



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 Plas
Llanelian
Old Colwyn
Conwy
LL29 8YY**

Date of inspection: April 2013

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

Ysgol Y Plas is a Church in Wales primary school which serves the community of Llanelian village near Colwyn Bay and its surrounding rural area. The school describes the area as neither prosperous nor socially and economically deprived. Around 24% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above local authority and national averages.

Currently, the school has 56 pupils on roll aged between three and 11 years who are in three mixed-age classes. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnic origin and use English as their first language. There were no exclusions during the past 12 months.

Baseline assessments show that most pupils enter school with average literacy and communication skills. The school identifies around 14% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, a figure which is much lower than the national average. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher has been in post since April 2004.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Y Plas in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £4,487 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Conwy is £12,262 and the minimum is £3,081. Ysgol Y Plas is 22nd out of the 60 primary schools in Conwy in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve good standards in literacy and numeracy;
- pupils' performance at the end of key stage 2 over the last four years compares well with that of similar schools in most respects, and especially in science;
- the high standard of pupils' wellbeing is a strong feature of the school;
- effective teaching and good planning ensure that pupils are challenged by stimulating learning experiences;
- many pupils are happy, confident and well developed socially; and
- the school promotes positive attitudes to equality.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and staff collaborate closely to create a positive whole-school ethos;
- the headteacher and staff have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- staff involvement in professional learning communities have a positive effect on standards; and
- the strong partnerships with parents, the community and other schools extend pupils' learning experiences effectively.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that the outcomes of self-evaluation are monitored more thoroughly

R2 Increase pupils' ability to evaluate and improve their work

R3 Increase governors' role of supporting the school 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. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In lessons and over time nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning. Most use their problem-solving and thinking skills well when undertaking investigative tasks and recall previous learning appropriately. Most pupils, including the more able and those with additional learning needs, are working to their full potential. From an early age, pupils build upon their previous learning well and use it effectively to resolve the many challenges they face in more advanced work. However, the ability of most pupils to evaluate their own work and to identify what they need to do in order to improve, is limited. Girls and boys generally perform equally well when compared with national benchmarks.

According to their age and stage of development, most pupils achieve good standards in literacy. In the Foundation Phase, nearly all pupils make good progress in their ability to use their literacy and communication skills in different formal and informal contexts. They express their ideas clearly and, as they mature, read confidently and accurately and write imaginatively to achieve good standards. By the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils generally spell familiar words correctly.

In key stage 2, nearly all pupils discuss aspects of their work knowledgeably and sustain and develop oral contributions well. Many show a good understanding of different texts and apply a broad range of appropriate strategies for finding and retrieving information from books and websites. Most express and organise their ideas in written forms confidently and coherently. They use different sentence structures, paragraphing and punctuation with increasing effectiveness in their written work across the curriculum.

Across the age range, most pupils apply their numeracy skills well in a range of contexts. In both Foundation Phase and key stage 2, nearly all pupils make steady progress in their information and communication technology skills (ICT). By the end of key stage 2, most pupils use their ICT skills competently in different situations and work on programs independently.

Nearly all pupils have very little or no knowledge of Welsh when they enter the nursery class. However, many make good progress in learning the language and display a positive attitude towards the subject. The majority communicate personal and factual information with increasing confidence and read short pieces of text accurately. However, very few key stage 2 pupils have sufficient confidence to initiate conversations with adults. Nearly all pupils have a growing and appropriate awareness of the culture and heritage of Wales.

There is no data report for 2012 on pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. This is because the number of pupils assessed was too few to report without identifying individual pupils.

Key stage 2 performance over the last four years has been positive with pupils' performance in English and mathematics often placing the school in the higher 50% of schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible to receive free school meals. The outcomes in science have been exceptional and have placed the school in the highest 25% of similar schools over the last four years.

Wellbeing: Good

The quality of pupils' wellbeing is a strong feature of the school. Pupils appreciate the very close working relationships they have with staff, based on the school's ethos of caring and mutual respect. There are successful procedures for ensuring that new pupils feel welcome and understand classroom routines. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle and have a clear understanding of the importance of eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. Nearly all feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they have a problem.

Pupils are generally enthusiastic and attentive learners who are fully engaged in their lessons. Most apply themselves well and adopt a positive approach to learning activities. Both during lessons and around the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show courtesy, care and concern for each other and respect for staff and visitors. Older pupils undertake additional responsibilities maturely and often go out of their way to help younger pupils.

The school council is active and influential in the life of school. For example, it has recently agreed to purchase new playground equipment.

Attendance rates have gradually improved over the past five years. In 2012, the attendance rate was the highest of the schools in the family and placed the school in the top 25% when compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Pupils' punctuality is good and the number of unauthorised absences is very low.

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

Good planning ensures appropriate coverage of the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Phase. Most planned experiences for pupils are suitably challenging and stimulating both inside and outside the classroom. Planning for the development of communication, numeracy, ICT, thinking and problem-solving skills is thorough. This has a positive impact on the good standards achieved across the school.

Intervention programmes for literacy and personal and social skills have a positive impact on the progress made by pupils and their capacity to learn. Planning and provision for Welsh language development are appropriate and well suited to pupils' ages and abilities. Visits to local castles, churches and public gardens provide pupils with regular and effective opportunities to learn about their locality, and the history and culture of Wales.

A good range of after-school activities, which include residential visits to Glanllyn, clubs and visits, enrich pupils' experiences. Visitors to the school and links with the community and employers enhance pupils' learning opportunities.

The provision for teaching pupils about sustainable development and global citizenship is good. Pupils are actively involved in recycling, conservation and projects to develop the outside areas.

Teaching: Good

Teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge and plan lessons with stimulating learning experiences. Activities are appropriate to the age and abilities of pupils and develop their skills effectively. In many lessons, teachers set out clear learning objectives and success criteria. This ensures that many pupils understand what they are doing and what they should aim to achieve. Purposeful intervention and skilful questioning by teachers and support staff challenge pupils' thinking and help to increase their knowledge and understanding. Teachers' use of incidental Welsh is effective throughout the school. A few lessons lack pace and do not help pupils to become independent learners.

Teachers establish a productive working atmosphere in all lessons. Support staff provide pupils with well-focused assistance and feedback, which enhances their learning.

There are clear systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress. These systems enable staff to identify any instances of low performance and to take remedial action when necessary. Assessment information informs the next steps in pupils' learning well and teachers adapt their lessons accordingly.

Assessment for learning strategies are generally well established. Teachers encourage older pupils consistently to evaluate their own and others' work and to set their own targets. However, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to evaluate their work and to identify what they need to do in order to improve.

Written annual reports to parents and regular meetings with staff ensure that parents receive appropriate information about their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is a warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. There are appropriate policies for ensuring pupils' safety. The school promotes actively the importance of healthy living and exercise and the social and emotional aspects of pupils' learning. The school promotes pupils' moral, social and cultural development well through the curriculum and daily routines.

The school ensures that pupils clearly understand the expected standard of behaviour and know the consequences should they not meet these expectations. Pupils know who to approach if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing. The school deals quickly with any rare instances of bullying.

There is early identification of pupils with additional learning needs. The school tracks their progress effectively and through effective intervention programs and additional classroom support, ensures they achieve their personal targets for improving their learning. They have full access to the whole curriculum. There are effective relationships between the school and many external agencies to meet pupils' educational and social needs successfully.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive and collaborative community. Pupils and staff show mutual respect to each other and feel equally valued. The supportive ethos ensures equal opportunities for pupils of all ages, cultures and backgrounds. The school promotes positive attitudes to equality and diversity through classroom practice, curricular themes and links with the local community and other countries.

All classrooms have learning resources of good quality. Staff use these effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Resources for the Foundation Phase are particularly good and have a positive impact on pupils' learning and the good standards they achieve.

The school building is accessible to all pupils, staff and visitors. The well-maintained accommodation provides a bright, stimulating environment for pupils. The school uses all available space purposefully. Displays in classrooms and communal areas celebrate pupils' work and achievements well. Outdoor provision for the Foundation Phase is good. There are extensive grounds, including an extensive vegetable garden tended by the pupils.

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

The headteacher and staff work closely together to create a positive whole-school ethos where team working is encouraged and valued. Staff share a common sense of purpose and direction and have established a positive culture of school improvement.

Roles are sensibly distributed and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. Most lines of accountability are clear. Detailed job descriptions relate well to teachers' individual responsibilities. Regular staff meetings provide valuable opportunities to reflect and share good practice.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and is appropriately informed about its life and work. Members carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively and make a good contribution to the strategic direction of the school. However, their role as a critical friend and of holding the school to account for the standards and quality it achieves is not fully developed.

National and local priorities are incorporated effectively into the school's programmes of work. It has successfully implemented the Foundation Phase and has established assessment for learning initiatives in all classes.

Improving quality: Adequate

The headteacher and staff have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through the self-evaluation process, they collate and scrutinise a broad range of evidence and use this to identify appropriate priorities for development. Close analysis and interpretation of performance data enable teaching staff to identify the school's strengths and shortcomings clearly and to set appropriate targets for improvement. They also consider the views of parents, pupils, staff and governors well in reviewing the school's strengths and areas for development.

Outcomes of self-evaluation are used appropriately to inform the school improvement plan. The plan is a concise document that includes targets for improvement, time scales and suitable success criteria. However, there are no appropriate systems for monitoring the impact of the improvement plan on teaching and learning.

Members of staff have good opportunities for professional development according to their specific responsibilities and their professional development needs. This has had a positive effect on teaching and learning and on successfully implementing new initiatives such as assessment for learning.

There are many successful networks of professional learning communities, which have a positive effect on standards and improving provision. In particular, the headteacher initiated a professional learning community with other schools in the school's family to develop pupils' literacy skills through music. This has had a positive impact on pupils' social skills and improved the quality of their musical composition.

Partnership working: Good

Strong partnerships with parents, the community and other schools extend pupils' learning experiences effectively. Parents are very supportive and appreciate the regular information that they receive about the school's activities and their children's progress.

The school's collaboration with its local family of schools is a strong feature and is effective in promoting and sharing ideas among staff as well as in developing aspects of the curriculum. The close links that have been forged with the receiving secondary schools ease pupils' transition from one key stage to the next and ensure continuity and progression in their learning. There are thorough arrangements for moderating pupils' work at the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

There are mutually beneficial links between the school and the local community. Visitors from and visits to the community enrich pupils' experiences. Strong links have been established with the local church, the community in general, local businesses and teacher training establishments.

Resource management: Good

The school has sufficient qualified and experienced teachers and support staff to meet the learning needs of pupils, including those with additional learning needs. Staff are deployed effectively. Arrangements for teachers' planning, preparing and assessing time have been organised and implemented efficiently and they have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

Arrangements for managing the budget are appropriate and the governing body monitors closely the school's finances in order to ensure that expenditure matches priorities for improvement. The headteacher, staff and governors ensure that resources are used wisely and efficiently in order to promote the interests of pupils. The school manages its budget well.

In view of the good outcomes achieved by many pupils, the high standard of care, support and guidance and the efficient management of available resources, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

There is no data report on the performance of pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. This is because the number of pupils assessed in 2012 was too few to report without identifying individual pupils.

There is no trend data available for the Foundation Phase.

Trends in key stage 2 performance over the last four years have generally been positive with no emerging pattern of under-attainment. Although the small size of the cohort has led to a degree of fluctuation, the performance in English and mathematics has often placed the school in the upper 50% of schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible to receive free school meals. Science results have been exceptional over the last four years and have placed the school in the highest 25% of similar schools.

Nearly all pupils, whatever their ability or background, make good progress through the school. Generally, girls and boys perform equally well.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Twenty parents completed the questionnaire. Nearly all responses were positive and supportive of the school.

Nearly all parents say that:

- their child likes school and is making good progress;
- overall they are satisfied with the school and that their child has settled down well and feel safe;
- their child is helped to become more mature and take on responsibility and is well prepared for moving on to secondary education;
- their child is treated fairly and with respect and is expected to work hard and do his or her best;
- homework builds well on what their child learns at school and they are well informed about their child's progress; and
- the school is well run, teaching is good and they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or complaints;

Many parents say that:

- their child receives additional support in relation to any particular individual needs and there is a good range of activities including trips or visits.

Nearly all responses compare favourably with the national benchmarks.

Responses to pupil questionnaires

Fourteen key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaires. Nearly all responses were positive.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they are doing well at school, teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress and that they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- the school teaches them how to be healthy and that there are numerous opportunities for them to keep healthy through regular exercise;
- they feel safe in school, feel that they are doing well and know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard; and ;
- there are enough books, equipment and computers for them to do their work.

A minority of pupils believe that not all pupils behave well at playtime and lunch time.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Wil Williams	Reporting Inspector
Lowri Haf Evans	Team Inspector
Peter Haworth	Lay Inspector
Christopher Liptrot	Peer Inspector
Gwawr Mills	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.