



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 Barras
Stryd y Rhos
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1DY**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

Gwilym Trebor Roberts

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 Pen Barras is a county primary designated Welsh medium school which serves the town of Ruthin and the local area. It is a fairly prosperous area and, on the whole, pupils come from fairly advantaged social backgrounds. Over 2% of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is substantially lower than the average for the county and Wales as a whole.

Currently, there are 216 full time pupils aged between 4 and 11 years old on roll and there are 32 nursery age children who attend on a part time basis, either in the morning or in the afternoon. There are 18 pupils on the special educational needs register, including one pupil who has a statement of special educational need. About 84% of pupils are from homes where Welsh is spoken. Less than 1% of the pupils are from minority or mixed ethnic backgrounds.

The school runs its own nursery called “Clwb Ffrindiau Bach” on a daily basis. It also runs a breakfast club every morning and an after school club.

The Foundation Phase and key stage 1 classes are located in the school’s main building, with the Nursery and key stage 2 classes in demountable classrooms. The site is shared with another primary school, Ysgol Stryd y Rhos.

The school was last inspected in 2005. The acting head teacher has been in post since the autumn of 2010. A permanent head teacher has been appointed to start in September 2011.

The individual school budget in 2010 – 2011 per pupil for Ysgol Pen Barras is £3323 which compares with a maximum of £18610 and the minimum of £2626 for primary schools in Denbighshire. This is the school with the 45th highest budget per pupil of the 53 primary schools in Denbighshire.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- the pupils across the school achieve good standards;
- the quality of teaching is good;
- the pupils benefit from interesting and varied learning experiences;
- pupils enjoy school, behave very well and are enthusiastic when learning;
- there are good relationships between the school and the parents and the local community.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the teachers and the support staff display substantial dedication to maintaining and improving standards;
- the self evaluation procedures in which all the staff and the governors have participated over the past year have given rise to improvements, although there is room for further development;
- the school co-operates with a good range of partners, and
- the inspection team is of the view that the school will implement the recommendations of the report and ensure effective co-operation between professional staff, the Governing Body and the local authority (LA).

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1: aim for excellent standards;
- R2: improve the planning for development and progression in ITC skills in key stage 2;
- R3: improve arrangements for assessment and tracking pupils' progress and give pupils a more active role in improving their own work;
- R4: continue to develop the school's leadership roles and further develop the role of the Governing Body;
- R5: further improve the self evaluation systems;
- R6: co-operate with the LA to improve the site's limitations.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In key stage 1, there has been a gradual improvement over four years in the teacher assessment results for seven year old pupils. In 2010, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level (Level 2 or above) is higher than in the family of schools, the county and the whole of Wales, in the core subject indicator (CSI), mathematics and science. Results in Welsh have been higher than those of the family of schools, the county and Wales for four years. When compared with similar schools as regards the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level has varied. Between 2007 and 2009, the results placed the school amongst the lowest 50% or the lowest 25%. The 100% results for the three subjects and the CSI in 2010 places the school amongst the top 25% of similar schools for every indicator.

The results of teachers' assessments at the end of key stage 2 over the past four years have been consistently good. The school's results have been higher than those of the family of schools, the county and Wales for the CSI, Welsh and English in every one of the four years as regards the percentage attaining the expected level (Level 4 or above). Results in mathematics and science were also higher than those of the county and Wales over the same period and above those of the family of schools in three out of four years. When the school's performance is compared with the performance of similar schools as regards the percentage receiving free school meals, the performance for every indicator apart from one has placed the school either amongst the top 50% or the top 25% of similar schools over the past four years. The one exception was in 2009 when the school's science results placed it amongst the lowest 50% of similar schools.

There is no difference in boys' and girls' performance in class. Over four years, girls, on the whole, tend to outperform boys in end of key stage 1 and end of key stage 2 assessments. It is not possible to identify any difference between the performance of individuals in receipt of free school meals and other pupils.

Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) make good progress. More able and talented pupils achieve high standards throughout the school. The pupils' exercise books show high achievement in writing, mathematics and science. This was not fully reflected in teacher assessments at the end of key stage 1 in 2010. Around half the pupils reach a level 5, one level above that which is expected, at the end of key stage 2 in every one of the core subjects.

Most pupils make good progress in their lessons and across the school year. Almost every pupil makes good progress between the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2. The pupils throughout the school enjoy their lessons and learn successfully with their peers.

The standards of the communication and literacy skills of Foundation Phase, Year 2 and key stage 2 pupils are good in Welsh. The pupils listen intently and discuss, ask and answer questions well. They read to a good standard and write at length to a good standard in different curricular contexts. The communication and literacy skills of key stage 2 pupils in English are also good.

Those pupils who begin learning Welsh when they start school soon become able to use it with ease.

Wellbeing: Good

Almost every pupil feels safe in school and feels that the school deals well with any instances of bullying. The pupils have a strong awareness of what constitutes healthy living. Most of them participate in a wide range of physical activities, many of them outside normal school hours. Most of the pupils, and the parents confirm this, say that they are happy in school. This is confirmed by the inspection team's observations in the classes. The pupils' behaviour is very good and attendance rates (a little over 96%) are consistently higher than those of Wales and similar schools. The pupils discuss their themes and areas of learning well and in some classes they solve problems and plan, develop and reflect upon their own learning well. Despite this, the pupils do not often enough improve their own work. Members of the School Council have a growing awareness of their roles. The Council promotes improvements in the school, such as buying play equipment for the playground. The pupils show respect and care when they deal with each other and in their close relationships with their teachers and support staff.

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

The school presents a wide and balanced range of motivating experiences for all the pupils.

The provision meets the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and religious education in full. The school has effective planning systems which ensure that children in the Foundation Phase, year 2 and key stage 2 experience varied activities and develop in their learning. The provision is enriched by the contributions of visitors and after school sports, environmental and cultural clubs. All these arouse pupils' interests well.

The provision for communication, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been planned appropriately. The new ICT plans have not been implemented in a sufficiently systematic manner across key stage 2 in order to promote good standards by pupils.

Within the Foundation Phase, year 2 and key stage 2 the pupils have regular opportunities to speak, discuss and express views, to read literary and factual texts, and to write at length. The arrangements for promoting investigative and thinking skills have become firmly established in some classes.

The Welsh language provision is good. There is a strong Welsh ethos to the life and work of the school. Promoting specific activities such as the school choir, book quiz activities, various activities to do with sports or eisteddfod, together promote a feeling of being Welsh very well. Good attention is paid to promoting the pupils' awareness and understanding of Wales' history, heritage and culture.

The school promotes the pupils' understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship well through curricular activities and the day to day life of the school. Specific events such as a link with Kenya and raising money for good causes reinforce the provision well.

Teaching: Good

The quality of much of the teaching is good, and the remainder is very good, throughout the school. The staff have a good understanding of the curriculum.

When the teaching is good, the teachers explain new concepts clearly, stimulate the pupils effectively and ensure good progress and learning by the pupils. Lessons are well paced. Resources are thoroughly and skilfully used to improve the learning.

When the teaching is very good, the teacher is successful in stimulating and challenging most of the pupils. The pupils are engaged in many of the tasks, work independently and there is appropriate emphasis in the lessons on investigative and research tasks. The teachers' questioning also challenges them to reinforce concepts.

Assessment for learning is firmly established throughout the school. Learning aims are presented for almost every task, and often, the teachers set criteria for success in line with the tasks. At times, pupils set their own success criteria. In the best practice, extended discussions to evaluate success take place and, at times, this includes the use of discussion partners.

The progress of children in the Foundation Phase, Year 2 and key stage 2 pupils is tracked in great detail but the systems are burdensome for teachers. The teachers respond to work in a positive manner but they move on to the next task before allowing pupils to improve their work. Insufficient use is made of the assessment findings to inform the learning.

Parents and carers are given good information about their children's achievements, welfare and development. The individual profiles kept in the Foundation Phase are excellent and the parents appreciate them very much. The three formal opportunities during the year for parents to talk to teachers are useful.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an organised and caring community. The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully by means of a range of educational experiences. Healthy eating habits and fitness are promoted well.

A range of appropriate information is given to parents. The induction arrangements for pupils new to the school are good. The school makes good use of various agencies to promote the pupils' knowledge of matters such as safety, health and hygiene.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding children.

The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is now good. The pupils' learning needs are recognised by the teachers at an early stage and are addressed effectively. Good use is made of assistants and also external agencies to support the pupils' needs.

Learning environment: Adequate

There is an inclusive and supportive ethos in the school which promotes pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and towards their fellow pupils.

Displays in every class create an attractive learning environment.

Policies such as those that relate to behaviour, anti-bullying, anti racism and ensuring fairness for the disabled, promote the inclusive ethos well. The school has taken reasonable steps to ensure access for the disabled.

The buildings are spread out, with seven of the eleven classes in demountable classrooms. Over half the pupils have to cross the playground to move between them whatever the weather. There is no water supply or a toilet in one unit. The school shares a canteen, playing field, computer classroom and hall with the neighbouring school. Whilst the school copes with the situation, this somewhat limits the choices available to make full use of the resources on site. The buildings are kept clean and tidy.

There is a lack of parking space, particularly for dropping pupils off or picking them up. The school takes steps under difficult circumstances to lessen the risk to pupils. The governors' attention has been drawn to a specific safety issue.

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

Leadership: Adequate

There has been a period of instability in the school and that has had an impact on some aspects of leadership and management. Since February 2010, there have been three temporary headteachers in the school and a new deputy head teacher and another teacher have joined the staff recently. The temporary headteachers, in co-operation with the hard working staff, have ensured good standards as regards the education offered.

There is a very strong sense of teamwork in the school. All the staff work together closely to create a positive ethos. The job descriptions of all the staff have been defined, but the job descriptions of teachers with additional higher responsibilities are not always specific enough. The teachers share responsibilities for subjects and areas. Good attention is paid to satisfying national and local priorities.

Members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) are fairly new to their posts and the members have not had sufficient time for their work to have a full impact on all aspects of standards of achievement and quality assurance processes.

By now, the governors have a satisfactory understanding of their responsibilities and they work in close conjunction with the acting headteacher to set an appropriate strategic direction for the school's development. They are starting to act as critical friends and challenge decisions. Recently, members have been discussing the co-ordinators' work with them. Also, jointly with teachers, they have contributed to the self evaluation document drawn up by the school.

Pupils' and parents' views are starting to influence aspects of the life and the work of the school.

Improving quality: Good

A good range of evidence is used as part of the self evaluation process. After a period of instability, the role and contribution of all the staff to the arrangements are clearer. Due consideration is given to the views of pupils and parents. These views are a help in deciding upon what the strengths are, and what are the areas for improvement.

The self evaluation arrangements have contributed towards the good standards attained by the pupils, for example, by observing the learning and teaching regularly, comparing methods of working in the Foundation Phase and by analysing the key stage 2 language books and presenting the staff with a detailed report.

Recently, the acting headteacher and the SMT have produced a three year overview of the areas staff and governors have noted for improvement. The School Development Plan (SDP) notes incisive priorities for improvement as regards raising standards and aspects of management; the cost, timetable and staff responsibilities in responding to every priority have been clearly noted.

The professional development arrangements and training sessions for every member of staff provide good opportunities for everyone to gain new skills and reflect on good practice.

The acting headteacher, the staff and the governing body strive continuously to improve upon the school's previous performance.

Partnership working: Good

The school has nurtured a range of valuable strategic partnerships which have a positive impact on the quality of the provision. The parents are supportive of the school's work and appreciate it. They support the school practically by raising money, holding social events and attending meetings on aspects of the curriculum. Some parents wish to become more involved. There is also a close link with the local community which has a positive impact on the quality of the learning experiences. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is promoted well through international links with other countries, such as Kenya. The school co-operates well with other primary schools such as the designated Welsh medium schools in the county. The curricular and pastoral link with the local secondary school are very good. The school works in close conjunction with Ysgol Stryd y Rhos which shares a number of resources on the site.

Resource management: Good

There are an appropriate number of teachers and support staff in the school in order to meet the pupils' needs. The teachers work together very well for the benefit of the pupils. The support staff fulfil their roles effectively and contribute well to the work and life of the school. Specific arrangements are implemented for the performance management of staff. The teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) is used effectively to improve standards and the school's educational provision. Recently, useful non-contact time has been earmarked for the SMT, in order to attend to aspects of school leadership and management.

Good resources are available to provide for all the requirements of the school curriculum and in general they are used efficiently to promote good standards. The impact of the use of ICT resources in key stage 2 is less effective.

The school's financial management is now good. The acting headteacher, and the governors oversee the budget carefully. There is a clear link between the decisions on expenditure and the school's priorities for improvement.

The school offers good value for money, as the teaching is good and this leads to good standards.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty four parents completed the questionnaire. In general, the parents express positive views about the school. Almost all of them are satisfied with the school and say that their children like being there; most of them are confident that their children are safe in school. Most are of the view that teaching is good and that their children are given appropriate additional support. Most parents also say that the school is well run and that it is easy to talk to staff if they have any questions or concerns and that they receive regular information about their children's progress.

A very few parents say that they do not receive regular information about their children's progress, that their children are not encouraged to be healthy and to exercise regularly. A very few parents also say that they do not understand the school's arrangements for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire. They all feel that they are well taught, that they are making progress, and that they know with whom to talk if the work is difficult. Almost all of them are of the view that there are enough resources to enable them to learn well. Almost all the pupils feel safe. Very few of them believe that homework fails to help them to understand and improve their work. Almost all of them believe that the school encourages them to keep healthy and fit. Most feel that the school deals well with bullying. Most say that children behave well and that they are able to do their work, and that there is good behaviour during playtime and lunchtime.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Gwilym Trebor Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Phil Mostert	Team Inspector
Richard Parry Hughes	Lay Inspector
Elfed Williams	Peer Inspector
Geraint Williams	School Nominee

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Copies of the report

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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