



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 Gynradd Abernant
Abernant
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA33 5RR**

Date of inspection: June 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 Abernant is a small rural school that serves the village itself and the surrounding area. The area in which the school is situated is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. A very few pupils are entitled to free school meals, the number lower than county and national percentages.

Thirty pupils, between three and 11 years of age, are on roll, including one nursery child. Children are admitted full-time to the school during the term in which they have their fourth birthday. Pupil numbers have fallen a little since the last inspection.

The school has designated only a few pupils as having additional learning needs. This percentage is significantly lower than the average for the local authority. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The school is a category Ac school in accordance with Carmarthenshire County Council's language policy and Welsh is the main language medium of the life and work of the school. The aim is to ensure that all pupils are completely bilingual by the time they transfer to the secondary sector. Welsh is the main language that is spoken in the homes of about 35% of pupils.

Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes, by one full-time teacher and two part-time teachers. The current headteacher was appointed in September 1991 but, during the inspection, the headteacher of a nearby school was in charge of the school, in the absence of the headteacher.

The school was last inspected in July 2007.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Abernant in 2012-2013 means a budget of £4,629 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in the Carmarthenshire authority is £25,997 and the minimum is £2,878. Ysgol Gynradd Abernant is in 19th position of the 108 primary schools in Carmarthenshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- most pupils achieve good standards;
- pupils develop good social and life skills;
- teaching is of good quality;
- the school is an inclusive and caring community in which pupils feel happy and safe; and
- partnerships with parents and the local community are good.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- pupils at the end of the key stages achieve well;
- staff members demonstrate commitment to pupils in their care; and
- governors are beginning to monitor the quality of education more regularly.

However:

- there are important areas to be developed in relation to management and ensuring quality;
- planning for skills is not detailed enough to ensure continuous progression and progress across the curriculum; and
- the school has not addressed all of the recommendations in the last inspection.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise the standards of extended writing in Welsh and English in key stage 2
- R2 Ensure that schemes of work in key stage 2 pay appropriate attention to developing pupils' skills
- R3 Ensure that pupils of higher ability have learning experiences and targets that extend them fully
- R4 Ensure that the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet statutory requirements
- R5 Establish self-evaluation arrangements that identify areas to be improved more effectively

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In lessons, most pupils across the school work productively and make appropriate progress against the learning aims. They recall previous learning knowledgeably in several areas.

In the Foundation Phase, many listen well and respond and contribute confidently in lessons. They confidently use Welsh orally in a range of situations and the skills of pupils who come from non-Welsh-speaking homes develop quickly and very effectively.

Many pupils' early reading skills develop well, and by the end of the Foundation Phase nearly all read for a purpose and show a detailed understanding of the text. They use a range of appropriate strategies successfully in order to tackle new vocabulary. Many pupils make sound progress in their writing skills. They become increasingly confident in writing simple sentences by using suitable and interesting vocabulary.

In key stage 2, nearly all pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. Most pupils' oral skills continue to develop well. They become increasingly confident in speaking about their work, in both languages in key stage 2, and express themselves clearly and accurately. Most pupils show a willingness to offer responses when teachers ask them and many often offer extended answers. Most pupils use the Welsh language naturally when conversing together.

Many read a range of texts fluently and accurately. They are confident in finding information and use it meaningfully in a number of areas. By the end of key stage 2, most are equally confident when reading in English.

In key stage 2, many pupils make good progress in their ability to write. They plan their work carefully and are able to make improvements when redrafting. The work shows a good awareness of the features of different forms and the ability to paragraph appropriately. Pupils make good progress in punctuating their work. On the whole, standards of accuracy of written work in Welsh and English are good. Most pupils' extended writing work has not developed enough and they do not use their writing skills consistently across the curriculum. Pupils of higher ability do not achieve as much as they should in various subjects.

There is no data report for 2012 in the report as the number of pupils who were assessed was too small to report on them without revealing the identity of individual pupils. As this is the first year for publishing Foundation Phase data, there is no information on trends available.

Over the last four years, the percentage of 11-year-old pupils who attained the expected level (level 4) at the end of key stage 2 in English, mathematics and

science has been consistently higher than the averages for schools in the family and Wales. Results for Welsh varied and were lower in two of the last four years.

Over the same period, the number of pupils who achieved the higher level (level 5) was higher than the averages for schools in the family and Wales. Apart from in 2012, results for mathematics were also higher. In two of the four years, results for science were higher but no pupils achieved the higher level in Welsh.

In comparison with schools that have similar levels of free school meals, the school's performance placed it among the top 25% over this period in English, mathematics and science. Performance in Welsh, and in all subjects at the higher level (level 5), was more varied. There has been no significant difference in the achievement of girls and boys over recent years.

Wellbeing: Good

The school promotes pupils' wellbeing successfully. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to be healthy. Everyone takes part in physical activities and many are aware of the importance of keeping the body healthy.

All children feel safe at school and know to whom to turn if they are anxious. The behaviour of almost every pupil is good during lessons, break times and lunch time. Most are keen to learn and they concentrate well during their lessons. They work well and persevere while working independently, in pairs or in a group. Nearly all pupils show respect and care for each other.

The majority of pupils develop the confidence to evaluate their work and understand what they need to do to improve it.

Pupils' attendance rates are around 95%, which is higher than the averages for the local authority and for Wales. This places the school in the top 25% in comparison schools with similar levels of free school meals. The pattern has been the same over the last four years.

The school council is enthusiastic and its voice has an effect on school life. However, its role in decision-making within the school has not had enough attention.

There are strong links between the local area and the school and pupils benefit from their experiences in the community and co-operating with people from the local area whilst they visit the school.

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

The principles of the Foundation Phase have been established and clear schemes of work ensure suitable activities for all pupils' needs.

Planning is suitable for the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. Planning for skills is not detailed enough to ensure increasing development across the curriculum.

In key stage 2, a range of interesting activities is provided which, on the whole, meet the needs of most pupils, but overdependence on work sheets limits the development of pupils' extended writing skills in Welsh and English. Overuse of uniform tasks for whole year-groups restricts the opportunities to extend higher ability pupils.

Provision for developing the Welsh language enables pupils to make good progress. All staff offer a good standard of language models to pupils, which is having a positive effect on oral skills across the school.

Extra-curricular experiences enrich pupils' experiences through visiting farms and local historical buildings.

There is satisfactory provision to enable pupils to learn about sustainability and global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is consistently good. A caring relationship exists between teachers and their pupils and a supportive ethos is evident in both classrooms.

Teachers and assistants have good subject knowledge and support is focussed clearly and contributes purposefully to pupils' needs. Teachers plan lessons in detail and share the aim carefully at the beginning of the lesson. Effective use is made of a range of teaching methods and purposeful resources and specific attention is paid in lessons to developing skills. However, tasks are not always challenging enough for pupils of higher ability.

Teachers offer supportive feedback during lessons and encourage pupils regularly to assess their own work. Pupils' work is marked regularly with frequent comments of praise; in the best practice, there are constructive comments that give them clear guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers co-operate purposefully with pupils to set personal targets for number and literacy, but these are not always specific enough.

The school makes good use of a progress tracking system. Moderating procedures are effective and ensure that the school assesses pupils accurately.

Annual reports to parents on their children's achievement and progress meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The best care and purposeful guidance are given to all pupils. Good arrangements exist to support their health and wellbeing and to encourage their involvement in their school and their community. The advantages of living healthily and the importance of keeping fit are promoted effectively.

Regular collective worship sessions support pupils' moral and spiritual development extremely successfully and promote respect and sensitivity towards others. Joint activities with local churches reinforce this further. The prominent emphasis that is placed on fostering values such as honesty, fairness and respect for others contributes well to creating a feeling of a close-knit community at the school.

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

The school has effective arrangements for pupils who have additional learning needs. They identify the needs of various pupils quickly and act promptly and purposefully. Individual education plans identify clear targets and specific activities for ensuring progress. Members of staff work effectively with external agencies and specialist services for the benefit of pupils.

Learning environment: Good

A happy and friendly ethos exists at the school. A prominent feature is the familial feeling that is based on implementing the respect and rights of all individuals within the school community. The school's arrangements ensure equal opportunities and full access for everyone to all activities. Staff promote equality and respect for diversity through personal and social education programmes and circle time.

Procedures to prevent aggressive behaviour, such as bullying, are purposeful, but they are used very rarely. Pupils are taught effectively to respect and care for their environment.

The building offers an appropriate learning environment for the number of pupils. The school makes the best use of the building and grounds. The outdoor space for the Foundation Phase and the school garden are attractive resources and they are used effectively to promote learning. However, not all of the site is accessible to disabled people.

The building and grounds are maintained well and offer a safe and interesting environment.

Displays in the classroom and across the school reflect pupils' work successfully. The varied supply of good quality resources matches pupils' needs appropriately.

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

Over the last two years, the school has gone through an unstable period in terms of leadership and the strategic direction is not clear. The headteacher in charge co-operates effectively with staff and governors to lead the school.

All members of staff have specific job descriptions and they are all clear about their roles, support each other and share common values effectively. They have created a happy atmosphere in which the contribution and potential of all pupils are

appreciated. This is reflected in the happy atmosphere across the school and it has a good effect on pupils' achievement.

The school has a range of current policies which concentrate on meeting pupils' needs and steer the school's work appropriately. Teachers make suitable use of performance data in order to identify the school's good features but areas of development for the improvement of standards are not identified specifically enough.

Governors are very supportive of the school's work; they meet regularly and are aware of their responsibilities. Recent arrangements to visit the school regularly to monitor the quality of provision and teaching have improved some governors' knowledge and understanding of the everyday life of the school. However, the governing body's ability to hold the school to account for standards and provision and to challenge as critical friends has not been developed fully.

Neither the prospectus nor the annual report to parents meets statutory requirements.

The school pays appropriate attention to national and local priorities. The Foundation Phase has been established successfully and adequate attention is paid to improving literacy across the curriculum. Assessment for learning is in place in lessons and contributes suitably to improving pupils' understanding of how well they are doing.

Improving quality: Adequate

Self-evaluation arrangements and planning for improvement pay appropriate attention to data analysis but they do not focus enough on monitoring lessons, scrutinising books and collecting the opinion of parents, pupils, teachers and governors. The self-evaluation report is not always evaluative enough, nor does it give a clear picture of every aspect of the school's work. However, the school has succeeded in identifying a number of strengths and aspects that need attention.

There is some link between the self-evaluation report and the priorities of the school development plan. The plan contains measurable targets and criteria, suitable activities and appropriate methods of monitoring and recording progress. Members of staff are aware of the priorities and their responsibilities for implementing them. The governors' role in monitoring progress is developing appropriately.

The school has paid suitable attention to the majority of the recommendations of the last inspection. However, not enough progress has been made to improve standards of extended writing in English or to empower the self-evaluation arrangements in order to identify in detail any shortcomings needing attention.

The school's staff co-operate purposefully and take full advantage of every opportunity to improve their teaching skills. The school is not yet part of a professional learning network beyond the school.

Partnership working: Good

The partnership between the school and parents is good. The parent teacher association is very active and raises a considerable amount of money for school funds. This has enabled the school to improve outdoor provision and information and communication technology (ICT) equipment.

The school benefits from a constructive link with the local community and pupils take a successful part in community activities such as services in the church and chapel.

A suitable range of external agencies and services, such as the health service, contribute their expertise well to supporting the school's work. There is a strong link between nearby schools, to share ICT resources and sports equipment.

The school has benefitted recently from the effective and successful partnership that exists with local authority officers.

Successful co-operation with local secondary schools facilitates the transfer of Year 6 pupils to the next step in their education.

Teachers co-operate effectively with primary and secondary schools in the area to moderate and standardise pupils' work and to provide joint training. This has improved teachers' understanding of the standards that are expected at the end of key stage 2.

Resource management: Good

The school has an appropriate level of staff to teach the whole curriculum. Good use is made of classroom assistants and they play a key part in supporting pupils.

Appropriate arrangements are in place for managing the performance of all staff, which results in suitable opportunities for continuous professional development. Teachers make effective use of their planning, preparation and assessment time.

The school has an extensive range of learning and teaching resources and it manages them effectively.

Expenditure is monitored very carefully, and specific sums are earmarked for implementing the school's priorities.

Considering pupils' outcomes and the use that is made of funding, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

There is no data report for 2012 in the report because the number of pupils that were assessed is too small to report upon without identifying individual pupils. As this is the first year for publishing Foundation Phase data, there is no information about trends available.

Over the last four years, the percentage of 11-year-old pupils who attained the expected level (level 4) at the end of key stage 2 in English, mathematics and science has been consistently higher than the averages for the family and for Wales. Results for Welsh varied and were lower than these averages in two out of the last four years.

Over the same period, the number of pupils who achieved the higher level (level 5) in English was higher than the averages for the schools in the family and Wales. Apart from in 2012, mathematics results were also higher. In two out of the four years, results for science were higher, but no pupil achieved the higher level in Welsh.

In comparison with the performance levels of schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, the school's performance was among the top 25% over this period in English, mathematics and science. Results for Welsh were varied, from being in the top 25% in 2009 and 2011, to being in the bottom 25% in 2010 and 2012.

The percentage of pupils who attained the higher level (level 5) also varied from being in the top 25% in English and mathematics in 2009 to 2011 but in the lower 50% in 2012. In science, results were in the top 25% in 2009 and 2011 but in the bottom 25% in 2010 and 2012. Results for Welsh over the same period were consistently in the bottom 25%.

There has been no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys over recent years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fourteen completed questionnaires were received from parents/carers.

All parents state that their child likes school and had support to settle in well when he/she started at the school. They also say that pupils behave well and that all members of staff treat every child fairly and with respect. Everyone feels that their children are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular physical exercise.

Nearly all of them feel that teaching is good and that members of staff expect them to work hard and to do their best. They say that the school helps their children to become more mature and to shoulder responsibility. They say that homework builds well on what is being learnt at school. They feel comfortable about asking a question at school, making suggestions or identifying any problem. Nearly all of them felt that their children are safe at school.

Nearly all parents say that they are satisfied with the school and are of the opinion that the school is well run. They also say that their children have appropriate additional support in relation to any specific individual needs. Nearly all state that they understand the school's arrangements for dealing with complaints.

Most of them say that there is a good variety of activities and that they receive regular information about their children's progress.

A little over half of the answers are lower than the national averages for primary schools.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by 22 key stage 2 pupils.

All pupils say that they feel safe at school. They all say that teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress and that they know to whom to turn if they find their work difficult. They all feel that they are doing well at school and that the school teaches them to stay healthy.

Nearly all say that the school deals well with bullying and that they know to whom to turn if they are worried or anxious.

Most of them say that there are enough books, equipment and computers for them to do their work.

Many say that there are several opportunities to take regular physical exercise and that homework helps them to understand and improve their work.

A few feel that children do not behave well at all times so that they can do their work and about half are of the opinion that children do not behave well at play time and lunch time.

In half of the questions, the answers compare well with national averages for primary schools.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Mervyn Lloyd Jones	Reporting Inspector
Ruth Rhydderch	Lay Inspector
Jano Owen	Peer Inspector
Aled Davies	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.