



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 Pen-y-bryn
Bethesda
Gwynedd
LL57 3BE**

Date of inspection: January 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 Pen-y-bryn is a junior school in the village of Bethesda. It is maintained by Gwynedd local authority. The school serves the village of Bethesda and the nearby areas. The school describes the area it serves as one that is economically disadvantaged.

There are 112 pupils between seven and 11 years of age on roll. Eighty per cent of pupils are from homes where Welsh is spoken as a first language. Welsh is the main medium of teaching. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds at present. Approximately 20% of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this figure is a little higher than the county average and is close to the national average. Twenty-five per cent of pupils have special educational needs, and one pupil has a statement.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Pen-y-bryn in 2011-2012 is £3,220. The maximum school budget per pupil in Gwynedd primary schools is £7,732 and the minimum is £2,745. Ysgol Pen-y-bryn is in 63rd place out of the 102 primary schools in Gwynedd in terms of its school budget per pupil.

The school was last inspected during the spring term, 2006.

The current headteacher was appointed in April 2004.

Summary

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

Current performance

This school is good because:

- most of the pupils make very good progress during their period at the school;
- excellent learning experiences are provided;
- the majority of teaching is good or better across the school, with effective support from the teaching assistants; and
- there is a caring ethos that ensures that nearly all pupils enjoy learning and feel safe.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher knows the school very well and has a clear vision that is shared by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors;
- the school has demonstrated success in creating very effective strategies for raising standards; and
- specific opportunities are given to pupils within the self-evaluation process that have a considerable influence on raising standards.

Recommendations

In order to improve, there is a need to:

R1 increase the numbers of boys who achieve at level 5 or higher; and

R2 share the best practice in teaching throughout the school.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice that was seen during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils across the school work diligently, carry out their work effectively and display obvious progress in the standard of that which is achieved within learning sessions and over a period of time. Considerable progress is seen over a short time, especially in English.

The percentage of pupils that attain the expected level (level 4) in all subjects in key stage 2 in 2011 is higher than the average in Welsh schools and higher than the average results of the family of similar schools. The school's performance compares favourably with that of schools that have a similar percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The school is among the top 25% in relation to English and Welsh results and among the upper 50% in relation to mathematics and science. The school's results in Welsh have been consistently higher than of the averages for the family and schools in Wales as a whole for four years and in the remainder of subjects for two years.

There has been considerable improvement in the school's level 5 results recently with a higher percentage in every subject than the averages for the family and Wales.

There was a significant difference between boys' and girls' results in 2011 in Welsh, English and mathematics at level 5, and boys' results were significantly lower than those of girls.

Nearly all pupils across the school listen attentively during lessons. They are keen to contribute to discussions and to respond effectively to questioning by teachers and other adults. Most pupils can converse confidently and clearly in both languages in different contexts. They can respond sensibly to others' viewpoints and offer their own valid contributions in pairs and during group work. By the end of the key stage most pupils have a very good grasp of the natural syntax of speech, especially in Welsh.

Nearly all pupils' reading standards in both languages are appropriate to their age and ability. They read a wide range of materials fluently across the curriculum. They understand what they are reading, and express an opinion and discuss the content of books confidently. By the end of the key stage they can look for and collate information confidently from a range of sources and translanguaging takes place naturally and effectively.

The development of writing across the school in both languages is good and most pupils produce effective extended pieces. Development in writing by the top end of the school in English shows considerable progress. By the end of the key stage, most pupils write clearly and interestingly in a wide range of forms and for a variety of purposes.

Pupils who are entitled to free school meals and pupils who have additional learning needs are achieving well and making appropriate progress for their age and ability.

Pupils who have Welsh as a second language handle the language confidently very quickly after starting at the school.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular physical exercise. They participate regularly in keep fit and physical exercise activities within the school and in clubs after school hours.

Pupils are very aware of safety issues and they know how to express an opinion or concern about any case of bullying or misbehaviour. Nearly all pupils state that they are treated with respect, that they are happy at school and that they feel safe. They turn confidently towards adults and peers for help. The behaviour of nearly all pupils is good in lessons and during less formal times. They show respect and care for one another and for adults. They are nearly all enthusiastic learners who can work with others effectively. They show pride in their work, and persevere with their tasks for extended periods.

School attendance is nearly 95% at present; this is an increase on the attendance average for the last three years and is higher than the local and national average.

The School Council, the Green Group, the Sports Council and the Effectiveness Group meet regularly and implement effective ways of seeking fellow pupils' opinions and comments, and ensuring that the comments are heard and considered. The way in which the Effectiveness Group operates means that pupils have a strong influence on the school's self-evaluation. This has led to considerable improvement in pupils' attitudes towards learning and has raised standards considerably. This is an excellent element, which is being proposed to the remainder of the county's schools as good practice to be emulated.

Pupils take part regularly in enterprise activities, sport, concerts, assemblies and eisteddfodau. They nearly all, across the school, benefit from these opportunities and grow in confidence.

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

The curriculum complies fully with statutory requirements. The school provides an extensive range of rich learning experiences for pupils of all ages and ability. The school's planning systems ensure that there are opportunities for all pupils to experience a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities. The influence of the role of assistants and the Effectiveness Group in enriching the provision is a very strong element. The part given to pupils in this process is innovative. They are given opportunities to evaluate lessons and curriculum content and propose changes when appropriate.

Communication, reading and thinking skills have a clear focus in planning, and this has had an obvious influence on raising standards of all pupil cohorts at the school. Pupils' part in planning and their understanding of thinking skills in learning are excellent.

Differentiating learning activities to meet the needs of all pupils is an excellent feature. This ensures very good progress across the curriculum. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to write at length.

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is core to the school's work and ethos. The school offers rich and stimulating provision for studying the area's history and folklore. In addition to competing in local and national eisteddfodau, this promotes pupils' cultural development and their awareness of the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension very effectively.

Education for sustainability and global citizenship takes very effective advantage of the active relationship with the National Trust and international links with Indonesia and Jamaica.

Teaching: Good

Teaching across the school is generally good. Where teaching is at its best, communication, reading and thinking skills are developed very effectively. Effective use is made of success criteria and probing questioning in order to move learning forward.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and appropriate opportunities are given for developing independence in learning. Teachers use a wide range of effective teaching strategies and present lessons in a lively and enthusiastic way.

At times, the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils depend too much on their teachers.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan a range of activities that stimulate pupils. Classroom assistants are extremely effective in their support of pupils across the school and they work excellently with class teachers. Specific consideration is given to individual pupils' needs within the day-to-day planning. Pupils' input on how they learn best is a strong feature.

Classroom management is consistently good and teachers create a friendly and caring ethos.

One of the school's strengths is the use it makes of assessment for learning. The strategies are integrated into the lessons and are an integral part of the school's teaching methods and ethos. A variety of strategies is used to stimulate and hold pupils' interest. Assessment in most classes informs the planning and marking and comments are constructive. The school has an effective procedure for including pupils to be part of the assessment process and to set success criteria for themselves and for the lessons. This has a positive impact on pupils' commitment and on standards. The school has a comprehensive tracking system that uses a

range of standard tests to measure progress, set targets and appropriate intervention. All this has a positive impact on standards.

Annual reports to parents are detailed and give a clear picture of pupils' attainment and progress and outline the way forward.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. The school is a well-organised, caring community that has expectations and rules that are clear to everyone. Prefects among the pupils, namely 'Bydis Buarth', offer support to peers as needed.

There is a good relationship between the school and relevant external agencies to ensure appropriate provision for every pupil. The appropriate provision for wellbeing and the advantages of living healthily are promoted effectively by the school's healthy committee as well as in the schemes of work.

Good information is provided for pupils and parents about school life. All pupils receive appropriate support and guidance. There are effective induction arrangements for new pupils and pupils with special needs, and effective procedures are in place for transferring older pupils to secondary education.

The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength. Support is co-ordinated effectively and there are good links with specialist external agencies. A detailed record is kept of pupils and their needs, including suitable individual education plans. Appropriate intervention is provided and a considerable effect is seen on progress.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school ensures equal opportunities in which all pupils are regularly included in the life and daily work of the school. The curriculum is accessible to everyone, and the school fulfils its statutory duties successfully.

The school makes effective use of the building. The learning environment is very stimulating and the school has a wide range of resources that match pupils' needs well. The School Council plays a prominent part in developing the yard and leading improvements. Constant and effective use is made of the leisure centre's facilities and the local rugby field.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision and good recognition of the school's needs. He conveys that vision successfully to staff, governors and pupils. The headteacher, staff and governors work together well to present specific strategies for raising pupils' standards.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher undertake their responsibilities effectively. They know the school well and set challenging targets and expectations for the whole school. All members of staff receive valuable opportunities to contribute to aspects of management across the school. They are aware of their role and responsibilities and work together closely as a team. The school is supported well by the governors. They visit the school regularly, analyse end of key stage data and consider further evidence effectively. Members of the governing body have thorough knowledge of strengths and areas for development. They operate successfully in their role as critical friends.

The school responds very well to national and local priorities. Specific attention is paid to the requirements of the School Effectiveness Framework, and pupils have an innovative opportunity to plan and review lessons, and to contribute to the self-evaluation process.

Improving quality: Excellent

The school has comprehensive procedures for measuring its effectiveness. The self-evaluation process identifies clearly the areas for development within the school. The way in which pupils contribute to the self-evaluation process and influence the operation of the school is innovative practice.

The school's self-evaluation procedure is very thorough and includes staff discussions, monitoring teaching and learning by class observations and analysing and levelling children's work. All the school's staff and members of the governing body are given opportunities to contribute fully to the self-evaluation process.

The self-evaluation report is comprehensive and presents a clear picture of the school's performance.

There is an obvious link between the self-evaluation process and planning for improvement. The information that is gathered is used effectively to produce a clear and comprehensive school development plan.

The school's internal professional learning communities ensure that staff develop and share relevant information very effectively. Effective networks of professional practice with other schools and partners are developing very well. The school's teachers have been given guidance on specific learning areas within the cluster and more widely. These networks enrich the school's general provision effectively and contribute to raising standards considerably.

Partnership working: Good

The school has fostered a range of effective strategic partnerships.

There is a strong link with parents and they can contribute to the school's work by responding to questionnaires and offering suggestions and comments. There is effective communication between the school and the parents themselves.

There are appropriate transfer arrangements between the school and the Foundation Phase school and the secondary school. Many transition activities of a high standard are provided, which include transition work and appropriate moderation in the core subjects.

The school's links with the community are good. The School Council has created a valuable link with Penrhyn Quarry. There are also close links with the town council through working together on the Ogwen regeneration and development scheme in order to improve provision in the community. The school contributes on a monthly basis to the community newspaper. The school is part of clusters of local schools and beyond that share good practice and that have a positive influence on the school's procedures. Specifically, there is effective co-operation between schools in the school effectiveness framework pilot scheme.

Resource management: Good

The school is staffed appropriately to teach the National Curriculum. Staff expertise is used to exchange and teach across the school effectively.

The special contribution by the teaching assistants offers effective support to every aspect of the school's life and work. Performance management arrangements identify staff's development needs, and the provision for planning, preparation and assessment time is appropriate.

There are good procedures for supporting the professional development of all members of staff. There is a very close link between staff training and responsibilities and the priorities of the school development plan.

The school's buildings are maintained to a high standard. Effective use is made of the space that is available by adapting empty classrooms in order to create centres such as a kitchen, library and art room.

Financial resources are allocated specifically to respond to the priorities of the school development plan.

The school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Performance data

The percentage of pupils who attained the expected level in all the subjects and the core subject indicator in key stage 2 in 2011 was higher than the average for Welsh schools and higher than the percentage for the results of the family of similar schools.

The school compares favourably when benchmarked against other schools with a similar percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The school is among the top 25% in relation to English and Welsh results and the core subject indicator and the upper 50% in relation to mathematics and science.

The percentage who attained beyond the expected level in 2011 in key stage 2 was higher than family and Wales averages in every subject.

Key stage 2 pupils' results in Welsh over four years have been fairly even and consistently higher than family and all-Wales averages since 2006. The results in English were uneven during the same period up until 2010-2011. The school's level 5 results have made obvious progress and have been higher than family and all-Wales averages since 2009-2010 in Welsh, and since 2010-2011 in English.

In mathematics, the results have been fairly consistently higher than family and Wales averages since 2008-2009. The level 5 results had been lower than the family average since 2008-2009 but showed improvement in 2010-2011 and were higher than both family and all-Wales averages.

Science results at level 4 have been higher than the average for the family and Wales since 2008-2009, and since 2009-2010 at level 5.

There was a significant difference between boys' and girls' results in 2011 in Welsh, English and mathematics at level 5, and boys' results were considerably lower than those of girls.

There is no obvious difference in the end of key stage data associated with specific groups of pupils such as pupils that are entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional learning needs. These pupils, on the whole, attain levels according to their ability.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fifty-three responses were received. Nearly all state that their children are safe at school, that they have had support to settle in well and that they are encouraged to be healthy and take regular physical exercise. All are also of the opinion that the school helps the children to become more mature and shoulder responsibility and that they behave well at school.

Nearly all parents are of the opinion that the teaching is good, that they receive information regularly on their children's progress and that they are satisfied with the progress that their children are making.

Most state that the school offers a good variety of activities for pupils. They believe that staff treat all children fairly and with respect and offer additional support as needed.

Most also understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints and they feel comfortable in asking the school a question. They believe that the school is well run.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred and ten learners completed the questionnaire. All learners state that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and that there are many opportunities for them to take regular physical exercise.

Nearly all pupils are of the opinion that they are doing well at school. They say that teachers and other adults at school help them to learn and make progress. They also know what to do and to whom to speak if they find the work difficult and they feel that they have sufficient resources to do their work. They also say that they are happy and feel safe at school.

Many pupils noted that there is good behaviour at the school and that there is no misbehaviour to affect their ability to work.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Glyn Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Carolyn Thomas	Team Inspector
Dylan Jones	Lay Inspector
Angharad Jones	Peer Inspector
Ceren Lloyd (Headteacher)	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.