A report on the quality of primary education

in

Ysgol Rhiw-Bechan
Tregynon
Newtown
Powys
SY16 3EH

Date of inspection: November 2009

School number: 666/2129

Publication date: 28 January 2010

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>What the grade means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>Strengths outweigh areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estyn’s reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nearly all</td>
<td>with very few exceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>90% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>70% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A majority</td>
<td>over 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half/around half</td>
<td>close to 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minority</td>
<td>below 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>below 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>less than 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Context

Ysgol Rhiw-Bechan in the village of Tregynon, Powys, provides education for pupils between four and 11 years of age. Many pupils enter the school a term after their fourth birthday with high levels of basic skills. Pupils between four and five years of age are taught in classes where both Welsh and English are used as the means of communication. In the year that children turn six, parents or carers choose whether they wish their child to be educated in classes where either Welsh or English is the main language of communication. Very few pupils who choose to be educated mainly through the medium of Welsh are from Welsh-speaking homes. Approximately 3% of pupils are from ethnic minority groups.

Currently 140 pupils are on roll. Approximately 5% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This indicates that very few children come from homes that are disadvantaged economically. At the time of the inspection, 26 children are listed as requiring additional learning support, one of whom has a statement of special educational needs.

Ysgol Rhiw-Bechan is piloting the Welsh Assembly Government's Foundation Phase curriculum and pupils of six and seven years of age are disapplied from the national curriculum.

The newly-appointed headteacher has been in post since September 2009.
Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall judgement on the school</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prospects for improvement</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall judgement

Rhiw-Bechan is a good school because:

- many pupils achieve good standards;
- most pupils by 11 years of age have made good progress in their learning and apply their communication, numeracy and information and communication skills (ICT) securely in a range of different contexts;
- teaching is mainly good;
- the school provides positive learning experiences for all pupils; and
- effective support and guidance procedures contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing.

Prospects for improvement

The school has adequate prospects for improvement because:

- the new leadership team has not had enough time to embed the required improvements;
- self-evaluation does not always identify clear priorities for improvement;
- the school development plan is not sufficiently robust; and
- there is uncertainty about whether there are enough resources to meet the identified priorities for school development.
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Recommendations

Inspectors have made the following recommendations for improvement:

R1 improve pupils’ skills in writing and in applying mental mathematical strategies across the curriculum;

R2 improve pupils’ standards of reading and writing in Welsh in classes that are taught mainly through the medium of English;

R3 ensure that lessons offer enough challenge to pupils of all ability;

R4 continue to develop self-evaluation procedures and practices to prioritise actions for improvement; and

R5 work with the local authority to reduce the current budget deficit.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Ysgol Rhiw-Bechan was judged to have adequate prospects for improvement. This means that Estyn inspectors will visit the school in about a year’s time. The visit will focus on the recommendations in the original report and will lead to a brief report that will be sent to the school and placed on the inspectorate’s website.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?  |  Good

Standards:  Good

Most pupils attain the outcomes expected for their age in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development by the end of the Foundation Phase\(^1\). However, far fewer pupils achieve at higher levels in these areas of learning than would be expected. Many pupils attain very high standards in their personal, social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. Since 2007, there has been steady progress in improvements in pupils’ attainment.

Analysis of data indicates that pupils’ progress in key stage 2 (KS2) is very variable and does not always compare favourably with similar schools. However, having relatively small numbers of pupils in most years, combined with a few pupils with additional needs, means that numbers are often too small for reliable comparisons to be made

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\(^1\) As a pilot school for the Foundation Phase, published comparative data is not yet available.
Pupils at the school have made significant progress in Welsh first language from a low baseline since 2007. Pupils have made good progress in mathematics over the same period of time.

The percentage of pupils who achieve above the expected level for pupils of this age in English, Welsh first language, mathematics and science is generally better than that in other similar schools and better than local and national averages.

In 2009, boys’ results at 11 years of age compares favourably with local and national averages. Girls’ results, however, were far lower in English and science than compared with local and national averages and far fewer girls attained the expected level in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school reports that almost half of the girls in the 2009 cohort have additional learning needs.

Most pupils make adequate progress through the Foundation Phase from a very high starting point. Gains made are built on in lower KS2, with good progress made by many pupils by 11 years of age.

Many pupils have good recall of previous learning. They work together well to solve problems and learn from their mistakes. Many pupils are skilled at generating questions and ideas. In all classes, pupils are encouraged to contribute ideas as to what they should learn. For instance, six and seven-year olds in the Foundation Phase studying the topic, ‘Night and Day’ decided that they would like to learn about a country where it was daylight when they slept. This led to a short study of Australia, which captured children’s imagination and interests.

Most pupils towards the end of the Foundation Phase and in KS2 speak and read with confidence, and listen well in both languages at levels appropriate to the choice of language of instruction. They write confidently using different styles and genres, such as writing prayers in religious education, labelling in design technology in both Welsh and English and writing information sheets about Australia. However, very few pupils write at length and this aspect of their work is underdeveloped.

Nearly all pupils’ ICT skills are good and used well in all areas of the curriculum. Numeracy skills across the school are adequate; the main weakness is that the majority of pupils have difficulties in using mental arithmetic strategies. Nearly all pupils’ investigative and enquiry skills in science in KS2 are good and they are capable of identifying errors in practical work to adapt and improve their work.

Considering their linguistic background, many pupils in the classes where Welsh is used as the means of communication make good progress in Welsh first language by 11 years of age. The majority of pupils in the classes where English is the main language of communication make good progress in speaking Welsh as they move through the school but make only adequate progress in their reading and writing skills in Welsh.
Wellbeing: Good

Pupils’ wellbeing is good. All pupils feel safe and understand what they need to do to keep healthy. Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. Pupils are polite, courteous and sociable. Nearly all pupils are well motivated and show high levels of enjoyment in the activities they are offered. The majority of pupils have the skills needed to improve their own learning. For instance, older pupils are skilful in identifying ways of improving their presentation skills during ‘Show and Tell’ sessions.

Pupils’ attendance is 95% and compares favourably with similar schools in Wales and in the local authority.

Pupils throughout the school are represented well by their School Council and Eco Council. They are actively involved in making decisions about what happens in the school.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?  
Good

Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is broad, balanced and generally flexible enough to meet the needs of nearly all pupils. Teachers plan collaboratively to provide a variety of enriching and stimulating experiences for their pupils. For instance, older pupils in the school have recently visited a chocolate factory and climbed the lower slopes of Snowdon while younger pupils make regular use of their outdoor environment. Such experiences contribute significantly to pupils’ understanding and enjoyment in learning. The curriculum requirements of the Foundation Phase and KS2, including religious education, are well met. The Foundation Phase classes provide a wealth of first-hand experiences that impact positively upon pupils’ personal and social skills and their independence. The school provides well for the development of pupils’ understanding in topics such as education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Pupils are provided with good opportunities throughout the school for developing their speaking and listening skills, their reading skills in English and their ICT skills. Pupils’ have good support for developing their reading skills in Welsh in the Welsh-medium classes and adequate support for developing their reading skills in Welsh in English-medium classes. There is good provision in all classes for promoting Welsh culture. Provision for developing pupils’ writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum is only adequate. However, improved planning and better co-ordination is beginning to result in improvements in pupils’ writing and numeracy skills.

Teaching: Good

Teaching in all lessons is mainly of good quality. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the areas of learning and the subjects they teach. Teachers in KS2, have a good understanding of changes in, and approaches to, delivering the revised curriculum. Foundation Phase teachers are experienced in delivering a play-based,
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The quality of the experiential curriculum. Teachers use their knowledge and expertise in both key stages to plan generally interesting lessons that motivate pupils to learn. Many lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers generally make good use of interactive whiteboards to enhance pupils’ learning experiences. Teachers use support staff well to support and extend children’s learning.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide activities and experiences that challenge pupils enough and their expectations of what pupils are capable of are too low.

The quality of assessment, reporting and recording of pupils’ achievement is good. Teachers’ regularly assess and track pupils’ progress in learning, at an individual pupil level. This information is used appropriately to make sure that pupils meet individual targets or milestones. Reports to parents are of very good quality; they are clear and informative and allow pupils to contribute purposefully to the content.

Assessment of learning is good. Pupils’ work is marked conscientiously but the quality of marking varies from one teacher to another.

**Care, support and guidance: Good**

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. Circle time is used well to promote pupils’ personal and social skills.

Information for parents is adequate. There are regular newsletters to parents, two formal parent and teacher evenings and detailed annual reports on pupils’ progress at the end of the summer term. However, the prospectus does not fully meet statutory requirements. There is insufficient information for parents about how the Foundation Phase supports pupils’ learning, particularly in their progress in reading and writing, at the end of the Phase. There is also a lack of information for parents as to how the school prepares pupils for the transition from the Foundation Phase into KS2.

Teaching and non-teaching staff successfully promote pupils’ health and wellbeing. For instance, pupils’ grow, cook and eat their own vegetables and canteen staff provide guidance to pupils on what makes for a healthy lunchbox. Pupils are encouraged to get involved in the school and quite often make suggestions to improve what happens on a day-to-day basis. There are effective anti-bullying procedures and the school promotes good behaviour and attendance through well-established rules and practices that are understood by both pupils and parents.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding pupils. There is clear guidance for all staff and they are aware of procedures.

Pupils with additional learning needs have good support and guidance both within the school and from external agencies. As a result, pupils make the progress expected towards achieving the targets set for them.
The school effectively promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, health and wellbeing. Consequently, pupils make good progress in these areas.

Learning environment: Good

The school is fully inclusive and treats all pupils equally. All have the opportunity to access the full range of the school’s provision. Staff encourage pupils to challenge stereotypes and celebrate differences.

Teachers have the appropriate knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. Support staff work well alongside the teachers to plan, deliver and evaluate learning and planning. Resources are plentiful and meet pupils' learning needs. The maintenance of the school building, community facilities and grounds is good.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
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</table>

Leadership: Adequate

Individual members of staff, particularly the deputy headteacher, have shown positive attitudes and a strong commitment to maintaining the smooth running of the school during a period of change and uncertainty in its leadership. These individuals have succeeded in:

- successfully introducing a more play-based experiential learning curriculum for children three to seven years of age in the Foundation Phase;
- making improvements to provision, particularly outdoor provision and ICT equipment;
- setting appropriate expectations of more able pupils;
- improving pupils' ICT skills; and
- successfully addressing recommendations from the previous inspection.

However, uncertainty about the future leadership and management of the school has resulted in weaknesses in its long-term strategic direction. The appointment of a new headteacher in September has already provided a greater purpose and direction for the process of school improvement. The headteacher and senior management team are successfully creating an ethos that supports better collaborative working and whole-school approaches to learning and teaching. Staff meetings now focus more on ways of improving provision and staff know what they need to do. The school has effective arrangements for performance management and staff training needs are planned appropriately.
Governors undertake their role and responsibilities seriously and have a strong interest in what happens on a day-to-day basis in the school. Governor and staff self-evaluation workshops provide governors with a better understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for development. Governors do not yet offer enough constructive challenge to the school as a result they are not wholly effective in undertaking their role as a critical friend.

The school effectively meets national and local priorities. It is successfully developing pupils’ ICT and questioning skills, provides experiences that engage boys’ positively in learning and promotes pupils’ healthy lifestyles. The Foundation Phase classes provide good quality learning experiences that encourage pupils’ self-confidence, self-reliance and independence.

**Partnership working: Good**

Partnership with parents and the community are good. Effective transition links between the playgroup and the school make sure that children settle quickly into school life. Transition plans agreed by the cluster of schools and the local secondary schools enable older pupils to be well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Visits into the community and visitors from the community make a positive contribution to enriching pupils’ experiences. Pupils’ understanding of other cultures is enhanced by partnerships with schools in other countries.

Throughout the school, staff in both the Welsh and English language classes work effectively together to make sure that there is parity in the experiences offered to pupils. The playgroup leader and the teacher in the under-fives class share planning and resources. This enhances children’s sense of wellbeing when they transfer into nursery. There are currently no formal procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in the playgroup.

There are appropriate arrangements for moderating of pupils work at the end of both key stages.

**Quality improvement: Adequate**

Self-evaluation procedures are in development. The school uses a range of evidence, including the views of others to evaluate how well it is doing. However, actions are not always prioritised or linked to the findings from self-evaluation. While the annual action plan contains many elements of an effective plan for school improvement there is not enough detail about how to measure the impact of actions taken on pupils’ progress and achievement.

A well-established learning community in the school enables staff to share ideas, knowledge and expertise. Staff also learn from others outside the school through cluster initiatives and from participation in initiatives such as the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS). The PESS programme in particular is helping to raise levels of staff confidence and skills in PE, especially in gymnastics.

The progress that the school has made in relation to all the recommendations from the last inspection is good overall.
Resource management: Adequate

There are enough resources of good quality throughout the school. The quality and layout of the building are good overall. The external area is spacious and well kept. However, support staff state that space is limited for some activities, particularly for pupils with special needs.

The school effectively deploys staff and resources to deliver the curriculum. It makes good use of the accommodation at its disposal. However, spending is not clearly linked to priorities in the school development plan and managers have not monitored and controlled spending to ensure that it remains within the delegated budget.

Although the school balances are in deficit at present, the new headteacher, governing body and local authority are now fully aware of the situation and have begun to put plans in place to address the shortfall over a realistic period.

The school’s outcomes are good although the overall value for money is only adequate because of the weaknesses in managing the budget over a period of time.
Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report:

Responses to parent questionnaires

Over one third of parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Overall, they expressed a high level of satisfaction about the school. Most say their children like being there and that they feel their children are safe at school. Many parents think the school is well run and find staff approachable if they have any questions or concerns. Many feel they are kept well informed about their children’s progress. A minority of parents do not feel that their children receive additional support in relation to their individual needs. A few parents feel that that homework doesn’t build well on what their child learns in school and that their children are not well prepared to move on to the high school. A small minority of parents feel that they do not have enough information about the Foundation Phase as their child moves through this stage of their education.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Close to one third of pupils in KS2 completed the questionnaire. Many think that they are well supported in school especially having someone to talk to if they are worried or upset. Most feel they are doing well at school and many believe there are enough resources to enable them to learn well. Most pupils feel safe, and are encouraged to take on responsibilities which prepare them well for the next class or school. Most feel they are able to learn effectively about their locality, Wales and the wider world. There is widespread agreement that the school helps pupils’ to live healthy lifestyles. A minority of pupils think that pupils do not always behave well, especially during the play and lunch intervals and sometimes pupils’ behaviour prevents them from getting their work done as well as they could. A minority also feel that homework doesn’t help them to improve on their work in school.
Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

The Data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term ‘Reception’ (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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
<th>Y6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary phase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Y7</th>
<th>Y8</th>
<th>Y9</th>
<th>Y10</th>
<th>Y11</th>
<th>Y12</th>
<th>Y13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stage 1</th>
<th>Year 1 and Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key stage 2</td>
<td>Year 3 to Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stage 3</td>
<td>Year 7 to Year 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stage 4</td>
<td>Year 10 and Year 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2

**The inspection team**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bev Jenkins HMI</td>
<td>Reporting Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Jones AI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dylan Jones</td>
<td>Lay Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Williams</td>
<td>Peer Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alun Thomas</td>
<td>Provider nominee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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