support of staff and parents. However, not all the strategies have had enough impact on some aspects of pupils' achievements in key stage 2.

The school is an orderly community and all staff work effectively as a team. They have clear job descriptions and a firm understanding of their role and responsibilities.

Governors undertake their roles and responsibilities conscientiously and they have a strong interest in school life. They attend appropriate training and they have a good awareness of the school's performance in comparison with that of similar schools. This has strengthened their role as critical friends in order to challenge the school about standards.

The school's initiatives to meet local and national priorities are developing effectively. Prominent attention is given to the Welsh language and pupils' wellbeing, and the Foundation Phase is implemented successfully.

Improving quality: Adequate

Self-evaluation procedures are developing appropriately. All members of staff play an active part in the evaluation, and consider a number of sources of evidence. Pupils have regular opportunities to express an opinion on the school and they do this with obvious maturity. Parents' and governors' contributions to the self-evaluation processes have not been developed as well.

The school's self-evaluation report is comprehensive and conveys a valid picture of the school's current situation. There is a tendency for the report to be descriptive rather than evaluative.

The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities and is focused appropriately on improving standards. However, targets are not quantitative enough and, as a result, it is not easy for governors to review progress. There is not a clear enough link between the self-evaluation, the priorities of the development plan and targets for improving key stage 2 pupils.

The school is developing appropriately as a professional learning community. There are regular and appropriate opportunities to enable all staff to develop and share their knowledge. A good example of this is the effective co-operation with the staff at

the local special school to ensure the best provision for pupils who have profound needs.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively with a range of partners to support pupils' wellbeing and achievements. An open and close partnership exists between parents and the school. They value the feeling of partnership between the home and school, which allows them to contribute fully to their children's development.

The school has effective partnerships in order to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils. A good example of this is the close co-operation with the language unit to ensure that latecomers develop their communication skills effectively.

There are good partnerships with a number of local authority agencies, which have a positive impact on the development of pupils' wellbeing and attainment. This is extremely effective when supporting pupils with profound needs and is a strong feature of the provision.

There are strong links with the local community, and members of the community come to the school to share experiences with pupils. Links with local businesses promote pupils' awareness of the world of work effectively. Close links with the local nursery group ensure that children settle in easily at school. The transition plans that the cluster of schools established enable older pupils to be prepared appropriately for the next stage of their education. There are effective arrangements to standardise and moderate teachers' assessments at the end of a key stage.

Resource management: Good

The school has enough teaching staff and support staff. They work together effectively. Support staff are used extremely effectively and they work effectively alongside teachers in the classroom.

Staffing and financial resources are managed and used effectively in order to support learning and improvements across the school. The governing body monitors expenditure carefully in order to ensure that it remains within budget. Decisions on expenditure match the priorities for developing the school.

The school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

As there is a comparatively small number of pupils at the school, data must be treated carefully as the result for one pupil counts for a high percentage of the cohort in every year.

In the end of key stage 1 assessments in 2011, every pupil achieved the expected level (level 2) in Welsh, mathematics and science. This is among the highest in the family. Over a period of four years, apart from 2011, the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level in the three subjects has been lower than the average figures for Wales and the family of similar schools. During the same period, apart from 2011, the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level in reading and writing in Welsh has also been lower than the average figures for Wales and the family.

In comparison with that of schools with similar levels of entitlement to receive free school meals, the school's performance in 2011 was among the top 25% in Wales. It had been among the bottom 25% in the previous three years.

Over a period of four years, the percentage achieving the higher level (level 3), although varying, has tended to be lower than family and Wales averages. No pupils have achieved the higher level in Welsh or mathematics during the last two years.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level (level 4) in Welsh, English, mathematics and science in combination has varied over a period of four years. In 2011, the percentage was the lowest in the family. It has been higher than family and Wales averages in two of the last three years. During the same period, apart from 2011, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in reading and writing in Welsh and English had been higher than the average figures for Wales and the family.

In 2011, the school's performance placed it among the bottom 25% of similar schools in terms of entitlement to receive free school meals. The school's performance had placed it among the upper 50% in the previous three years and in the top 25% in two of them.

Apart from in mathematics in 2008 and science in 2009, the percentage of pupils who achieve level 5 or higher at the end of key stage 2 has been consistently lower than family and Wales averages in the four subjects over a period of four years.

There is no consistent pattern of boys' underperformance in comparison with girls in either key stage.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fifteen completed questionnaires were received from parents/carers. Parents' levels of satisfaction are high, and higher than the average for primary schools.

Parents all agree that their children are making good progress at school and that appropriate additional support is available when needed. All parents indicated that they are satisfied with the school in general and that they agree that the school is run well.

Nearly all agree that homework builds well on what is learnt at school and they feel comfortable in raising any issue.

Most agree that they receive regular information about their child's progress and that there is a variety of activities, including trips and visits.

Responses to learner questionnaires

The learner questionnaires were completed by 15 key stage 2 pupils. The responses are very positive, and are higher than the national average for primary schools.

All pupils feel that they are doing well at school and that teachers help them to become more mature and to shoulder responsibility. All pupils feel safe and know to whom to turn in the case of anxiety or to ask for advice. They all agree that the school teaches them how to keep healthy. However, one pupil says that homework does not help him to understand and do his work. Three pupils are of the opinion that not all pupils behave well at lunch time and play time.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Goronwy Morris	Reporting Inspector
Buddug Bates	Team Inspector
Kevin Davies	Lay Inspector
Eifion Watkins	Peer Inspector
Annwen Hughes	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. 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.