



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 Ponthenri
Heol y Pentre
Ponthenri
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA15 5NS**

Date of inspection: September 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

The school is situated in the village of Ponthenri, near Llanelli, in Carmarthenshire. The vast majority of pupils come from the village, which is in an economically disadvantaged area.

There are 45 pupils, between three and 11 years of age, on roll. They represent the full range of ability and their attainments vary considerably when they start school.

Pupil numbers have decreased by about 25% since the last inspection. The school admits full-time pupils to the reception class at the beginning of the term following their fourth birthday. Entry to the reception class is managed and administered by the local authority.

Welsh-medium education is provided for all pupils although English is the main language of the home for about half of them. Twenty-four per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. Twenty-nine per cent of pupils have been recorded by the school as having special educational needs, and two have a statement of special educational needs.

Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes in one building, and the hall, the canteen and the resource room are situated in another building on the same site. They are taught by two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. There have been considerable staffing changes recently. The current headteacher was appointed in April 2012 under a Federation arrangement. She is also responsible for two other schools in the Gwendraeth Valley area. She is supported by an assistant headteacher who was appointed in September 2012.

The school was last inspected in November 2006.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Ponthenri in 2011-2012 means a budget of £3,801 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in Carmarthenshire authority's primary schools is £18,947 and the minimum is £3,114. Ysgol Gynradd Ponthenri is in 34th place of the 110 primary schools in Carmarthenshire in terms of its 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:

- most pupils are making consistent progress;
- the school is an inclusive and caring community in which pupils feel happy and safe;
- teaching is consistently good;
- the school provides a range of interesting learning experiences that, on the whole, meet the needs of most pupils; and
- partnerships with parents and local schools are good.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and governors have a clear vision and they convey that vision clearly to staff, pupils and parents;
- the school knows its own performance well;
- planning for improvement focuses on raising standards; and
- the Federation schools and other local schools demonstrate willingness to continue to co-operate as an effective learning community.

Recommendations

R1 improve pupils' independent learning skills across the school;

R2 improve the provision to promote English across the curriculum;

R3 strengthen the differentiated elements in planning in order to meet the needs of all pupils better; and

R4 develop assessment for learning and pupils' role in the process further.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in the Foundation Phase, and at the end of Year 6 in key stage 2, should be treated with care because the small numbers of children in a year can have a considerable effect on a school's performance from one year to another.

In assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012, nearly all pupils achieved the expected levels, namely outcome 5 (level 2) or better. In language, literacy and communication and mathematics skills, many of the cohort achieved outcome 6 (level 3).

In comparison with schools that have similar levels in terms of entitlement to free school meals, the school performed a little below family, local authority and Wales averages. In terms of the Foundation Phase indicator, the school is in the lower 50%, but in the top 25% in terms of personal and social skills, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level (level 4 or higher) in Welsh, English, mathematics and science in combination has varied over a period of four years. In 2012, the school's performance placed it among the bottom 25% of similar schools in terms of entitlement to free school meals in English, Welsh, mathematics and science.

The percentage of pupils who achieve level 5 in Welsh and mathematics is a little better than the average for schools in the same family, but a little lower than average in English and science.

There is no consistent pattern of boys' underachievement compared with that of girls in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in line with their age and ability.

In their work books, and in the observation sessions, many pupils in the Foundation Phase and in key stage 2 are making consistent progress. They recall previous learning confidently and knowledgeably. Many are developing thinking skills successfully in the Foundation Phase in order to acquire knowledge and understanding and apply them to new situations. They are not as confident in key stage 2. The majority of pupils, especially in key stage 2, do not have the necessary skills to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.

The majority of pupils across the school have good talking and listening skills. They contribute well, especially in Welsh, and express their ideas confidently in group discussion work activities. However, there is scope to develop this further in key

stage 2. The oral skills of pupils who come from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds are developing very quickly and, by the end of key stage 2, most use the language fluently and effectively.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils' early reading skills are developing well. They read for a purpose and show a detailed understanding of the text. They use a range of appropriate strategies successfully in order to address new vocabulary. In key stage 2, many read meaningfully in Welsh and English with appropriate intonation. They are becoming increasingly familiar with using a variety of sources purposefully in order to glean information in their studies.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils are making strong progress in their writing skills. They are becoming increasingly confident in writing simple sentences, using suitable and interesting vocabulary. The Welsh writing skills of most pupils across the curriculum in key stage 2 are good but examples in English are scarce. Many pupils' spelling skills are not robust enough in English.

Nearly all pupils' work presentation and handwriting are good across the school.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils' personal and social skills and life skills are developing well and they are being prepared well for the next stage in their education.

Nearly all pupils have a good awareness of the need to eat healthy food and to keep fit. They all enjoy the life and work of the school and feel safe there.

The majority of pupils are enthusiastic and are keen to learn. They co-operate effectively and are prepared to contribute in lessons. The behaviour of all pupils is very good in classes and during break time and lunchtime. Pupils show respect and care for one another, and they are courteous towards everyone.

Attendance rates of 91.3% are lower than those of similar schools.

Many pupils are prepared and keen to accept responsibilities within classes and during break time and lunchtime. They take their responsibilities seriously. The school council is an active part of decision-making, and pupils' viewpoints and ideas are considered seriously.

Setting success criteria has only just begun as a regular part of practice in classes. Pupils are not yet confident about the process and in understanding the benefit of the purpose. A minority of pupils have the confidence and ability at present to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. They are not always certain of what needs to be done to improve their work.

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

The school provides rich learning experiences that respond fully to the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and religious education.

Federation teachers provide work jointly and effectively in order to prepare a variety of interesting experiences. Learning experiences in the Foundation Phase offer stimulating and challenging activities for all pupils, which ensure consistent progress. In key stage 2, interesting learning experiences deal appropriately with the curriculum's requirements and are successful in gaining the interest of most pupils. However, short-term planning does not always respond to all pupils' needs.

Good use is made of the outdoor environment. Visits outside the school and visitors to the school contribute extensively to expanding and enriching learning experiences.

Planning for developing literacy, communication, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is good. Provision for oral, reading and writing work in Welsh is very strong, but not as thorough in English. Good attention is paid to the Welsh dimension. A good range of opportunities is provided for pupils to learn about their local area and about Welsh art and culture.

The school promotes sustainable development effectively through pupils' practical activities, and responds well to national priorities. The school does not succeed as well in developing global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

On the whole, teaching is of good quality in all lessons. All teachers and assistants have a thorough knowledge of the subject that is presented. There is a good working relationship between staff and pupils and in all classes and adults create an industrious and supportive ethos. Praise is used consistently to encourage pupils. On the whole, lessons have a good pace and good use is made of interactive white boards and learning resources to assist and engender pupils' understanding of their work. Good and very effective use is made of a varied range of learning methods. In a minority of lessons, activities have not been planned in sufficient detail in order to challenge all pupils of different abilities.

All the school's teachers and support staff model polished language very effectively. This has a positive effect on pupils' oral skills, especially in Welsh.

Teachers plan individual lessons in detail and ensure that pupils are aware of the objectives of the lessons. They give useful oral feedback and mark work regularly with positive comments. However, comments rarely include guidance on how to improve.

The school has comprehensive and thorough systems for tracking progress and wellbeing. They are effective as a tool for ensuring appropriate intervention, although this is not always reflected in the daily planning. The use of joint moderation work with other local schools is valuable, and facilitates the process of determining levels successfully.

Reports to parents on pupils' progress are detailed and useful, and indicate what the pupil needs to do in order to improve his or her performance in the future.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are effective arrangements for supporting pupils' health and wellbeing in addition to encouraging their involvement in their school and the wider community. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and make decisions.

The inclusive ethos and numerous experiences promote pupils' moral and spiritual development successfully. Courtesy and respect are prominent qualities at the school and they are fostered daily by all members of staff. The school provides well for pupils' social and cultural development through links with several organisations in the local community.

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

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very good, and concerns are responded to promptly. Individual education plans are reviewed and updated effectively and regularly in consultation with parents, the pupil, and the appropriate specialist agencies.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive and caring community in which pupils feel happy and safe. The school's homely and welcoming ethos ensures that pupils get along well together.

Pupils are encouraged to show respect and care towards each other and others, and they have a good relationship with their peers and with the school's staff. All pupils have full access to the curriculum and boys and girls take part in all activities.

Both buildings in the school's grounds offer plenty of space and good use is made of them. The outdoor area for the Foundation Phase is attractive, but it can not be used very effectively to promote independent learning because of the lack of direct access from the class.

There are plenty of resources in all areas to promote learning and teaching, apart from in information and communication technology. The learning environment in every class is attractive with colourful displays that show respect for pupils' work. The buildings and grounds are maintained well.

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

The school has clear aims and objectives that are promoted effectively by all the school and Federation staff. The headteacher offers purposeful strategic direction for the life and work of the school. There is a good emphasis on improving standards and provision for learners. Teachers co-operate well to develop activities and new ways of learning and teaching. This has a positive influence on pupils' achievement.

All staff have clear responsibilities and job descriptions. Their continuous professional development is supported through an effective system of performance management. This promotes the process of improving the school.

The governing body is very knowledgeable about the school's performance and is very willing to challenge pupils' outcomes within the school family and the local Federation. Governors are very supportive in ensuring the school's future as a member of the Federation. They develop their expertise further during learning trips. Policies and statutory documentation meet requirements fully.

A number of local and national initiatives are developing appropriately and contribute positively to raising and maintaining standards. A particular example of this is the attention that is paid to literacy and the Welsh language.

Improving quality: Good

The wide range of information, effective networking and climate of monitoring and challenging standards ensures that the self-evaluation and action plan are relevant and current. Parents and pupils have an opportunity to voice opinions and their comments are considered seriously.

The outcomes of self-evaluation have an appropriate influence on the priorities of the school improvement plan, which focuses appropriately on improving standards.

There is a history of effective monitoring at the school and the headteacher and Federation staff now interpret a range of relevant information consistently. The practice includes data analysis, classroom observations, scrutinising and discussing work with pupils. In addition, outcomes from the performance management system are used to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This is effective for deciding on priorities.

The networks of professional practice within and beyond the school have a very effective influence on the school's practices and standards, especially in developing and improving standards of literacy and communication. The school has met the requirements of the recommendations of the previous inspection and has continued to develop literacy skills further across the school.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a very strong relationship with the staff of both the other schools within the Federation, which includes sharing expertise and resources in order to enrich learning experiences.

The school also has an appropriate and effective range of other strategic partners. These partners, which include the authority's school improvement officers, parents and the wider community, support pupils' wellbeing and learning very successfully.

Transition arrangements are effective for pupils who transfer from the cylch meithrin to the school and for pupils who transfer to the local secondary schools. The arrangements support pupils well to settle in quickly in their new environment.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources effectively. All staff co-operate successfully and valuable use is made of their expertise. Teaching staff are supported by an effective team of assistants. They play a key part in supporting pupils.

Teachers make valuable use of their time for planning, preparation and assessment.

There is a useful range of appropriate resources for supporting learning and teaching. They are managed well in order to support and improve pupils' standards and wellbeing and to ensure that they are in line with the priorities in the development plan.

The building, including the outdoor areas, offer an attractive and safe learning environment.

Expenditure is monitored carefully in order to ensure that pupils achieve good outcomes and, as a result, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2, in the Foundation Phase, and at the end of Year 6 in key stage 2, must be treated with care because the small numbers of children in a year can have a considerable effect on a school's performance from one year to another.

In assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012, nearly all pupils achieved the expected levels, namely outcome 5 (level 2) or better. In language literacy and communication and mathematics skills, many of the cohort achieved outcome 6 (level 3).

In comparison with schools with similar levels in terms of entitlement to free school meals, the school performed a little lower than the family, the local authority and Wales averages. In terms of the Foundation Phase indicator, the school is in the lower 50%, but in the top 25% in terms of personal and social skills, and wellbeing and cultural diversity.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level (level 4 or higher) in Welsh, English, mathematics and science in combination has varied over a period of four years. In 2009 and 2012, the percentage was lower than similar schools, local authority and all-Wales averages but higher in 2010 and 2011.

In 2012, the school's performance placed it among the bottom 25% of similar schools in terms of entitlement to free school meals in English, Welsh, mathematics and science.

In 2012, pupils' attainment in Welsh oracy was a little better than the average for similar schools, and there has been a consistent pattern over the last three years.

In 2012, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was a little lower than the average for similar schools although the pattern was higher over the last two years.

The percentage of pupils who achieve level 5 in Welsh and mathematics is a little better than the average performance levels for schools in the family, the local authority and Wales. Considerable progress can be seen over the last two years.

In English, in terms of pupils who attain level 5, the school performs better than the local authority and Wales averages but a little lower than the family average. This has been a similar pattern over the last two years.

In science, level 5 results are lower than similar schools, local authority and all-Wales averages but again progress can be seen over the last two years.

There is no consistent pattern of boys' underachievement in comparison with that of girls in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

Pupils with additional learning needs achieve appropriately in line with their ability, previous attainment and special educational needs.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent/carer questionnaires

Twenty-five questionnaires were received from parents/carers. Parents' satisfaction levels are high, and are higher than the average for primary schools.

Nearly all parents state that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the school in general and that their children are safe there. They all also believe that pupils' behaviour is good, and that pupils are respected and treated fairly and are developing to become more mature and to shoulder responsibility. Nearly all parents feel that teaching in classes is good and they say that their children are making good progress at school. They all agree that homework builds well on what is taught at school and that they feel comfortable in raising any issue. All parents also say that their children like school and they feel that they have regular information about their children's progress. Very few feel that they do not understand the school's arrangements for dealing with complaints. Nearly all parents are of the opinion that the school is run well or very well.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Learner questionnaires were completed by 30 pupils in key stage 2. All pupils feel safe at school and that the school deals well with bullying. All but one feel that they are doing well at school. Nearly all pupils feel that teachers help them to learn and make progress and they know to whom to turn if they are worried or whom to ask for advice. Most agree that the school teaches them how to keep healthy. A small number of pupils feel that their homework helps them to understand and improve their work at school. Nearly all pupils feel that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work. A minority are of the opinion that not all children behave well at lunchtime and play time. The level of satisfaction here compares well with the average for primary schools except that a few pupils feel that they do not have many opportunities to take regular physical exercise and that children do not always behave well so that they can do their work.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Merfyn Lloyd Jones	Reporting Inspector
Margaret Davies	Team Inspector
Dylan Jones	Lay Inspector
Derfel Griffiths	Peer Inspector
Rhian Evans	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.