



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 Y Ferch o'r Sgêr
Greenfield Terrace
North Cornelly
Bridgend
CF33 4LW**

Date of inspection: November 2011

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

The designated Welsh-medium school, Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sgêr, shares a site with Cornelly Primary School and Cornelly Integrated Children's Centre in Bridgend. Currently, the school has 245 pupils, including 61 pupils in nursery and reception classes. The school serves a large area that includes Porthcawl, Kenfig Hill, Pyle and Cefn Cribbwr.

The pupils are taught by ten full-time teachers and one part-time teacher and 11 assistants, in nine classes. The majority of pupils transfer to Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd at the end of their period in the school.

The school is located in a disadvantaged area that is recognised as a 'Communities First' area and 19% of the pupils live in this area. Twelve per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which is below the county and national averages. Very few of the pupils speak Welsh at home and the percentage of pupils from an ethnic background is very low and is less than half of the local authority percentage.

Fifteen per cent of pupils have assistance with additional learning needs, which is below the national figure. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. No permanent exclusions were recorded in the year preceding the inspection but one temporary exclusion was recorded.

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to the school's teaching staff and both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for just over two years.

In 2011-2012, the individual school budget for Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sger is £3,037 per pupil. The maximum amount per pupil for Bridgend primary schools is £5,486 and the minimum is £2,737. Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sger has the 38th highest school budget per pupil of the 52 primary schools in Bridgend.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- over the past four years there has been a clear pattern of progress in both key stages in relation to pupils attaining the expected level in Welsh, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator);
- the performance of pupils who were assessed at the end of key stage 2 in 2011 was better than their performance at the end of key stage 1 and shows good progress in learning whilst in the school;
- comparisons with other members of the family of schools indicate that pupils in both key stages consistently perform better than the average for the family of schools in every subject; and that
- the percentage of key stage 2 pupils that attain the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined has increased significantly since 2007, and for the past three years the school has consistently performed better in this measure than the family of schools and Wales.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the school has a clear vision and the members of the senior management team work well together;
- there is a clear focus on raising standards and meeting pupils' needs and the positive effect of this has been seen in the results;
- data is analysed thoroughly in order to monitor performance and the governors are aware of how the school is performing in comparison with the family of schools;
- the self-evaluation process is embedded in the life of the school and the report identify strengths and the areas that require improvement which shows that the senior management team and the governors know their school well; and
- the school has responded well to national priorities.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 reduce the gap in key stage 2 between the outcomes of pupils that are entitled to free school and those pupils who are not;
- R2 ensure consistency in teaching throughout the school and continue to develop assessment for learning;
- R3 continue to work with parents and the authority to reduce unauthorised absences; and
- R4 continue to work with the authority to eliminate overexpenditure in the budget and to improve the external appearance of the school.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The results of the initial assessments of children when they begin in the school show that their skills are consistently below the percentages of the local authority.

Compared with their starting point when they began in the school, pupils' progress in learning is good. Between 7-11 years of age, almost all pupils attain two levels of progress and a few pupils make even more progress.

Many pupils can recall what they previously learnt well and use this purposefully to acquire new knowledge and skills. Almost all pupils work well together and respond appropriately to tasks and questions asked by the teachers. Most pupils across the school are developing their thinking skills appropriately.

By the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, most pupils speak and listen well. In both key stages, pupils read confidently and are able to refer to a variety of books and authors in both languages. Most pupils are able to write well in Welsh and English, in a variety of styles such as imaginary material, instructions in geography, historical records and information sheets in science. However, extended writing is not an aspect that has been developed fully.

In both key stages, the standard of Welsh and pupils' awareness of the culture and history of Wales is good.

In key stage 1, the school's performance in relation to pupils attaining the expected level in Welsh, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) has increased gradually, from 77% in 2007 to 93% in 2011. In key stage 2, during the same period, there was a significant increase, from 60% to 100%. The performance of pupils who were assessed at the end of key stage 2 in 2011 was better than their performance at the end of key stage 1 and shows good progress in learning whilst at the school.

Comparisons with other schools within the family of schools show that, in 2011, pupils in both key stages perform consistently better than those of other members of the family of schools in every subject. The percentage of key stage 2 pupils who attain the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined has increased significantly since 2007. For the past three years, the school has performed consistently better than the family of schools and Wales in this measure. In general, for the past four years, girls' performance has been better than boys' in attaining the expected level in key stage 1, whilst the opposite is true in key stage 2.

Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress against their individual targets. In key stage 1, over the past four years, there has been no difference in performance amongst those pupils that are entitled to free school meals and those who are not. With the exception of 2010-2011, pupils in key stage 2 who are entitled to free school meals have not performed as well as those pupils who are not. In general, over the four years, the performance of girls in terms of attaining the

expected level has been better than the boys' performance, but the opposite is true in key stage 2.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils show a positive attitude to keeping fit and eating healthily. They are aware of health and safety matters that are appropriate to their age and maturity, for example when using the internet. Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. A prominent feature in the life of the school is the courtesy and respect shown by pupils to their peers and to adults.

Pupils' attendance levels over the period are good when compared with those of schools that have similar percentages of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. However, the percentage of unauthorised absences is above the county average and the average for Wales.

Most pupils concentrate well when working and are very enthusiastic when undertaking their tasks. Pupils develop very good inter-relational skills and this is highlighted, in particular, in the work of the school council and the Eco committee. These pupils enjoy their responsibilities and are aware that they have a strong voice that influences the daily life and activities of the school. Pupils support national and international charities and this raises their awareness of the needs of other people, very effectively. As a result, the pupils have a firm foundation for life and work outside school.

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

The school plans carefully and provides interesting experiences that respond well to learners' needs and which comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Phase. Thorough planning is undertaken to develop literacy, communication, numeracy, information technology and communication skills, and provision across the school is good.

The provision for Welsh and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is good. Rich opportunities are ensured for children to gain broad experiences when talking and reading and when writing in a wide range of school formats.

There is good provision for sustainable development and the school has ensured a rich programme which deals with recycling, gardening and fair trade. Special days are designated to give a clear and effective focus to activities in this field. The staff work together closely with the Eco committee and have created displays and areas of interest to stimulate pupils. The provision for global citizenship is developing appropriately within the school.

Teaching: Good

The teaching is of good quality in almost every lesson. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their teaching areas and the subjects that they teach. The teachers

use various teaching strategies in order to ensure rich learning experiences for pupils. There is effective co-operation between teachers and the support staff, which has a positive effect on standards. Every teacher has created a rich and attractive environment in their classes which motivates the pupils.

Where the teaching is good, there are lively introductions and a purposeful pace that ensures pupils' involvement. Consistent use is made of praise and encouragement which helps to control pupils' behaviour effectively. Through effective questioning, teachers challenge the pupils to think. In the exception where the teaching is adequate, insufficient differentiated activities have been provided and the pace of the lesson is too slow. As a result, some pupils are unable to continue with a task for an extended period and not all pupils' requirements are met.

The assessment for learning strategies are a prominent and effective feature of the lessons. The success criteria are given appropriate attention and focus the pupils on how to develop their work. Teachers include pupils in the process of setting targets for improvement well and as this is implemented consistently it has a constructive effect on pupils' work.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide helpful feedback orally and in writing on achievement and ways to improve the work. A computer tracking system is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and teachers make appropriate use of this system to inform planning. The school uses data and professional judgement well in order to identify pupils who require additional support. The arrangements for reporting to parents are good and end-of-year reports include comments on progress and the way forward.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy, caring and inclusive community. Eating healthily and healthy ways of living are promoted well. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development well and the provision for personal and social education is good. These contribute effectively to pupils' wellbeing. A particular feature of the school's care is the new extra-curricular club, namely the keep cool club, which promotes behaviour. The club has already begun to meet pupils' social and emotional needs very well.

The arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs are clear, useful and comply with the Code of Practice. In addition, the school identifies children's needs at an early stage through classroom observation and teachers' assessments.

There is clear communication with parents and good co-operation between the school and external agencies in order to influence the standards of pupils who have additional learning needs.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a range of policies and procedures in place that ensure equal opportunities for every pupil in all aspects of the school's provision. A curriculum is provided which is wholly accessible to every pupil.

The school makes good use of its classrooms and corridors and has created a stimulating atmosphere in every class which promotes effective learning and teaching. A good variety of resources are used purposefully in order to enrich pupils' experiences. The interior of the school and the school's grounds are well maintained.

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

The headteacher has developed a clear vision for the school and has secured the commitment of governors, the senior management team and members of staff. Members of the senior management team have succeeded in working together very effectively and they use data well in order to monitor performance. As a result, they know how well the school is performing in comparison with other schools. A clear focus is ensured to raise standards by challenging all pupils to do their best and the effect of this has been seen on the results over the past two years.

The performance management arrangements are appropriate and support the focus on raising standards and implementing the school's priorities well.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations conscientiously. Its role as a critical friend is developing well and it has a good understanding of how the school is performing in comparison with other schools. Its role in the self-evaluation process is developing well and it has a very good understanding of what the school has to do in order to improve. However, it does not have a sufficiently thorough knowledge of standards in individual subjects.

The school succeeds in giving due attention to national and local priorities. The Foundation Phase provision has been established effectively and the principles are implemented throughout the department. Pupils' thinking skills are very well developed throughout the school and a clear voice is given to pupils when deciding on aspects of the school's work.

Improving quality: Good

The school has a clear self-evaluation process and a range of relevant evidence is considered effectively to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The evidence includes data analysis, classroom observations, examining pupils' books and seeking the views of parents and pupils. In addition, good use is made of the local authority's recommendations following monitoring visits. In general, the quality of the self-evaluation report is good; the strengths and areas for improvement have been identified but they are not always sufficiently clear.

There is an appropriate link between the self-evaluation report and the priorities of the school development plan. The current development plan has a definite focus on raising standards and improving provision. The plan is purposeful and includes clear quantitative targets. This makes the work of the governing body much easier in terms of monitoring progress in standards and challenging the school.

The school has an appropriate performance management procedure, which provides opportunities for continuous professional development. Over recent years, there have been successful local networks of learning communities and one international network. These contribute effectively towards improving pupils' results as well as supporting staff's professional development in the areas of numeracy and thinking skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a number of good strategic partnerships that enrich and sustain pupils' educational experiences and wellbeing. There is a good relationship with parents and close links with the local community. Parents come to the school on a regular basis to help and to make improvements to external areas of the school. The curriculum is enriched further through visits by a number of visitors and through links that the school has with schools in other countries, such as Italy and Sweden. Pupils are given many opportunities as a result of the various partnerships of which the school is a member, including being in sports leagues and activities held as part of the cluster of schools.

The arrangements with the schools in the catchment area and the local secondary school are effective, for example to standardise and moderate teachers' end of key stage assessments, to improve provision and to raise pupils' standards even higher. In addition, there are effective arrangements for transferring 11-year-old pupils, which prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

The school works well with local colleges to provide a beneficial placement for students who are training to be teachers. The school continues to work effectively with the authority's education service and a nearby school to reach agreement on the use of the playing field.

Resource management: Good

Members of staff have suitable qualifications to deliver the curriculum in full. The school manages staffing levels well and uses the staff effectively to raise standards. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment time effectively and the teaching assistants support the work of the teachers purposefully.

The staffing levels in the school are generous, which has a negative impact on the school budget and, as a result, there has been overexpenditure in recent years. The governing body and the headteacher are working with the local authority to control and eliminate the overexpenditure.

The school has good resources for meeting pupils' needs. The interior of the building is well maintained, but the external appearance of the building is not as good.

As the school's standards show a clear pattern of improvement and because it performs consistently better than the family of schools in every subject, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Comments on performance data

In key stage 1, the school's performance in relation to pupils attaining the expected level in Welsh, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) has risen gradually, from 77% in 2007 to 93% in 2011. Over the same period in key stage 2, it has risen significantly, from 60% to 100%. The performance of pupils assessed at the end of key stage 2 in 2011 is better than their performance at the end of key stage 1 and shows good progress in learning.

The percentage of pupils who achieve the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined has increased significantly since 2007, and the school has been performing consistently better than the family of schools and Wales for the past three years.

The 2011 data for key stage 1, which has been benchmarked against schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, indicates that the school is in quartile 2 for Welsh and mathematics. This places its performance in the upper 50% in every subject except science, which was in quartile 3. Although there is no pattern over the four year period in terms of subjects, the core subject indicator has been in the top two quartiles for three of the past four years. Over the same period, the results in key stage 2 have been better than those in key stage 1, with every subject in quartile 1, placing the school's performance in the top 25%. Over time, the standards in key stage 1 based on entitlement to free school meals appear to be slightly better than those of key stage 2.

Comparisons with the family of schools show that, in 2011, pupils at the end of key stage 1 performed consistently better than the family of schools average in every subject. Over a four year period, the data shows that the school has performed better than the family of schools for three of the four years in every subject except Welsh. The data for the end of key stage 2 for 2011 is better than that for key stage 1. It shows that pupils have performed better than the family of schools average in every subject and exactly in line with the expectations based on the level of challenge at the school. Over a four year period the data shows that the school has performed consistently better than the family of schools in Welsh and for three of the four years in terms of the core subject indicator.

At the end of both key stages, when compared with all-Wales averages, in 2011 the school performed consistently better in every subject, and for three of the past four years has been above the Wales average in terms of achieving the core subject indicator.

In key stage 1, over a five year period, on average, pupils who are entitled to free school meals have performed almost as well as those who are not. With the exception of 2010-2011, there is a definite pattern in key stage 2 which indicates that pupils who are entitled to free school meals have not performed as well as those who are not entitled to free school meals.

In 2011, in key stage 1, the boys' performance was better than girls' in terms of attaining the core subject indicator. The gap between them was narrower than that of the family of schools in every subject except science and better than the Wales average in all subjects. In general, over the past four years, the performance of girls has been better than that of boys in terms of attaining the expected level. This is particularly true of the core subject indicator, mathematics and science. In 2011, the percentage of boys (6.7%) that did not attain the expected level in Welsh was higher than that of girls (0%). In general, over a four year period, girls have done better than boys in terms of attaining level 3 in Welsh and mathematics.

In 2011, in key stage 2, there was no difference between the performance of girls and boys in terms of attaining level 4+, because the percentage attaining it was 100%. Over a period, boys have performed better than girls in terms of attaining the core subject indicator and in every other subject. In 2011, girls performed slightly better than boys in terms of attaining level 5 in Welsh and English and significantly better in mathematics and science. In 2011, no boy attained level 5 for writing in Welsh or in English.

The percentage of pupils who attained the higher levels at the end of key stage 1 in 2011 was higher than that of the family of schools in every subject. The percentage was higher than that for Wales in every subject except science. In key stage 2, the percentage attaining the higher levels was above that for the family of schools in every subject except English.

The data for 2011 shows that the school is performing better than the family of schools and Wales in all aspects of literacy in Welsh and English. Over a period, the results in both key stages have shown good progress in almost all aspects of both languages.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

A total of 66 responses to the questionnaire were received from parents and they were unanimous that their children enjoyed themselves in school.

Almost all of them believe that:

- the school is run well and they are generally satisfied with the school;
- the teaching is good and that members of staff expect the children to work hard and to do their best;
- their children are safe in the school and that they are supported to settle in well;
- their children are encouraged to be healthy and to undertake physical exercise regularly;
- they are comfortable about asking questions of the school or to make suggestions or identify a problem;
- the school helps the children to become more mature and to shoulder responsibilities and that their children are well prepared for moving on to the next school;
- pupils are well behaved;
- members of staff treat every child fairly and with respect;
- the homework that is set builds well on what is learnt in school; and
- there is a good variety of activities, including trips and visits

and most believe that:

- their children are making good progress and that they receive regular information about their children's progress;
- their children receive appropriate additional support in relation to any specific individual needs; and that
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

A total of 106 responses were received from key stage 2 pupils and they were unanimous that:

- they felt safe in the school;
- teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and to make progress;
- the school teaches them how to keep healthy; and
- they have sufficient books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Almost all the pupils believe that:

- they are doing well in school;
- the school deals well with any bullying;
- they know what to do and whom to speak to if they think that the work is difficult or if they are worried or concerned about something; and
- there are many opportunities in the school to have regular physical exercise.

Most pupils believe that:

- the homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school; and
- other children behave well during break times and at lunch time.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Maldwyn Pryse	Reporting Inspector
David Kenneth Davies	Team Inspector
Eirian Youngman	Lay Inspector
Clive Williams	Peer Inspector
Rhiannon Dixon	School Nominee

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