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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Pontfadog Primary School

**Pontfadog
Llangollen
Wrexham
LL20 7AH**

Date of inspection: November 2010

by

Merfyn Douglas Jones

for

**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 Pontfadog is a community primary school maintained by Wrexham County Borough Council. The school is located in the Ceiriog Valley in north-east Wales and serves the rural communities of Pontfadog, Dolywern, Llwynmawr and Bronygarth.

The school reports that the pupils are representative of a range of social backgrounds, and that the intake consists of many able and a few less-able pupils. Approximately 5% per cent of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, and the same percentage has special educational needs (SEN). These are well below local and national averages.

There has been a decline in the number of pupils since the last inspection. Currently, the school has 21 full-time pupils (5 -11 years old) and five nursery aged children who attend on a part-time basis. There were 3 classrooms in 2004 and there are now only 2 two classrooms.

All the pupils are from homes where the language of communication is English and they learn Welsh as a second language.

The headteacher shares his time between two schools and is now a non-teaching head. He was appointed in 1993 as headteacher of Pontfadog school and in 2009 for Llanarmon school.

Teaching in the junior class is now a job share where one teacher teaches for three days and the other for two days. There is one full-time teacher and one classroom assistant in the Foundation Phase.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school is adequate because:

- Learners' progress from on-entry to the end of key stage 2 is generally adequate;
- Sometimes, teaching lacks pace, tasks lack challenge and questioning does not provoke learners' thinking and communication skills;
- Strategic leadership is insufficiently focussed on standards and on national initiatives such as the 'School Effectiveness Framework';
- Safeguarding arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- Self-evaluation does not impact enough on raising standards;
- Recommendations from the previous inspection have not all been addressed;
- Pupils, especially the more able, are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential.

Recommendations

- R1* Provide tasks that are closely matched to pupils' abilities and challenge the higher achieving pupils.
- R2 Ensure consistency in the quality of marking and raise pupils' awareness of what they need to do next, with achievable and specific individual targets.
- R3* Continue to develop assessment for learning strategies across the school.
- R4 Review the school's safeguarding policy and procedures as a matter of urgency and arrange appropriate training for all staff.
- R5 Improve the rigour of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and adopt the School Effectiveness Framework.

*identified by the school in its recent development plan.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. A small team of Estyn inspectors will visit the school to judge progress around a year later.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

On entry to the nursery and reception class, the intake consists of many able and a few less able pupils. The progress they make by the end of KS2 is satisfactory.

With such small numbers of pupils at the end of both key stages, the analysis of data and identification of trends over time needs to be done cautiously because one pupil's results can have a significant impact on the school's overall performance.

However, over the last four years, there has been a steady decline in the number of pupils attaining level 3 in Key stage 1 (KS1) and level 5 in Key stage 2 (KS2).

In 2010, there were no level 5s in English (oracy, reading and writing) and in science in KS2 and no level 3s in KS1.

However, in KS2, the level 4+ figures are well above family, local and all Wales averages and in KS1, level 2+ figures are well above family, local and national averages in mathematics and science but well below in English.

Benchmarked against schools with similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' results fluctuate greatly from being in the bottom 25% to the top 25% due to the very low cohort numbers.

The Core Subject Indicator (CSI) results (i.e. the percentage of pupils that achieve level 2 or above in KS1 and level 4 or above in KS2 in English, mathematics and science) also fluctuate greatly in both key stages.

The difference between the performance of boys and girls fluctuate considerably over the years.

Across the school, most learners listen well, speak clearly and read with confidence. However, very few pupils write at length in other subjects across the curriculum and in different genre. Nearly all pupils' computer and technology skills are well developed and the majority of pupils' numeracy skills are developing well.

Nearly all learners' Welsh language and bilingual skills are well developed. They arrive in school with no Welsh and make good progress in learning the language.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils' wellbeing is good. All pupils feel safe despite the shortcomings in safeguarding arrangements, and understand what they need to do to keep healthy. They work well together and many are involved in decisions to improve their own learning.

Attendance at 96.6% is very good and compares very well with similar schools in Wales and the Local Authority (LA). It has improved considerably in the last three

years. Behaviour of nearly all pupils is good both in class and at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are polite and well mannered, treating all with respect.

The School Council and Eco Committee are actively involved in making decisions about what happens in school.

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

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which covers satisfies the requirements of the Foundation Phase and National Curriculum, including religious education. A good range of interesting learning experiences meets the needs of all pupils. Plans extend for up four years in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of subject areas and to maintain pupils' interest and motivation.

Many activities challenge learners with interesting opportunities to work creatively and to solve problems. Curricular plans give adequate consideration to the development of pupils' key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. Speaking, listening and reading feature prominently in pupils' work. Opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills are not planned sufficiently well.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the historical and cultural characteristics of the locality and Wales are developed effectively. Pupils' awareness of sustainable development is good and global citizenship is adequate. Overall, opportunities to extend more able pupils are not sufficiently planned for or opportunities fully exploited.

A good range of visits, visitors to school and extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' experiences significantly. Provision for developing pupils' bilingual skills is good.

Teaching: Adequate

There is an efficient system for measuring and tracking learners' progress through the school. On-entry and Baseline assessments provide a useful benchmark against which progress may be measured. In KS2, all pupils' progress in reading is tested and a test of thinking skills in year 4 allows teachers to plan more effectively. Arrangements to standardise teachers' assessments are being revised in order to make assessment more reliable.

Teachers know their pupils very well and give good support and oral feedback while they are working. Marking in books is less effective, as it rarely refers to intended outcomes or suggests ways to improve. Assessment for learning is at an early stage of development. Reports to parents are detailed and helpful.

Where teaching is most effective, tasks are well matched to pupils' ability and resources are used well to support learning. Open-ended questioning extends learners' thinking and communication skills.

Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently and the pace of lessons is too slow. Lessons are too teacher-directed and there is an

over-use of inappropriate worksheets which lack challenge.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

Parents are supportive and agree that the schools' provision for health and wellbeing is good. The school's involvement with Healthy Schools has further encouraged pupils' awareness of the importance of eating healthy food and taking regular exercise. The Framework for Personal and Social Education (PSE) takes account and supports pupils' learning experiences and personal development well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Although all staff know what to do and who to contact in an emergency, they have not had any recent training regarding safeguarding arrangements. The school does not have an appropriate policy for safeguarding and procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues are not fully developed.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community and all pupils are valued and treated equally. The school has adopted a range of policies that promote equality for pupils and staff. Pupils take on responsibilities that impact on the learning environment. There is equal access to the curriculum and end of key stage National Curriculum results show that the majority of pupils achieve success, irrespective of gender, ability or social background.

Staff and pupils display a caring and tolerant approach to others.

There are comprehensive resources to support teaching and learning, well matched to pupils' needs. Accommodation is well maintained and classrooms provide a bright, stimulating environment for learners. Outside areas are used effectively, the field and yard is well used for learning experiences. The Foundation Phase outdoor space is used consistently to develop independence. Toilets are appropriate to number of pupils but they are in need of modernization. The school has no hall and pupils have to be transported to ensure coverage of Physical Education in the National Curriculum.

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

Since his appointment as head of another small village school locally, the headteacher has delegated leadership successfully and this ensures the day to day running of the school is effective and efficient in his absence. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and balanced, and all staff understand their roles.

There is a recently organised rolling programme for monitoring teaching and learning but this has not yet had an impact on standards. Staff work closely together as a small team and this impacts well on the ethos of the school

The priorities identified from the self-evaluation process are not often based on raising standards or on promoting pupil progress. The school improvement plan (SIP) lacks

detail on actions to be taken to achieve the success criteria and there is no review and analysis of previous priorities.

The headteacher is not fully aware of the available strategies to raise standards such as in the School Effectiveness Framework but he is very supportive of his staff and the governing body and works hard for the benefit of all the learners.

Apart from the safeguard issue, the governing body has a good understanding of its responsibilities. The governors have a strong interest in the day-to-day life of the school and are very supportive of the headteacher and staff. However, they do not always challenge the school's direction and development planning.

Improving quality: Adequate

Procedures for evaluating quality and planning for improvement are adequate. The school evaluates its work honestly but the self-evaluation process is insufficiently rigorous. Reviews describe the situation without evaluating any impact on pupils and standards. Although the review involves the views of parents, pupils and governors, it does not include contributions from all members of staff. Analysis of attainment data has been insufficiently focused on seeking opportunities to raise standards of attainment for pupils of all abilities. The school has sought few opportunities to observe best practice in other schools and modify its provision accordingly.

The SIP draws on the self-evaluation review but is not a fully effective tool in bringing about improvements, because priorities are not linked to standards, do not describe tasks and targets in sufficient detail, nor provide quantifiable success criteria. Progress towards priorities from previous years' plans is not routinely evaluated.

Partnership working: Good

Partnerships with parents and the local community are very strong. Pupils throughout the school benefit from a good number of links with local schools, businesses and charities.

There are close links with the local Mother and Toddlers group, the cluster of primary schools and the main receiving secondary school. Transition arrangements between the schools are good, with older pupils benefitting from visits to and from the high school. They undertake jointly-planned topics to prepare them for their first term in the new school.

A number of joint curricular initiatives are planned with cluster schools. The school provides students from secondary schools and teacher training colleges with useful experiences and placements.

Resource management: Adequate

Throughout the school there are a wide range of resources that are used to support teaching and learning. Good use is made of the limited space available. Staff are effectively deployed and teachers have the knowledge to cover all aspects of the curriculum. Teachers make good use of their planning, preparation and assessment time to plan effective opportunities for all children. The school meets its statutory

requirements for performance management and implementing the Workload Agreement. There is an appraisal system in place for support staff. The school Finance Sub-Committee sets the school budget and makes arrangements for contingencies.

The school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Parent questionnaires

Five parents completed the questionnaire. All parents strongly agree or agree with all the comments in the questionnaire except for the one regarding children being well prepared for moving into the next school, and 50% did not know.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Learner questionnaires

Twelve learners, the whole of KS2, completed the questionnaire. They all agreed that;

- the school deals well with bullying
- they know who to talk to if worried or upset
- they are doing well at school
- teachers help them to learn and make progress
- they have enough books and equipment to do their work

The main concerns were homework (4), behaviour in class (6) and behaviour at playtimes and lunch times (8). These were mainly girls.

When questioned, the pupils explained that they had been confused and that there was no real bullying in the school. During the inspection all pupils were polite and behaved well.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Merfyn Douglas Jones	Reporting Inspector
Christopher Dolby	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Barbara Adams	Peer Inspector
David Davies	School Nominee

Contractor:

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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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 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	R	Y1	Y2	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:

Key stage 1	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