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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Rhydyfro Primary School
Waun Penlan
Pontardawe
Swansea
SA8 3BB**

Date of inspection: July 2012

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Rhydyfro Primary School is in the village of Rhydyfro just outside the town of Pontardawe in the Swansea valley. There are currently 93 full-time pupils on roll, with an additional 22 nursery children attending in the mornings only. There are three full-time and four part-time teachers at the school. Pupils are able to start part-time education at the nursery the day after their third birthday.

Most pupils come from a wide area around the village of Rhydyfro and the town of Pontardawe. Their social and economic circumstances vary, but are generally disadvantaged. Around 36% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This has increased steadily over the past four years and is above the local authority and national average. Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the first language. Pupil mobility is high and varies between 20% and 50% in any one year. There are currently 37 pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN). This percentage is above the local authority and national averages. One pupil has a statement of SEN and one pupil is looked after by the local authority.

The individual school budget per pupil for Rhydyfro Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £4,295 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Neath Port Talbot is £21,718 and the minimum is £2,648. Rhydyfro Primary School is 18th out of the 71 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot in terms of its school budget per pupil.

The school was last inspected in March 2006. The school currently has an acting headteacher who has been in post since June 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate because:

- many pupils achieve good standards in lessons observed;
- the school is a happy, caring and safe place to learn;
- pupils' wellbeing is good; and
- most pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points.

However:

- learning activities do not always meet the needs and abilities of all pupils well enough; and
- the quality of teaching varies too much from class to class.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the relatively new acting headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision for the development of the school;
- leaders and managers have started to use data and other first-hand evidence effectively to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- leaders have highlighted priorities that are clearly linked to the outcomes of self-evaluation; and
- recent developments have improved provision and outcomes for pupils in a few key areas.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise standards of literacy, particularly extended writing and handwriting across the curriculum;
- R2 provide learning experiences that meet the needs and abilities of all pupils consistently;
- R3 develop the school's planning for the development of pupils' skills to ensure that they develop their skills from class to class and in all subjects;
- R4 improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all lessons are well paced and well managed; and
- R5 improve the way governors challenge performance, measure the impact of any developments and act as a critical friend.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Most pupils start school with below average skills in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development.

Most pupils listen carefully to staff and other pupils and contribute well to class discussions. Many pupils enjoy reading and read competently for their age and stage of development. They use appropriate expression when reading aloud and talk confidently about what they have read. Many very young pupils demonstrate confident mark-making skills and older Foundation Phase pupils develop good phonic awareness and make reasonable attempts at spelling and sounding out unfamiliar words. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils use a growing vocabulary to write in a range of forms during literacy lessons. However, presentation and handwriting skills are weak throughout the school and pupils do not consistently write at length across the curriculum.

Most pupils recall previous learning well and make appropriate progress in new learning. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not make good enough progress because the activities do not match their range of abilities and extend their thinking and learning enough.

Most pupils have appropriate numeracy and information and communication technology skills, but they do not always apply them enough across different subject areas. Progress in more complex information and communication technology skills, such as the use of databases and spreadsheets, is limited.

Pupils with additional learning needs achieve well in relation to their abilities. Most pupils who receive support with their learning make good progress.

Most pupils make a good progress in their Welsh language skills across the school. The majority are confident to use their incidental Welsh outside the classroom.

Overall results in key stage 1 show that the school attains below the average for the family of schools, the local authority and Wales at the expected level 2. However, there was a significant increase in attainment in 2011 when the school performed above the average for the family of schools.

In the past two years, overall results in key stage 2 show that the school performs below the average for the family of schools at the expected level 4. However, school assessment data shows that many pupils achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Work in pupils' books confirms that many pupils work at the expected level and a few work above this level by the end of Year 6.

At the end of both key stages, girls consistently outperform boys at the expected levels in English.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school. They are well motivated and keen to learn. Most pupils feel safe in school and all know whom to approach if they need help. Their good behaviour reflects their positive attitude towards school life. They are courteous towards visitors and each other. However, a few pupils waste time in lessons through persistent low-level disruption due to a lack of engagement.

All pupils have a secure understanding of healthy lifestyles and most try to make sensible food choices. The majority of pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as the weekly games clubs, cookery and gardening sessions. All pupils take part in community activities, and regular visits to places of interest enhance pupils' enjoyment of their work.

Most pupils work successfully together to solve problems or to achieve a given task. With support from staff, the pupils are beginning to consider how to improve their work by sharing ideas and reflecting on progress against agreed targets.

Most pupils make full use of opportunities to take on responsibilities and to participate in decision-making. They develop a strong sense of allegiance to the school and the wider community. The school council is beginning to make an impact on the pupils' decision-making opportunities and members are committed and active.

In the academic year 2010-2011, the whole-school attendance rate was below the family, local authority and national averages. However, as a result of the school's improved approach to attendance and lateness, the attendance rate has risen greatly this year.

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

The school provides a suitable range of opportunities and learning experiences for pupils. Staff enhance learning experiences with a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs. However, activities in lessons do not always meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. This results in pupils of different abilities completing the same tasks and, as a result, they do not receive a suitable level of challenge or support in their work.

Teachers are beginning to identify appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' communication, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in short and medium-term planning. However, the school has no overview of skills development that ensures continuity and progression between classes and across all subject areas.

The school makes effective provision for pupils' Welsh language development. Most staff use Welsh regularly around the school and this enhances the progress that pupils make. Staff provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about their locality and the history and culture of Wales.

There is appropriate provision to enable pupils to learn about sustainability and global citizenship. Most pupils are aware of the need to recycle, save energy and act sustainably. Members of the eco committee are conscientious and proud of the school's recent award achievements.

Teaching: Adequate

Teachers display good, up-to-date knowledge of the subjects they teach, have clear objectives for their lessons and, along with the teaching assistants, act as good language models for their pupils. However, in a minority of lessons, the teaching lacks sufficient pace to engage pupils effectively. Although teachers have good working relationships with pupils, in a minority of lessons the teacher fails to deal appropriately with low-level disruption. Nearly all teachers explain new concepts clearly and use effective questioning techniques. However, many teachers fail to make appropriate use of the resources, including technology to enhance learning, and rely too heavily on worksheets for activities.

Teachers' marking is informative and they are beginning to develop assessment for learning strategies. Pupils have targets for mathematics and literacy and share these with parents. New tracking systems are in place that enable staff to monitor pupil attainment and wellbeing successfully across the school. Annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements. Parents/carers feel well informed about their children's achievements and progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The quality of care, support and guidance offered to pupils is very effective and makes a positive contribution to their enjoyment of school and to high levels of wellbeing. The recently developed policies and procedures for promoting good behaviour and for dealing with issues such as bullying and attendance have had a positive impact in school.

Staff promote the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through collective worship and personal and social education. This provision has a positive influence on pupils' wellbeing.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Teachers identify difficulties at an early stage. Clearly targeted strategies for pupils needing support have resulted in good progress in their learning, attitudes and behaviour. Targets set for individuals are shared with pupils and their parents and are reviewed regularly. The school has established a number of withdrawal groups for pupils with additional learning needs, which effectively meet their needs. Good pastoral support is provided for the high number of pupils who move into and out of school.

The school has good partnerships with specialist services, such as speech and language therapy and educational psychology. The school liaison police officer visits each term to talk to children about a variety of issues that affect their learning and wellbeing. These partnerships also have a positive influence on wellbeing at the school.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has a very caring and inclusive ethos. All pupils are treated equally and the school takes good account of pupils' backgrounds to make sure that they all participate fully in the school curriculum and succeed in all aspects of school life.

The school promotes respect for diversity and communicates these values effectively to pupils through the personal and social education programme and assemblies. It also celebrates the pupils' achievement and good behaviour through the newly-developed Star System, which identifies and celebrates those pupils throughout school who have done well.

The school provides a bright, warm and welcoming environment for all learners. Accommodation is of a good standard and the school buildings and grounds are well maintained. Classroom and general wall displays are attractive and informative. Learning resources are good and meet the needs of pupils.

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

The acting headteacher shares her vision, values and purpose effectively with all staff, governors and parents. She has provided a clear sense of direction to the life and work of the school and has developed good links with pupils and their families.

The acting headteacher is supported well by the acting deputy headteacher and staff, who play an active part in the decision-making process.

All members of staff feel valued and all have specific responsibilities for developing various initiatives. These are beginning to have a positive impact on the school as a learning community. The newly-established self-evaluation process and subject leadership roles have yet to impact fully on standards and provision.

The governing body shares the acting headteacher's sense of direction for the school. The governors are supportive of the school and are keen to see improvements. They visit the school regularly, but their role in monitoring the provision and challenging the school as critical friends is not yet fully developed.

The school shows clear commitment towards addressing national and local priorities, such as improving standards in literacy and tackling disadvantage. The School Effectiveness Framework is used effectively to drive forward school improvement.

Improving quality: Adequate

The senior leadership team actively encourages governors and staff to contribute towards all aspects of school life. The school uses the local authority's monitoring reports and the result of pupil and parent questionnaires to identify areas for improvement. An appropriate programme is in place for monitoring subjects and whole-school aspects, which actively involves all subject leaders. Although the acting headteacher has introduced a number of new initiatives, these have not had sufficient time to become established in the school and an effective culture of self-evaluation is at an early stage of development.

There is a clear link between the outcomes of the recent self-evaluation process and the priorities of the school development plan. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities and includes suitable actions and timescales, although there is not enough use of specific, quantifiable targets to help to measure progress.

Leaders provide appropriate opportunities for staff to benefit from continuous professional development. The performance management procedures include agreeing goals and setting specific development needs. The school works effectively with its cluster of schools and has begun to develop networks of professional practice in guided reading and thinking skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a good partnership with parents and nearly all parents are positive about all aspects of school life. They feel welcome in the school and they receive good information about day-to-day events through regular newsletters and text messages. Since her appointment, the acting headteacher has actively sought the views of parents and responded positively to their feedback and suggestions. Nearly all parents feel that arrangements made for pupils new to the school are effective and help pupils to settle quickly.

The school collaborates well with its neighbouring secondary school and the cluster of local primary schools to pool resources effectively. These arrangements include the sharing of a specialist Welsh language teacher to raise standards in Welsh at the end of key stage 2. There are good transition arrangements in place which ensure that pupils are well prepared for their move to secondary school. There are joint meetings with other local primary schools to standardise and moderate pupils' work at the end of key stage 2.

Good links with the community have enhanced the extra-curricular provision within the school. This includes the use of local visits to Pontadawe arts centre and visitors to school, such as the local vicar and the Swansea City Community Football Project. All of these partnerships have a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.

Resource management: Adequate

The school is staffed effectively and manages its budget well. Expenditure is linked clearly with priorities in the school development plan. Although much has been achieved recently, the strategic plan and development priorities have not had time to become established and to influence planning, teaching and pupils' standards fully.

The school has a suitable range of learning resources which are used appropriately to meet the needs of all the pupils. Good use is made of support staff. There is an appropriate focus on staff development through performance management procedures.

Although there has been recent progress in many areas, the school provides adequate value for money due to the shortcomings in pupils' outcomes and in aspects of its provision.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The school's performance in 2011, when compared with that of its family of schools, shows that it performs at a much higher level than expected in all subjects at the end of key stage 1. However, it performs slightly below the expected level for all subjects and the core subject indicator at the end of key stage 2.

Many pupils enter the school with skills below the local authority average. By the age of seven, at the end of key stage 1, many pupils have made good progress. At the end of key stage 1, teacher assessments over the last three years show a general upward trend in pupil performance in English, mathematics and science, and in the core subject indicator at the expected level (level 2). Most pupils attain the expected level (level 2) in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Pupil attainment at the end of key stage 1 is above that of schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Standards attained by pupils in English, mathematics and science place the school in the highest 25% of similar schools.

Last year, attainment at the higher level (level 3) in all subjects improved as, in the past five years, no pupil had achieved at the higher level. Pupil attainment at the higher level moved the school to the highest 25% of similar schools for English and mathematics and to the higher 50% of similar schools for science.

At the end of key stage 2, teacher assessments over the last three years show fluctuations in pupil performance in English and mathematics at the expected level (level 4). There has been a downward trend in pupil performance in science. Teacher assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2011 place the school in the upper 50% for mathematics and for the core subject indicator when compared to schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. The school was in the lower 50% of similar schools for English and science.

Performance at the higher level (level 5) in English, mathematics and science has also varied over the past three years, placing the school between the bottom 25% and the upper 25% of schools with similar levels of free school meals. Pupil performance at the higher level in 2011 was below the average of the family of schools.

In 2011 in key stage 1, girls outperformed boys in English and in gaining the core subject indicator. In key stage 2 in 2011, girls outperformed boys in gaining the core subject indicator, English and mathematics at the expected level. The gap between the performance of boys and girls in both key stages was greater than the family and all-Wales averages. Over the past two years, girls outperformed boys in performance at the expected level in English in both key stages.

Almost all pupils entitled to free school meals make good progress in both key stages. Most pupils identified with additional learning needs make at least the expected progress and the majority do even better.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10) before the deadline for their collection.

Responses to learner questionnaires:

Forty-seven pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Overall, pupil responses to most questions were in line with or above national benchmarks.

All pupils say that:

- they feel safe in school;
- they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset; and
- teachers and adults in school help them to make good progress.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they are doing well at school;
- they learn to keep healthy;
- they have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;
- they know how to get help if their work is too hard; and
- their homework helps them to understand and improve.

Many pupils say that:

- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work;
- the school deals well with any bullying; and
- other pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time.

Around half of pupils say that:

- other pupils behave well and that they can get their work done.

Pupils' positive responses were below the national benchmarks in relation to having sufficient school resources, appropriate pupil behaviour and bullying

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Hurst	Reporting Inspector
Eleri Hurley	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
David Witchell	Peer Inspector
Sarah Griffiths	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms – Primary

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.