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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Ysgol Maesydre
Severn Road
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 7SU**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

Gareth Wyn 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 Maesydre is a school for key stage 2 (KS2) junior aged pupils serving the market town of Welshpool near the English border. It is maintained by Powys Local Education Authority. The school describes its catchment area as generally neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. In 2009/10 around 19.84% of pupils were entitled to receive free school meals. This is slightly higher than the national average.

Currently, there are 191 pupils between 7 and 11 of age on the school roll and they are transferred from the town's feeder infants' schools following the completion of their key stage 1 (KS1) education at the end of Year 2. The school operates two language streams, with 31 pupils receiving their education through the medium of Welsh. Pupil numbers have fallen from 256 recorded during the last inspection in 2005. The majority of pupils come from homes where English is spoken as a first language and three percent of pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken at home.

There are nine classes, three English medium mixed age / mixed ability classes for Year 3 and Year 4 and three English medium mixed age / mixed ability classes for Year 5 and Year 6. The Welsh medium unit is also organized into mixed age / mixed ability classes, one for Year 3 and Year 4 whilst the other is for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. The specialist resource centre for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is for pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Sixty-six pupils, (33%) are designated as having special educational needs (SEN); none of these have statements. Eight percent of the school population are gypsy traveller children and a further 6% are learning English as an additional language. (EAL)

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Maesydre is £3164 which compares with a maximum of £11812 and a minimum of £2891 for primary schools in Powys. The school has the 83rd highest budget per pupil out of the 101 primary schools in Powys. The head teacher has been in post for three years.

Summary

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

Current performance

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

The overall current performance of the provider is unsatisfactory because of:

- poor standards overall; too many pupils do not reach the expected levels of National Curriculum (NC) attainment (level 4) in the core subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science; standards are unsatisfactory in Welsh second language;
- trends in data on pupil NC outcomes are declining and there is insufficient progress in addressing pupil under performance;
- leadership and management are ineffective in halting the decline in standards;
- governors do not have sufficient information about school policies and performance, and there is a lack of compliance with Child Protection requirements, and
- the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils is having a detrimental effect on teaching and learning.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are unsatisfactory because:

- self evaluation lacks rigour; not enough stakeholders are involved in the process and it fails to inform school development planning sufficiently and influence teachers' continuous professional development; (CPD)
- the planning of learning experiences fails to adequately meet the needs of enough pupils in mixed age/ mixed ability classes;
- assessment data is not used effectively enough to inform teachers planning, and
- recommendations from the previous inspection report still remain as areas for improvement.

Recommendations

There is a need to:

- R1 improve standards in English, mathematics, science and Welsh second language and ensure that staff development is focussed closely on raising standards in these subjects;
- R2 improve leadership, management and governance;
- R3 improve the behaviour of a small minority of pupils and ensure consistency across the school in methods of dealing with misbehaviour;
- R4 improve assessment of, and for learning;
- R5 improve self-evaluation;
- R6 ensure that the governing body is better informed about school performance;
- R7 ensure that child protection matters fully conform to the requirements;
- R8 ensure that the school's policies are up to date and shared fully with staff and governors;
- R9 improve communication between the head teacher, parents, school staff and governors, and
- R10 ensure that all children with ALN and EAL receive appropriate targeted support and that their progress is formally monitored on a regular basis across the school.

What happens next?

Once the report has been published the following procedures will be implemented:

- the school is placed on a list of schools in need of special measures;
- the school works with the local authority to address the weaknesses, and
- Estyn will monitor the progress of the school on a termly basis.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

On entry to school, the level of pupils' basic skills vary considerably from weak to good. Due to the often small numbers in the Welsh medium unit at the end of key stage 2 (KS2), the results of teacher assessments in this unit have to be treated with care. This is because, in some years, one pupil's results can have a significant impact on the outcomes in Welsh first language.

Since 2007, pupils' attainment in KS2, as judged by teacher assessment, has been lower than local authority and all Wales outcomes, and in comparison with the family of schools with similar percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM). The percentage of pupils achieving the expected level, that is level 4 or above in the separate core subjects of English or Welsh 1st language, mathematics and science, has also decreased in every case between 2007/08 and 2009/10 and is well below the local authority (LA), and Wales average.

Similarly, the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator (the expected level 4 in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science in combination) is also below the family, local and national results, and is declining. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls overall, though boys underperform girls in oracy and writing, in both English and Welsh first language.

Few pupils achieve the highest level (level 5) in the core subjects and the percentage of pupils achieving this level has also decreased in every case between 2007/08 and 2009/10 and is well below the LA, Wales and family of schools average.

The school is in the bottom 25% of similar schools in English, mathematics, and science, and at the lower quartile boundary in Welsh first language for 2009/2010 though the results in science and mathematics for 2009/10 represent a slight improvement over previous years. The performance of pupils who receive free FSM has improved between 2007/08 and 2009/10 whilst the performance of non FSM pupils has declined over the same period.

School data shows that, whilst allowing for the gains recorded above, the rate of progress in standards is still not sufficient to ensure that the majority of pupils will achieve the expected level (level 4) at the end of KS2 in the current year.

Progress in developing their key, and wider skills, is satisfactory overall and good in the Welsh unit. Standards of reading are good in English and Welsh first language. Writing is satisfactory overall in both languages. However, standards in numeracy across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those with English as a second language (EAL) make satisfactory progress in acquiring their key and wider skills. However the progress of EAL pupils in learning English is too slow because, in part, of a lack of strategy and intense teaching programme to support their second language acquisition.

Pupils use a variety of information and communications technology (ICT) skills, particularly word processing, appropriately, though their application of data is weak. Most pupils' skills in Welsh second language are unsatisfactory particularly in writing and oracy. The majority of pupils interpersonal and learning skills are satisfactory overall.

Wellbeing: Unsatisfactory

Most pupils show an appropriate awareness of health and safety issues. They understand the need for eating healthy food and take part regularly in sports clubs and exercises, which help them develop appropriate life skills. Few pupils are sufficiently engaged in their own target setting on how to improve their work.

The average attendance figure of 92.6% is below the target of 95% and has declined over the past three years. Punctuality overall is good, and behaviour during the inspection was good overall. Pupils' social and life skills are satisfactory. However, the regular poor behaviour of a minority of pupils is having a detrimental effect on teaching and learning, and on the cohesiveness of the school as a community. The number of fixed term exclusions is high.

The School Council meets infrequently and is dependent on the presence of the deputy head to ensure that meetings are held on a regular basis. The Council identified pupils' behaviour as a priority area for improvement, but have little input into other aspects of school organisation and decision making. Pupils generally feel safe in school, and a minority of pupils take part in wider community based activities.

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

The curriculum provides a range of experiences to meet the needs of pupils and address the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. However there is limited work in science, Welsh second language and the development of data in ICT.

The school provides for the personal and social education (PSE) framework in line with NC 2008 through a designated programme, but this has been implemented infrequently in recent months. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is addressed in most class planning, but Welsh second language provision relies too heavily on the work of the Athrawes Fro. Overall, there is insufficiently rigorous follow up activity by class teachers.

Every class is organised into mixed age and ability groups. Teachers plan together as a separate upper (Y5/6) and lower (Y3/4) school to ensure a consistent approach to deliver skills and subjects using a thematic approach.

The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular sporting and other activities and arranges visits for example to the local museum, churches and Town Hall. The curriculum is enriched by visits to the school by artists and story tellers. The school provides an appropriate range of experiences for pupils in sustainable development, but global citizenship is underdeveloped within the curriculum.

Teaching: Adequate

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. Teaching is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons but there are few examples of high quality teaching. A common weakness is a lack of pace and vigour. Too many lessons fail to motivate and inspire pupils.

Most lesson plans have objectives, reference to the skills to be covered and identified learning tasks for pupils. However, teachers do not make enough use of NC and school data to plan and adapt lessons to promote higher standards.

There is an emphasis on developing vocabulary and spelling, but few lesson plans address issues such as the general underachievement of pupils in literacy, numeracy and Welsh second language, and of boys in writing and oracy.

There are examples of good enquiry based work, but this is limited in scope across the school. In general the range and quality of teaching approaches are limited. There is insufficient adaptation of tasks and resources to effectively address the needs of pupils.

Teachers mostly ask recall questions; there is very little higher order questioning and pupils are rarely given opportunities to consolidate their learning. Overall, teacher expectations are too low. Many lessons do not produce high enough standards of work. Many books contain work sheets that do not challenge pupils. Homework is not always used to best effect.

Teachers respond to pupil tasks through oral feedback and marking, but overall across the school, this practice is not effective enough to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils rarely have an active role in improving or redrafting their work.

National Curriculum assessment procedures within the school are not clear enough. They are not monitored sufficiently to promote an agreed understanding of the National Curriculum 'best fit' criteria in awarding an appropriate level to pupils' work at 11 years of age.

Assessment for learning is developing and there are examples where classes share learning objectives and make use of success criteria. However, few classes spend sufficient time reflecting on success criteria and discussing with pupils the implications for assessing and improving their work.

Most lessons make appropriate use of teaching assistants. Overall, teachers manage pupils' behaviour appropriately, but there are inconsistent approaches to behaviour management across the school.

Annual reports keep parents well informed about their children's progress, but do not always indicate strategies for improvement.

Care, support and guidance: Unsatisfactory

The school's policies and arrangements for promoting healthy living and wellbeing are adequate.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted appropriately across the school. Pupils receive adequate guidance in respect of their personal and social education (PSE) but the school does not show how PSE is included across all subject areas.

The school has effective transition arrangements and makes appropriate use of specialist services to provide appropriate information and guidance.

There has been no recent updated Child Protection training for all staff. The school does not have an appropriate policy for safeguarding children. Procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues are not fully developed.

Pupils with ALN receive adequate support but the quality of activities to meet the needs of pupils with SEN is inconsistent across the school. Pupils' individual education plans (IEP) are clear and specific but many are limited in the scope of targets given to pupils. Learning support assistants (LSAs) provide appropriate support to pupils ensuring access to all areas of the curriculum. However, the work of pupils with SEN in mainstream classes is not regularly monitored on a formal basis.

Those pupils who learn English as an additional language receive appropriate support from teachers and teachers' assistants in class. However, there is no co-ordinated whole school strategy to enable pupils who do not speak English to receive an intense programme to aid their second language acquisition. There are also limited strategies to support pupils who are more able and talented.

Strategies to address the pupils who disrupt their own and others' learning are applied inconsistently and are not monitored effectively. The majority of staff have not received updated training on behaviour management.

Learning environment: Adequate

Equality and diversity are promoted through assemblies, classroom activities and in the general work of the school. Pupils with SEN are included in all aspects of the school's activities, although a few are occasionally withdrawn from assemblies to receive extra support.

There are policies and practices in place to deal with disruption and bullying but these have proved ineffective in preventing instances of oppressive behaviour.

In general, accommodation provides an appropriate learning environment, enhanced by well presented displays of pupils' work, but one classroom is too small for the number of pupils. The large field is used well for curricular activities and break times, and appropriate use is made of community based facilities.

The school has a large garden which is used appropriately as an outside classroom and relaxation area.

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

The head teacher has been in post for three years. During this time the school has been, and continues to work, on implementing strategic national initiatives. The healthy schools initiative is having an impact on pupil lifestyles, but assessment for learning is applied inconsistently between classes and the skills based National Curriculum 2008 and global citizenship are underdeveloped.

During the same period, many additional initiatives emanating from the school have been introduced. These include restructuring the school management team, organising classes into mixed age /mixed ability groups throughout the school, developing new curricular themes and introducing a new mathematics scheme.

This has been a challenging programme, and not all members of staff, nor every member of the governing body, have been sufficiently engaged in the consultation and decision making process over the development and implementation of all of these initiatives.

Insufficient attention has been given to ensure that every teacher has the necessary skills, motivation and record of relevant continuous professional development (CPD) to implement these initiatives successfully.

Management structures, procedures and decision making processes are not effective enough to contribute efficiently to school improvement. The school's current objectives in terms of improving standards in literacy and numeracy, as well as improving the behaviour of a minority of pupils, are ineffective. Too many pupils fail to attain level 4 national curriculum standards in the core subjects, as is normally expected, before they leave the school.

The School Development Plan, created in 2010, has resulted in some small improvements in Y3 and Y4, but on the whole there is not enough emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning to mixed age/mixed ability classes.

Leaders, managers and staff do not all communicate well enough. Although all teachers are hard-working, there is not a whole school commitment to some of the school's key policies and strategies that are designed to improve standards.

Governors have an interest in the day-to-day life of the school. However, they are not well informed about the school's policies and performance and do not succeed in bringing about improvements. Members are not sufficiently involved in influencing key decisions such as curriculum, classroom organisation and monitoring provision through the school's self-evaluation processes. The governing body does not meet some key statutory requirements, such as the need to discuss and endorse various policies, especially child protection procedures.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

There is a specific timetable for monitoring subjects and other aspects of the provision in turn. There are some examples of perceptive comments from the head teacher and deputy, but those teachers with teaching and learning responsibilities (TLRs) are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating standards. Records of their deliberations are scant, as are records of staff meetings.

The governing body does not receive reports on the provision and standards in various areas from members of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators. As a result, they do not have a current picture of the standards in various subjects.

The continuous professional development of staff is mainly organised through self-help in-house activities. In general there is insufficient sharing of good practice from higher performing schools to have an impact on standards.

Questionnaires have been distributed to parents and pupils, and the numerous responses are appropriately analysed to improve aspects of the life and work of the school.

Not enough progress has been made in relation to key issues identified by the previous inspection in 2005.

Partnership working: Adequate

The school liaises closely with partner infant schools and the receiving secondary school, particularly in the moderation of assessment. The school also derives benefits from discussing professional matters with schools in the local cluster group.

There are effective links with charities and with the local community and teacher training institutions. The link with parents is not developed sufficiently to have a strongly beneficial effect on the quality of education.

There are useful partnerships with the police, fire and ambulance services who work with disaffected children to teach self-control and self-responsibility.

Pupils' understanding of other cultures is fostered through appropriate themes and celebrations.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

There are enough teachers at the school, and they are appropriately qualified for the ages they teach. Teachers are effectively supported by the classroom assistants, who support well the individuals or groups of pupils within lessons.

There are shortcomings in the way the school caters for the development needs of staff. Not enough use is made of external expertise to inform teachers of current approaches to issues such as literacy and numeracy and behaviour management strategies.

The requirements of the 'National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' are only partly met. Aspects such as monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are underdeveloped.

The accommodation provides an appropriate environment for teaching and learning. Overall, the amount and quality of the resources available for pupils and teachers are good, and there is an appropriate library and a computer suite. There are interactive whiteboards in all classrooms.

The governing body handles the school's annual budget appropriately; there is little under-spend nowadays. However, because of its unsatisfactory standards, and weaknesses in leadership and management, the school gives unsatisfactory value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty two questionnaires were completed. Most parents and carers are satisfied with the school and state that their children like school. A minority feel that the school is not well run. Many feel that their child is making good progress but almost a half do not feel that pupils are well behaved. Most feel that the teaching is good, but a minority do not think that homework builds well on what children learn in school. A minority do not believe that their children receive appropriate additional support and are not content with the way in which they are kept informed about their children's progress.

All parents/carers feel that members of staff treat children fairly and with respect. Most believe that the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility and that they are encouraged to be healthy and take exercise. A few parents and carers do not feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions and complaints. Most understand the procedure for dealing with complaints.

Response to learner questionnaires

The great majority of pupils completed the questionnaire. Most pupils feel safe in school, very few pupils feel unsafe; a minority feel that the school does not deal well with bullying. A large minority feel that children do not behave well at playtime and lunch time. Nearly all know how to keep healthy. All pupils state that teachers and other adults in the school help them to make progress. Many express satisfaction with homework. Around half the pupils feel that they cannot do their work at times due to the behaviour of others.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Gareth Wyn Jones	Reporting Inspector
Phil Mostert	Team Inspector
Meic Francis	Lay Inspector
Glyn Griffiths	Peer Inspector
Suzanne Foster	Head and School Nominee

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Copies of the report

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

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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