



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 Llys Hywel
Stryd y Farchnad
Whitland
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA34 0QB**

Date of inspection: April 2013

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 Llys Hywel is situated in the small town of Whitland in the west of Carmarthenshire. There are 116 pupils on roll, including 19 full-time nursery children. An extensive proportion of pupils comes from Whitland itself.

At present, about 18% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the national figure. Thirty per cent of pupils have additional learning needs, including a small number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs.

Most pupils are from white British backgrounds, and a few pupils are of Roma gypsy or Polish descent. Twenty-nine per cent of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. The school has two linguistic streams, but nursery and reception age children are all taught in a Welsh-medium class. In Year 1, pupils continue their education either in the Welsh stream or in the English stream. About half the pupils are taught in the Welsh stream and learn Welsh as a first language.

Nearly all pupils transfer to Ysgol Dyffryn Taf at 11 years of age, and small numbers go to Ysgol Bro Myrddin.

The school was last inspected in July 2007.

The headteacher has been in post on a temporary contract since September 2012, but is also headteacher at Ysgol Talacharn. This follows a period of instability in the school's leadership. The headteacher will leave Ysgol Llys Hywel at the end of the summer term to be a full-time headteacher at Ysgol Talacharn.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Llys Hywel for 2012-2013 is £4,509. The maximum per pupil for primary schools in Carmarthenshire is £25,997 and the minimum is £2,878. Ysgol Llys Hywel is in twentieth place out of the 108 primary schools in Carmarthenshire in terms of school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol Llys Hywel's current performance is adequate because:

- the majority of pupils make good progress in their speaking, reading and writing skills by the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2;
- teaching ensures that pupils make appropriate progress in their work in many lessons;
- pupils benefit from programmes to track progress and provide additional intervention that have been introduced in order to improve their reading and numeracy skills;
- standards of behaviour are good, and most pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and are keen to succeed;
- there is effective provision for pupils who have additional learning needs; and
- the quality of Welsh-medium provision at the bottom of the Foundation Phase is a significant strength.

However:

- a minority of pupils do not make enough progress in all aspects in their reading and writing skills;
- many pupils in the English stream do not make enough progress in Welsh;
- pupils' use of information and communication technology skills across the curriculum is limited;
- a lack of planning for progression in the skills affects the progress that pupils make across the school in some aspects of their work;
- in a minority of lessons, there are important areas to be improved in teaching and assessment; and
- there is an important shortcoming in the school's arrangements for safeguarding children.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- significant progress has been made in introducing whole-school systems, which are beginning to have a clear effect on the quality of provision and pupils' achievements;
- the school makes use of an appropriate range of sources as a part of its self-evaluation arrangements; and
- appropriate priorities have been set for further improvement, with a clear focus on raising standards.

However:

- the instability at the school's leadership level continues and the role of the school's skills co-ordinators has not been established fully;
- the school's arrangements for monitoring lessons and scrutinising books have not been embedded fully; and
- the governing body's function in providing a challenge as a 'critical friend' has not been developed sufficiently.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that the school's leadership maintains and builds on the improvements that have already been achieved, and develop the role of the school's skills co-ordinators
- R2 Ensure that pupils at all levels of ability across the school develop their literacy and information and communication technology skills fully
- R3 Raise standards of Welsh in the English stream
- R4 Improve standards of teaching and assessment
- R5 Ensure that the school's self-evaluation arrangements are embedded firmly and focus on identifying aspects to be improved in standards and pupils' progress in their lessons and their written work
- R6 Develop the governing body's ability to act as a critical friend
- R7 Address immediately the important shortcoming associated with safeguarding children

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

The development of the Welsh oral skills of the youngest children in the Foundation Phase is a significant strength. Pupils are quickly able to offer responses spontaneously, and many of them use Welsh voluntarily when speaking to each other. By the end of the Foundation Phase, pupils make clear progress in their oral skills and express themselves confidently and with an increasing level of accuracy. However, pupils in the English stream do not make enough progress in their Welsh oral skills across the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, especially when considering their previous achievements.

By the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, many pupils are able to read aloud meaningfully and with appropriate intonation, and make good use of the voice to vary expression. However, a minority of pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase do not read Welsh-language materials that give them enough of a challenge. Pupils enjoy reading and make appropriate progress in their use of research skills. Progress in pupils' ability to respond to fiction and discuss aspects of what they read is not developing as well.

Results of the school's latest reading tests show that too many pupils do not possess reading skills in Welsh and English that are in line with expectations when considering their age. However, most pupils are making clear progress in their reading skills since the introduction of the additional Welsh and English literacy programmes this year. Pupils who receive additional intervention to improve weak literacy and numeracy skills are also making appropriate progress.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase make appropriate progress in their early writing skills. They become able to write sentences independently, and show an initial grasp of punctuation and spelling most words correctly. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils are able to write for a range of purposes and show an understanding of the characteristics of forms such as letters and writing instructions. However, pupils of higher ability do not make enough progress in their ability to write at length for a wider range of purposes, including imaginative and creative writing.

In key stage 2, pupils make appropriate progress in their ability to write letters and reports, and they are also able to use key words to present different viewpoints on controversial subjects. They also use their writing skills to record in other subjects, and show appropriate progress in terms of accuracy of expression. They make appropriate progress in their use of vocabulary and terms. However, there is not enough progress in their ability to write freely and at length for a range of purposes in contexts across the curriculum, as well as the ability to write creative and imaginative pieces.

Most pupils present their work neatly and in an orderly way. However, pupils do not make enough progress in key stage 2 in correcting the accuracy and content of their own work by using redrafting skills.

A lack of progress in pupils' Welsh writing skills in the English stream across the school is a significant shortcoming.

Pupils do not make enough progress in their use of information and communication technology skills.

Results at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012 at the expected outcome were lower than expectations, in comparison with those of similar schools. At the higher outcome, the school's performance compared favourably with the performance of similar schools in the learning areas of mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, but not in language, especially language, literacy and communication in English.

In key stage 2, the school's performance at the expected level has been mostly around the averages for the family and Wales over recent years. However, results for Welsh as a second language, written English and written Welsh especially, have been uneven. At the higher level, results for 2012 were higher than the averages for the family and Wales in all subjects, especially in English, after having been lower over time, especially in 2011.

In comparison with schools that have similar levels of free school meals, the school's performance at the expected level and the higher levels has placed the school in the bottom 25% or the lower 50% in about half the indicators over time.

Boys' achievements have been significantly lower than expectations in recent years.

Wellbeing: Good

Many pupils have a good awareness of how eating healthily and fitness activities help them to stay fit and healthy. They all take pride in the life and work of the school and feel safe.

The school's attendance levels compare favourably over time with the averages for the family and Wales. Following a pattern of significant improvement over recent years, attendance is now very close to the median when considering levels of free school meals.

Pupils show positive attitudes to work in many lessons, and, in general, apply themselves to learning activities and work productively. In a few lessons, a minority of pupils do not participate fully, and this leads, at times, to some disruption which affects their progress.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils contribute appropriately to the process of planning themes with their teachers, but this has not been developed to the same degree in key stage 2. The school council contributes appropriately to the school's work. The school's pupils have contributed to producing new school rules, following their work on the laws of Hywel Dda.

The school's 'bronze ambassadors' foster leadership skills by being responsible for the school's health and fitness clubs. All pupils foster self-confidence in public by taking part in productions and assemblies annually. They also develop their awareness of the wider community appropriately by attending events in the local community, including lighting Christmas lights and the pilgrimage associated with the St David's Day message from the Cathedral to the Welsh Government.

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

The school provides a wide range of learning experiences that gain the interest of most pupils. Learning experiences in the Foundation Phase offer stimulating activities that ensure consistent progress in the work. However, schemes of work in key stage 2 do not give enough consideration to ensuring progression and continuity in pupils' literacy skills at various levels of ability. Pupils across the school do not have enough opportunities to develop a full range of writing skills.

The range of pupils' experiences in information and communication technology is limited.

Welsh-medium provision for the youngest children in the Foundation Phase lays firm foundations for developing pupils' grasp of Welsh. The majority of pupils transfer to the Welsh stream in Year 1, which allows them to continue to develop their skills in Welsh. However, there is not detailed enough planning to ensure continuity in the development of pupils' Welsh language skills in the English stream.

There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh traditions and culture. The Welsh dimension is also a prominent feature of the learning experiences across the curriculum, for example the research into the life and work of Dylan Thomas, work based on Cardigan and Carew Castles and the study of the life and work of Hywel Dda.

The school provides an appropriate range of activities that promote pupils' understanding of sustainability issues. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of global citizenship.

Teaching: Adequate

Teachers plan learning activities that ensure that most pupils work productively in lessons. They provide appropriate support to pupils to ensure that they can complete the work and offer suitable language models. Classroom assistants make a significant contribution towards implementing programmes for improving pupils' literacy skills.

In many lessons, teachers share clear learning aims with pupils and make sure that pupils know how to achieve well. In these lessons, a sequence of appropriate learning activities ensures that pupils' levels of motivation are maintained. In addition, teachers ask questions continuously, and this encourages pupils to think, to reason and to improve their understanding of the work.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not give enough consideration to different ability levels in class or show pupils clearly what to do in order to ensure that they achieve to the best of their ability. At times, overuse of writing tasks and work sheets that have a low level of challenge hinders pupils' ability to achieve as well as they could when writing at length.

In the English stream, teachers make some use of the Welsh language when speaking to pupils. However, they do not do enough to make the pupils use Welsh themselves.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and, in a minority of cases, offer useful comments to help them to improve their work. However, pupils' involvement in the assessment process has not been developed consistently. In addition, there is too much inconsistency in the use that teachers make of criteria to help pupils to improve the standard of their work.

The school has effective assessment systems to track pupils' progress in the Foundation Phase. However, this aspect has not been developed to the same degree in key stage 2.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

There is appropriate provision to encourage pupils to stay healthy, and activities such as the games club and the cookery club raise awareness of how to eat healthily and keep fit. Pupils have weekly opportunities to use new fitness facilities in Ysgol Dyffryn Taf and participate in the 'Multiskills' programme.

As a result of circle sessions, pupils receive appropriate opportunities to consider moral and spiritual issues. The school also promotes pupils' social and cultural development successfully, and prizes such as 'marbles in a jar', 'star of the week' and 'the headteacher's prize' promote positive attitudes and good behaviour. The school benefits from the support of a range of external agencies and officials for the wellbeing of pupils who have specific needs.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding have not been developed fully.

Provision for pupils who have additional learning needs is effective. Individual education plans contain clear targets that are reviewed regularly. Pupils' needs are identified early, and there is effective intervention and support for them. This intervention includes purposeful use of staff, resources and a variety of plans to ensure the best possible opportunities for all pupils to develop to their full potential.

The way in which the school provides additional support to pupils who have weak basic skills is a strength.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an orderly community in which pupils show respect for one another and for adults and apply themselves fully to the life and work of the school. It has clear policies and procedures that promote equality and social diversity, and pupils have

an equal right to all educational and social provision. The recent initiative to change the school's name, logo and motto, as well as the new school uniform, has had a significant effect on the school's ethos.

The school has enough resources to ensure that children have an appropriate range of learning experiences. Although maintenance work is required on the buildings, the building offers enough room and the school makes appropriate use of it. The external area is attractive and is maintained well. Displays around the school and in classrooms create an interesting learning environment.

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

The acting headteacher has provided strong leadership that has begun to have a positive effect in terms of improving important aspects of provision, including standards of literacy. There is a clear focus on raising standards and improving pupils' wellbeing, and appropriate systems have been introduced, especially in terms of tracking pupils' progress and ensuring intervention to address underachievement. Clear aims have been set for ensuring further improvements.

The role of the school's skills co-ordinators has not been developed fully. As a result, staff who have whole-school responsibilities do not contribute fully to the work of ensuring progression across the school and identifying priorities for improvement.

The governing body contributes appropriately to ensure that statutory policies are updated and are in place. Initiatives such as 'learning journeys' provide useful opportunities to raise governors' awareness of work in classes. Presentations on the school's performance data have begun to improve governors' knowledge of how performance compares with that of similar schools. However, governors do not have enough of an understanding, arising from the school's data and self-evaluation systems, to raise questions about standards and contribute to the work of identifying priorities.

The school responds to national priorities by addressing raising standards of literacy and numeracy. However, it does not do enough to meet the national priority to raise standards in Welsh.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school has an appropriate timetable for its self-evaluation activities. Appropriate arrangements have been introduced to collect evidence from a range of sources, including data analysis, monitoring lessons, scrutinising books and collecting the opinion of staff, governors and parents. However, these arrangements are not being acted upon fully to date. Pupils' part in the process is only beginning to develop.

The school's self-evaluation report identifies many aspects that need improvement. Although the school development plan includes appropriate intentions to raise standards, criteria for measuring progress against intentions are not specific and challenging enough.

The school's teachers have benefited from opportunities to visit other local schools in order to observe good practice. Co-operation with Ysgol Talacharn has paid attention to aspects such as progression and continuity in language and sharing ideas for raising boys' standards of literacy.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a clear commitment to co-operating with an appropriate range of partners, and the partnership with parents and carers is a strength. Regular newsletters, use of text messages and the school website promote clear communication and share information effectively. In order to ensure that parents can give their children consistent support, the school holds useful workshops for them on aspects such as literacy.

Robust arrangements are in place with the secondary school that admits most pupils, to ensure continuity in pastoral care at the time of transition. There are suitable arrangements in place for standardising and moderating teachers' assessments jointly at the end of key stage 2.

The school has useful links with a range of local bodies, organisations and businesses. The partnership with the town council has led to sponsorship by the council to pay for new school uniforms for each pupil.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has enough qualified and experienced teachers and makes appropriate use of staff expertise. It takes full advantage of the link with Ysgol Talacharn for staff development, and the school benefits greatly from the arrangement of sharing a numeracy co-ordinator between the two schools. Staff have appropriate opportunities to attend training courses, including events to help to raise standards of literacy and numeracy.

There are appropriate arrangements for managing the performance of teaching staff, including setting targets for them. In addition, performance management arrangements are in place for support staff.

There has been significant under-expenditure on the school's budget for a number of years. Recently, the school has reduced the under-expenditure to an appropriate level. The school development plan earmarks appropriate spending for priorities.

The school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2012, the percentage of pupils who achieved the Foundation Phase indicator was lower than the average for the family of schools and the average for Wales. In the learning area of personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, the school's performance was higher than the figures for the family and Wales. However, in the other learning areas, performance was lower than the figures for the family and Wales, especially in language, literacy and communication in English.

In comparison with similar schools in terms of eligibility for free school meals, the school's performance placed it in the top 25% in the learning area of personal and social development, wellbeing and social diversity, but in the lower 50% or the bottom 25% in the other learning areas.

At the higher outcome, the school's performance in 2012 compared favourably with the performance of similar schools in the learning areas of mathematical development and personal development but not in language, especially language, literacy and communication in English.

In key stage 2, the school's performance in the core subject indicator has mostly been close to the figures for the family and Wales over the last four years. There is a similar pattern in achievements at the expected level in English. In Welsh and in mathematics and science, achievements over time have been a little higher than the averages for the family and Wales. However, pupils' achievements in writing have been lower than the figures for the family and Wales in two of the last five years, especially in Welsh.

In Welsh as a second language, the school's performance in 2012 at the expected level or higher was significantly lower than the figures for the family and Wales in 2012, but higher in the previous year.

At the higher level, performance in 2012 was higher than the averages for the family and Wales in all subjects, especially in English, following a period of being lower than expected, especially in 2011.

In comparison with schools that have similar levels of free school meals, the school's performance at the expected level and the higher levels at the end of key stage 2 has been variable, and places the school in the bottom 25% or the bottom 50% in about half the indicators over time.

In 2012, there was a significant gap between the achievements of boys and girls in every indicator in key stage 2. Boys' achievements have been consistently lower than national averages for boys over recent years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

The questionnaire was completed by 53 pupils in key stage 2. The proportion of positive responses is similar overall to the national averages for primary schools in Wales.

All pupils feel safe at school and know to whom to turn if they are anxious or find the work difficult. Most say that the school deals well with any bullying. Nearly all pupils say that there are many opportunities to take physical exercise, and that the school teaches them to stay healthy and helps them to learn and make progress. Most feel that they are doing well at school. Most also say that homework helps them to understand and improve their work and that they have enough equipment, books and computers.

Most pupils say that other children behave well at play time and lunch time. However, a minority of pupils, including almost half of the girls, say that other children behave well in class and enable them to do their work. This is significantly lower than the national average.

Responses to parent/carer questionnaires

The questionnaire was completed by 38 parents. The proportion of positive responses is lower overall than the averages for primary schools in Wales.

All parents indicate that their children settled in well when they started school and that their children are safe at school. Almost all indicate that their children like school. Most say that teaching is good, that their children are making good progress and that there is a good variety of activities, including trips or visits. Most also say that staff treat their children fairly and with respect.

Many parents say that homework builds well on what their children learn at school and that their children receive appropriate support for any specific individual needs. Many parents indicate that they receive regular information about their children's progress and almost all parents indicate that the school encourages their children to stay healthy and take regular physical exercise.

Most parents feel comfortable in asking a question, making suggestions or identifying a problem, and understand the school's complaints system. Many say that their children are prepared well for moving on to the next school.

Many parents also say that they are satisfied with the school and that the school is well-run. However, the proportion of positive answers is much lower than the national figures.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Iolo Dafydd	Reporting Inspector
David Davies	Team Inspector
Dylan Jones	Lay Inspector
Gwennol Ellis	Peer Inspector
Nia Ward	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.