



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-Gogarth
Nant-y-Gamar Road
Craig-y-Don
Llandudno
LL30 1YE**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

Mr Glyn Griffiths

Under contract 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-y-Gogarth is a day and residential special school located in the coastal town of Llandudno. At the time of the inspection there were 170 pupils (112 boys, 58 girls) on the roll of the school. The learners are aged between 3 and 19, and the school is maintained by Conwy Local Authority (LA).

The learners are either fully statemented or in the process of being statemented, and have a wide spectrum of additional learning needs (ALN) including moderate, severe, and profound and multiple learning difficulties (MLD, SLD and PMLD respectively), and learners who show autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

Most learners come from the Conwy Borough area, and a very few come from neighbouring local authorities.

The school has a residential facility that offers short-term placements for a maximum of 10 pupils who have been identified through the annual review process and by staff as benefiting from such a placement.

The school offers a number of specialist facilities including a swimming and hydrotherapy pool, sensory and autism classes, outdoor learning environments and a range of facilities to accommodate vocational courses.

The Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is responsible for the provision of physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, daily nursing and health care assistants within the school.

There are only a very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and there are only a few pupils for whom Welsh is their home language.

The proportion of learners eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 39%, which is above the national average for special schools in Wales.

The school's motto is 'Where children come first' and the school aims to fulfil learners' potential in a happy, relaxed, homely but industrious atmosphere.

Since the last inspection the school appointed a new headteacher in September 2009.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol-y-Gogarth is £17,058 which compares to a national average of £17,405 for all special schools in Wales.

The school was last inspected in May 2005.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school has many strengths. These include:

- the good achievement and progress made by nearly all pupils;
- the excellent quality of care, support and guidance which leads to high standards of pupils' wellbeing;
- the commitment of all members of staff to provide pupils with the best opportunities for learning; and
- the very strong partnerships, particularly with parents and the community.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because of:

- the outstanding leadership of the headteacher;
- the clear strategic vision of the school;
- the way the school focuses on improving pupil outcomes; and
- the school's very good understanding of the needs of all its pupils.

Recommendations

In order to improve further the school should:

- R1 improve pupil's bilingual skills;
- R2 further develop the skills associated with assessment for learning; and
- R3 ensure that all learning experiences meet the specific needs of groups of learners.

What happens next?

The school will prepare an action plan which will show how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most learners achieve well and make good progress in relation to their previous attainment. Standards of achievement in the pupils' work in all key stages are good.

All learners within the senior section of the school attain recognised qualifications by the time they leave school. Results of accredited courses show that learners in key stage 4 and post-16 make good progress and achieve well.

Most learners listen well. They focus on the speaker and maintain concentration for long periods. Many of them make good progress in their communication skills.

Most learners show good and developing writing skills. The more able learners show a good range of vocabulary within a specific context and they write simple sentences to express themselves. Older learners answer questions by writing clearly and concisely.

Most learners respond confidently to questions in group and individual activities and use a variety of communication strategies. They make good use of visual prompts to enhance and extend their speech and communication skills.

Most learners articulate and share new skills with others, making effective use of appropriate phrases during lessons. Younger pupils show good knowledge of symbols to interpret activities planned for the day.

Learners who have more profound needs make effective use of communications equipment and resources. Many maintain focus through eye-movement and gestures and they respond well to visual or auditory stimuli such as when indicating personal preferences.

Good progress is made by nearly all learners in reading and in applying number skills. Most older learners show a basic understanding of counting, identifying shapes and handling money.

A few learners respond well to simple directions in Welsh, especially those from homes where Welsh is spoken. However there is inconsistency in the use of Welsh by learners throughout the school.

Nearly all older learners show very good application of skills on a range of vocational tasks and projects involving local partners, as well as on work experience placements.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to use information technology in a range of activities while more able learners produce PowerPoint presentations and confidently conduct research on the internet.

Most learners have a very good understanding of sustainable issues such as gardening and re-cycling. These experiences enhance entrepreneurial skills and show that many of them can make decisions, work effectively with others and show good application of thinking skills.

Assessment data indicate that learners' achievement is consistently good and nearly all learners respond well to individual teaching programmes; making good progress towards their individual education plan (IEP) targets.

There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls in reading and spelling. The progress made by those learners who receive free school meals compares favourably with other groups of learners however learners within ethnic minority groups have made below average progress as a result of periods of absenteeism and significant behavioural issues.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards learners achieve with national averages or to analyse performance trends over time due to the wide range of ALN.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Learners' wellbeing is excellent.

Learners feel safe and secure in school, they enjoy coming to school and participate eagerly in lessons.

Behaviour in school is very good both within and outside the classroom where learners show a great deal of respect and care for one another.

Most learners have a very good awareness of healthy eating and the need to keep healthy. They have a positive attitude towards physical exercise and their participation in a range of activities both during school and after school is extremely high.

Attendance is higher than the all Wales national average for special schools. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years.

Members of the school council are actively involved in making decisions and represent the views of learners well. Their participation in decision making has been recognised by the Pupils' Voice in Wales project as an exemplar for other special schools. Learners play an extensive and supportive role in their community.

Learners enjoy the rich variety of extra-curricular experiences on offer. The extensive vocational experiences gained by the learners and the resultant learning achieved is sector leading practice. These experiences prepare them effectively for work and life outside school.

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

The provision for learning experiences is good.

Overall, the curriculum is appropriately adapted to meet the wide ranging and often complex needs and abilities of pupils. However, in a very few lessons the structure and presentation of learning experiences do not always meet the specific needs of groups of learners.

The school provides a broad range of learning experiences and maintains detailed records of each learner's attainments that are used effectively in planning suitable schemes of work. Specialist interventions are imaginatively implemented to support pupils' holistic development.

The extensive range of 14-19 vocational programmes delivered by the school, with effective support from partner stakeholders, is a sector leading practice and makes a notable contribution to meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community.

Planning and provision for key skills is good. Staff work as a co-ordinated team and through effective collaboration they provide pupils with extensive opportunities to develop skills in communication, literacy, independence, numeracy, information and communications technology, thinking and the ability to work with others.

The provision for Welsh is good; this enriches pupils' understanding of their heritage and the historical context of Wales. However bilingualism is underdeveloped across the school.

Through the vocational programme in particular the school provides very good experiences and opportunities for promoting sustainable development. The learning experiences relating to global citizenship is sector leading with the school having achieved the International School award since 2001. The school and pupils have benefited from numerous activities and experiences with European countries and those further afield.

The school provides an impressive programme of lunchtime and after school clubs to enhance pupils learning.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good and there are a few examples of excellent teaching.

The outstanding co-operative work between all staff and the excellent relationships between staff and learners ensures an environment where learners feel valued and helps them to achieve good standards.

Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge which is used to deliver lessons which are stimulating. Staff use a range of resources including the school environment in an imaginative manner.

Lessons are well-planned, structured and adapted effectively to meet individual need.

The school has a clear and efficient system for pupil assessment. The information gathered ensures that staff provide suitable, yet challenging, targets.

Many learners know how to set their own targets and in a majority of classes they have a good awareness of how to achieve them. Most learners can reflect on and evaluate their work. However their use of assessment techniques for identifying ways to improve is not fully embedded.

Reports to parents are detailed and include opportunities for parents to comment.

Annual reports and reviews meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The quality of care, support and guidance is excellent, enhanced by a wide range of highly effective multi agency specialist support.

There are appropriate policies in place to promote healthy living and wellbeing with a strong commitment to healthy approaches to diet and exercise.

Staff encourage learners to develop self esteem through effective use of praise, positive role models, the 'Terrific Tree' and school house point system. Learners report that they feel safe in school.

The school successfully promotes learners spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Collective worship meets statutory requirements, however in a few cases there are insufficient opportunities for reflection and spiritual development.

School staff have very good links with outside agencies for example, Careers Wales, police liaison officer and speech and language therapy service. Learners have the support of a qualified learning coach who works effectively with learners, parents and class staff.

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

Learners with ALN are fully included in the life of the school, including the opportunities for residential experiences. Staff develop effective individual programmes which impact positively on learning.

Learning environment: Good

The school has an inclusive and highly supportive ethos which values all learners. Staff give consideration to learners' needs, abilities, interests and backgrounds to ensure equal access to the curriculum and out of school learning. Equal opportunities and diversity are promoted throughout the school.

The school provides a very positive, caring and welcoming environment; it has a wide range of well-maintained resources to meet learners' needs.

The school buildings are well maintained however there is insufficient room in a few classrooms to accommodate the various activities designed to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils.

Displays are generally attractive, and reflect a stimulating and well-maintained environment. Many displays are supported by communication switches and symbols that support pupils' literacy and listening skills effectively.

The school grounds are well maintained and are used well to extend outdoor learning experiences. The extensive horticultural area has enabled more vocational options to be delivered to learners in the secondary department.

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

The quality of leadership at the school is excellent. In the relatively short time since his appointment the headteacher has established a shared understanding of the school's strategic direction to create a responsive learning culture that strives for continuous improvement.

The senior management team promote very effectively behaviours and values that contribute to a school ethos where pupils and staff feel valued.

Staff morale is high; this has been achieved through the sensitive development of a strong team spirit amongst all staff. Their commitment and dedication demonstrate the highest expectations and aspirations they have for all learners.

There is a clear vision and commitment to improve outcomes and provide all pupils with the best opportunities for learning. Leaders and governors use performance information very effectively to set objectives and targets that are strategic priorities. The school's shared vision with the LA has successfully secured a successful application to the Welsh Assembly Government for funding to build a new school.

Job descriptions are clear and members of staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Regular staff meetings provide very good opportunities for all to discuss progress, acquire new skills and to reflect on and share good practice.

The school is very effective in addressing local and national priorities. Careful consideration is given to the School Effectiveness Framework and its philosophy is already evident in the school. The school shows a clear commitment to the value of Professional Learning Communities, both within the school and beyond. The Foundation Phase has been successfully implemented and recognised locally and nationally as an example of good practice.

The governing body contributes effectively to the strategic direction of the school. Governors are becoming well informed and have a good understanding about all the issues that affect the school. All governors have clearly defined roles within the subcommittee structure and are well supported by in-house and LA training programmes. They act very effectively as a critical friend and hold the school accountable for standards through the good work of the curriculum/standards

committee. The governing body has adopted an appropriate complaints procedure and ensures that this is adequately explained to parents.

Improving quality: Excellent

The process of self-evaluation and development planning is excellent. A self-critical and supportive culture is well established to improve provision and performance. This results in clear outcomes that inform future priorities and, where necessary, the actions that may be required for further improvement.

Priorities in the school development plan (SDP) are agreed following careful audits and analysis of available information. The link between the self-evaluation process, priorities in the SDP and targets to improve pupil outcomes is clear. These have been carefully explained, shared and agreed with all interested parties.

The governing body and headteacher provide good resources to support priorities in teaching and learning. Progress is regularly and effectively monitored and evaluated.

The highly effective professional learning community within the school and beyond enables staff to develop and share their professional knowledge purposefully and successfully. This involvement is having a direct impact on the quality of provision and standards in a number of key areas.

The school has successfully addressed all the recommendations from the last inspection report and the improvement in accommodation is soon to be realised with the building of the new school.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has developed effective strategic partnerships with parents/carers and a range of external agencies that include the local community and LA groups such as the ASD team.

Older pupils receive high quality support and advice from Careers Wales, particularly in their transition from school to college.

The school makes purposeful use of its 'Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools' funding in order to support pupils with ALN in mainstream provision and to support the staff who work with them.

Joint working practices and collaborative arrangements as part of the 14-19 Learning Network are well established; the quality assurance of external providers is part of the school's monitoring and evaluation procedure to ensure high standards of provision.

The school has developed a particularly strong partnership with a local university; this has had positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour, self-esteem and confidence.

Resource management: Good

The school has a good range of experienced, specialist teachers and support staff who are managed well and deployed effectively.

A Report on Ysgol-y-Gogarth
June 2011

Staff access planned continuing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge; this ensures that they are effective in providing pupils with a wide variety of personalised learning experiences.

Teachers make effective use of their planning, preparation and assessment time and the school fully complies with the statutory requirements of the National Agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload'(2003).

School resources are of good quality and generally well matched and managed to meet the interests and abilities of the pupils.

The school's financial management is rigorously monitored through established procedures that include members of the governing body and senior administrative staff. Senior staff ensure that resources are available to support the creation of a purposeful learning environment. There are robust procedures to ensure that expenditure is allocated accordingly to meet identified priorities.

Taking account of the good standards attained by pupils, the quality of teaching and the rigorous management of resources the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

All of the 52 parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire say they are satisfied with the school and that their child likes the school. All parents think that teaching is good and that children are treated fairly and with respect. All parents think that their child feels safe at the school and that the school helps their child to become more mature and to take on responsibility. A very few parents think that homework does not build on what their child learns at school.

Response to learner questionnaires

All of the 38 learners who responded to the questionnaire said they felt safe in the school. They all felt that the school teaches them to be healthy and that there are lots of chances for them to get exercise. They all felt that the teachers and other adults at the school help them to learn and make progress. Nearly all of the pupils thought that other pupils behave well and felt that homework helps them to understand and improve their work.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Glyn Griffiths	Reporting Inspector
Mervyn Lloyd Jones	Team Inspector
Iorylle Aubrey	Team Inspector
Ian Elliott	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Lynne Alton	Peer Inspector
Jonathan Morgan	School Nominee

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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