



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 Tanycastell
Harlech
Gwynedd
LL46 2UE**

Date of inspection: February 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 Tanycastell is situated in the town of Harlech, Gwynedd and serves the town and the local rural area. The school admits pupils full-time at the beginning of September following their fourth birthday. Currently, the school has 10 part-time pupils who started school following their third birthday and 71 full-time pupils. Pupils are taught by two full-time teachers and four part-time teachers. The school has three part-time assistants and one full-time assistant.

Welsh is the school's main language medium and it aims to ensure that pupils are fully bilingual by the time they transfer to the secondary sector. Forty-two per cent of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. The percentage of pupils from ethnic backgrounds is extremely low and is lower than the percentage for the local authority.

Approximately 17% of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is below the county and national percentage. The school states that the area is not particularly prosperous. Approximately 19% of pupils are on the special educational needs register and this is slightly below the national figure of 21.2%. No pupils have a statement of additional needs. No permanent exclusions and only one fixed-term exclusion were recorded during the 12 months prior to the inspection.

The headteacher was a teacher at the school before being appointed to her current position in September 2009.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Tanycastell in 2012-2013 is £3,677. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in Gwynedd is £9,577 and the minimum is £2,839. Ysgol Tanycastell is in 67th position of the 102 primary schools in Gwynedd in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's performance is adequate because:

- most pupils are well behaved and polite;
- the school offers a wide range of varied, interesting experiences;
- the quality of teaching is good;
- there is a good relationship between parents, the school and the local community; and
- the learning environment is used effectively.

However:

- the standards and skills of the majority of pupils are below the expected attainment levels;
- there is not always enough of a challenge to move all pupils forward to achieve better; and
- although the self-evaluation process is well established, it has not been embedded sufficiently to raise pupils' standards.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- strategic planning focuses specifically on raising pupils' standards and levels of provision;
- it has good quality development plans which include appropriate priorities;
- the school is well aware of its own performance;
- the school's ethos supports positive attitudes towards learning;
- there is a strong culture of working together to ensure high quality provision; and
- parents and governors contribute effectively towards the school's work.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards of extended writing and numeracy across the curriculum
- R2 Develop suitable strategies to respond to the underperformance of boys and ensure that the most able and talented pupils' needs are met
- R3 Continue to develop the use of assessment for learning strategies, and ensure consistency throughout the school
- R4 Monitor pupils' skills development consistently and rigorously across all aspects of the curriculum
- R5 Strengthen the school's self-evaluation procedures to ensure that improvement needs are identified clearly

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

The skills of pupils who start school at three years old are lower than expected. The majority attain the appropriate outcomes for their age and starting point by the end of the Foundation Phase.

In key stage 2, many pupils undertake tasks successfully and make consistent progress against lesson goals. They show positive attitudes towards learning and are keen to succeed. In a few lessons, a minority of pupils do not make enough progress as tasks are not challenging enough.

Throughout the school, most pupils can recall previous learning well and they make effective use of this in lessons to acquire new knowledge and skills. Their knowledge and understanding develop appropriately.

Although the majority of pupils come from homes where English is the first language, they communicate orally in Welsh effectively from an early age. Many pupils' skills in the Welsh language show appropriate progress. They listen attentively, speak clearly and, by the end of key stage 2, many read with purpose. However, the majority of pupils' extended writing skills are not as well developed and their extended writing is not consistent in other subjects across the curriculum. Most pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory, but very few use their mathematical skills purposefully and consistently across the curriculum.

Most pupils across the school develop useful wider skills. In key stage 2, most pupils can talk about their work with increasing confidence. Their independence as learners and the way in which they evaluate their own work and that of their peers are developing suitably and are having a positive impact on their work. Many are able to express their opinions maturely about different issues that are important to them. Most pupils' research skills in the Foundation Phase are developing well.

In 2012, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected levels at the end of the Foundation Phase was below the average of the family of similar schools and the Wales average in all areas. These results placed the school among the lowest 25% of similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals.

In 2012, the percentage of pupils who achieved the core subject indicator, namely Welsh or English first language, mathematics and science combined, at the end of key stage 2 was lower than the family of schools average. When comparing the school with other similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the school was among the top 25%. Over time, the school's performance has varied in terms of the core subject indicator and the individual core subjects.

However, in general, the school has been among the top 50% of similar schools in terms of entitlement to free school meals over the past four years. Except in 2012, the school's performance has also been higher than the family average during this period.

The proportion of pupils who have achieved a higher level than expected (level 5 or above) at the end of key stage 2 has been significantly lower than the family and all-Wales averages over a period of four years.

In 2011, 100% of girls at the school achieved the expected level (level 4) in Welsh, English, mathematics and science, but boys' achievement was much lower, except in science. In general, boys have underperformed consistently compared with girls over the past four years.

Pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress and achieve their personal targets. As the number of pupils is small, it is not appropriate to compare the achievement of pupils who receive free school meals with those who do not.

Wellbeing: Good

Almost all pupils are aware of the importance of health and fitness and they achieve consistently well in their personal, social and cultural development. All pupils feel safe in school and know how they can keep healthy by eating sensibly and exercising through physical exercise lessons and activities.

Almost all pupils are satisfied learners who enjoy school life. They enjoy their lessons and take advantage of opportunities to express sensible opinions about what they learn. Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school and all pupils are very polite when responding to adults and peers. All pupils show care and respect towards each other and towards any pupils with special needs.

The attendance rate of approximately 95.2% places the school among the top 25% of similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. This is also above the national average. Almost all pupils are punctual.

Members of the school council and eco committee take an active role by making purposeful decisions about school life. These pupils enjoy their responsibilities and realise that they have a strong voice to influence the school's daily life and work. They are active and have a positive impact on aspects such as the school's environment, activities and resources. All pupils' commitment to the village and the local community is good.

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

The school plans appropriate and stimulating learning experiences which engage pupils across the school. Teachers work together in a purposeful manner to plan detailed work programmes. This includes planning practical activities in the school itself, such as the experience of re-living a day during "the great strike of Penrhyn

Quarry", and interesting educational visits outside the school to engage boys who are underperforming. However, the planning does not identify opportunities to challenge more able and talented pupils consistently enough. In the Foundation Phase, the school makes positive use of a suitable range of learning areas, including the outdoor area, to enrich skills.

Provision to ensure that pupils develop independent learning skills is robust. In general, provision for developing literacy and communication skills is suitable. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in Welsh or English. Numeracy skills are not embedded consistently enough across the curriculum.

Pupils' awareness of global citizenship is developing firmly. The school ensures that there is effective provision for developing pupils' knowledge of global citizenship issues through various work related to other countries such as those in Africa, and Australia, Iceland and Botswana. There is a good range of opportunities to raise most pupils' awareness of the importance of sustainable development, including recycling and saving energy. The work of the 'Green Group' reflects the school's regular efforts to support eco-projects. Collective worship is used appropriately to raise pupils' awareness of issues relating to fairness and inequality.

The focus on developing the Welsh language is successful. Pupils are given comprehensive opportunities to learn about the culture of their local area and Wales.

Teaching: Good

Teaching has many strengths across the school. Teachers have good, up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum and of suitable ways of developing pupils' skills. There is a valuable working relationship between adults and pupils in classes. Suitable questions often extend pupils' understanding in a supportive learning environment.

Presentations and the pace of lessons are effective. There is an appropriate balance between leading learning and developing pupils' independence. However, at times, an overdependence on worksheets limits the opportunities for the most able pupils to extend their work and develop their key skills.

All members of teaching staff, including support staff, use behaviour management strategies very effectively to support learning.

Assessment for learning strategies are in evidence in work throughout the school. However, they are not used consistently from one classroom to the next. Teachers give all pupils good suggestions and encouragement orally to improve their work. Some good aspects can be seen in marking and there are examples of comments that help pupils to know how they can improve their work. Where there are shortcomings, marking is not challenging enough to extend the most able pupils.

The target setting process for individual pupils is developing appropriately throughout the school. There are suitable arrangements for levelling and moderating pupils' work within the school and within the cluster. As a result, the school identifies underachievement early and responds appropriately.

The report to parents meets requirements and includes appropriate information.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a welcoming community. All members of staff share responsibility for care and support and assist with successful procedures for pupils' behaviour. There is effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and they are given regular opportunities to improve their health and fitness. The school promotes attendance well.

Pupils receive valuable support from the school's staff and external officers. The school has beneficial links with external professional agencies.

Structures for supporting pupils with special educational needs are embedded effectively. Information collected throughout the year is used to set appropriate targets in individual education plans. These plans are evaluated and updated regularly. Thorough procedures for pupils with additional learning needs ensure that they are able to access the full curriculum.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has a very inclusive ethos with a suitable emphasis on equal opportunities for all pupils and promoting a sense of belonging. The school's values lead to valuing and celebrating diversity effectively.

The school has a wide range of resources of appropriate quality which are used suitably. In the Foundation Phase, comprehensive use is made of the outdoor area. The large equipment, football field and playground offer valuable resources to pupils for learning and play.

Displays reflect pupils' work well and the accommodation meets their needs effectively. The room for children with disabilities is a specific example of this.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for raising standards, protecting the Welsh language and ensuring pupils' wellbeing. She succeeds in conveying that vision to staff, governors, parents and pupils. She has created an effective team with direction and purpose for the school's life and work

Staff feel that they are appreciated and their roles and responsibilities are defined clearly. New duties and responsibilities have been introduced recently to ensure improvements, but these arrangements have not yet embedded firmly enough to have an effect on standards.

Through their contribution to the school council, pupils are given beneficial opportunities to contribute towards developing the school.

Teachers' continuous professional development is supported through an effective performance management system. There is no formal system for managing the performance of support staff. However, the school ensures opportunities for them to develop professionally when the need arises.

The governing body receives regular reports from the headteacher and discusses them carefully. Governors are enthusiastic and develop their expertise further by familiarising themselves increasingly with pupils' attainment data and develop their subject knowledge through discussions with staff.

A number of local and national initiatives are developing appropriately and contribute positively towards raising standards.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school has developed a self-evaluation policy and processes that have an increasing influence on the School Development Plan. However, although these processes include reviewing all aspects of school life, the self-evaluation is not evaluative enough to ensure that the school's improvement needs are clear.

Self-evaluation arrangements make appropriate use of information, including end of key stage data and a range of first-hand evidence to plan for improvement. Regular attention is given to evidence of the quality of teaching and learning that is collected through classroom observations. However, evidence that informs the self-evaluation report is not always robust enough and governors are not given sufficient opportunities to influence the report's content and challenge the process's findings appropriately. The self-evaluation has led to a new development plan, which includes priorities that focus appropriately on raising pupils' standards and improving the quality of provision. Success criteria are appropriate and challenging. The plan identifies clearly the resources allocated for activities and all staff are aware of their responsibilities in terms of implementing them.

The cluster's networks of professional practice, the county training programme and the primary-secondary agreement influence the school's practice and standards effectively, especially when developing and improving literacy and communication.

Partnership working: Good

The school has useful and effective partnerships which contribute well towards improving pupils' educational standards.

Partnerships with parents, the community and others are robust and the school has benefitted significantly from the financial contributions of the parent teacher association.

Effective transition links with the local secondary school enable pupils to be prepared appropriately for the next stage in their education. These include transition projects, and induction period and visits by staff and pupils.

There are appropriate arrangements for standardising and moderating key stage 2 assessments with local primary schools and the secondary school. Similar arrangements for the end of the Foundation Phase which have resulted from the work of a professional learning community across schools in the catchment area are beginning to have an effect on standards.

Visits to the community and visitors from the community contribute positively towards enriching pupils' experiences.

Resource management: Adequate

There are enough full-time and part-time staff available to address all areas of the school curriculum appropriately, and they are managed effectively. Sufficient opportunities are offered for staff to attend suitable training courses. The governing body manages and monitors the school's financial resources effectively and ensures that they are linked fully to the new development plan. The school makes good use of its budget to promote effective education and, recently, it has invested substantially in assistants that have had a positive effect on pupils' achievement.

School staff have worked diligently to create an attractive environment. The accommodation is of a good standard and, along with the surrounding grounds, provides a stimulating learning environment for pupils.

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

The school provides adequate value for money, considering progress and standards throughout the school.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Trends in school performance data are unreliable as the number of pupils at the end of both key stages is very small.

At the end of 2012, the achievement of pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase at the school in the Foundation Phase indicator (the percentage of pupils who achieve outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development and cultural diversity combined) was lower than the family of similar schools and the all-Wales average.

When comparing the school's achievement at the end of the Foundation Phase with that of similar schools in terms of entitlement to free school meals, the school's achievement is among the lowest 25% in outcomes 5 and 6, but in the third quartile in relation to outcome 6 in language skills.

Trends in pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 at the school in the core subject indicator (the percentage of pupils who achieve level 4 in Welsh or English, mathematics and science combined) has improved over a four year period, but was lower than the average of the family of similar schools, although higher than the all-Wales average, in 2012. The pattern is also uneven for the subjects separately over a period of time. In 2011, 100% of girls at the school achieved the expected level (level 4) in Welsh, English, mathematics and science, but boys' achievement was much lower, except in science. One hundred per cent of boys succeeded in achieving level 4 in science. The percentage who achieved a higher than expected level (level 5) has been significantly lower in comparison with the family and all-Wales averages over a four-year period.

When comparing the school's achievement at the end of key stage 2 with that of similar school in terms of entitlement to free school meals, the school's achievement has ranged from being among the top 25% and the lower 50% over four years in all core subjects.

As the number of pupils is small, it is not fair to compare the achievement of pupils who receive free school meals with those who do not. Pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress in all school years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

The 41 responses received from pupils are very positive.

All are of the opinion that:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- the school teaches them how to keep healthy;
- there are many opportunities at the school to undertake regular physical exercise; and
- they know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard.

Almost all are of the opinion that:

- they feel safe at school;
- they know with whom to talk if they are worried or anxious;
- they are doing well at school; and
- the teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress.

Although the number of responses is small, the responses of pupils at Ysgol Tanycastell compare favourably with average pupil responses across Wales in the majority of statements.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Of the 14 responses received from parents, all are of the opinion that:

- teaching is good;
- the homework that is given builds well on what my child learns in school;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular physical exercise;
- their child likes this school; and
- their child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the school.

Almost all are of the opinion that:

- their child is making good progress at school;
- pupils behave well in school;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do his or her best;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their child is safe at school;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs;
- they receive regular information about their child's progress;

- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or when identifying a problem;
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and shoulder responsibility;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school;
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits; and
- the school is well run.

A very few disagree.

The responses of parents at Ysgol Tanycastell compare favourably with average parent responses across Wales in all statements.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Carolyn Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Margaret Davies	Team Inspector
Dylan Jones	Lay Inspector
Richard Carbis	Peer Inspector
Annwen Parry Williams	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.