



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

Report on

**Ysgol Syr John Rhys
Ponterwyd
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3JX**

Date of inspection: April 2015

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 Gymunedol Syr John Rhys is situated in the village of Ponterwyd in Ceredigion. There are 20 pupils between the ages of 3 and 11 on roll, in two mixed-age classes. Seventeen per cent of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. About 48% are eligible for free school meals. The school has designated 25% of pupils as having additional educational needs. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher has been in post since May 2011 and is in charge of two nearby schools in addition to the post at Ysgol Syr John Rhys. The school was last inspected in January 2010.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Syr John Rhys in 2014-2015 is £6,539. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in Ceredigion is £8,697 and the minimum is £3,038. Ysgol Syr John Rhys is in fourth place of the 51 primary schools in Ceredigion in terms of the school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school is good because:

- Most pupils make sound progress during their time at the school
- Most pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developing successfully
- The quality of teaching is effective
- Pupils across the school behave well and are keen to learn The school co-operates successfully with parents to improve pupils' standards and wellbeing
- There is effective provision to promote wellbeing and an inclusive and welcoming ethos in which pupils feel happy and safe

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- The headteacher has a clear strategic vision that is shared effectively with members of the school community
- The headteacher has established a beneficial management structure that shares responsibilities successfully
- The school makes the best use of staff's expertise
- Leaders convey high expectations in order to ensure improvement
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- There is a close link between the findings of the self-evaluation procedure and the improvement plan, which addresses priorities for improvement effectively
- The school provides good value for money

Recommendations

- R1 Improve key stage 2 pupils' discussion skills.
- R2 Develop opportunities for pupils to use and apply their communication skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum
- R3 Develop definite structures for including the voice of pupils, parents and the wider community in the self-evaluation process

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils' basic skills are below that which is expected. However, many of them make sound progress in their learning during their time at the school.

In the Foundation Phase, pupils develop their oral skills very well and use an increasing range of vocabulary successfully in various situations. They respond in a lively manner to teachers' questions and contribute valuably to discussions in the classroom. In key stage 2, most pupils communicate orally and robustly in Welsh and develop an appropriate range of subject vocabulary. However, their ability to conduct wider discussions has not developed sufficiently. Most pupils' oral skills in English are developing appropriately.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils develop reading skills effectively. When reading unfamiliar words, many use effective strategies to glean information independently. By the end of the phase, many read fluently and confidently in a variety of situations. They read with expression and are able to describe the content of their books well. In key stage 2, many pupils develop reading skills in Welsh appropriately. They read comparatively fluently and vary their voice intonation successfully, showing an appropriate understanding of the text. Many of them read more confidently in English and are able to discuss the content of books well.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, nearly all pupils write independently and vary their sentences and use basic punctuation correctly. They write in a variety of forms and for various audiences successfully, for example when writing a description of the journey of the migrants on The Mimosa ship to Patagonia. In key stage 2, many pupils develop their writing skills across the curriculum successfully. They are able to write for various purposes and audiences appropriately. By the end of the key stage, most pupils' spelling and punctuation are sound. They use paragraphs successfully to organise their work and draft and improve pieces skilfully. Most pupils' standard of handwriting and presentation of work is sound.

Most pupils' listening skills are good across the school. In the Foundation Phase, most contribute well to discussions and use their thinking skills successfully. In key stage 2, many pupils contribute appropriately to classroom discussions but they are not as confident when expressing an opinion in smaller groups. Many pupils' thinking skills are developing strongly.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils develop their numeracy skills well across the areas of learning. They are able to measure capacity and length by using standard units and decimal points successfully and collect and record information in the form of a bar graph. For example, measuring the length of worms and then recording the results in the form of a bar graph by using information and communication technology skills (ICT). In key stage 2, many pupils are able to use their numeracy skills robustly

in other subjects and apply their understanding to solve problems successfully. They are able to record data robustly by using various graphs to record data across the curriculum. Many pupils use appropriate vocabulary well to interpret the characteristics of data sets.

Pupils who have additional learning needs make sound progress and pupils of higher ability achieve well in the Foundation Phase. There is no marked difference between the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, in comparison with their peers, nor between boys' performance compared with that of girls.

Over recent years, the school often had a comparatively small number of pupils in the year groups at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. As a result, the data is not reliable and can have a significant effect on the school's benchmark performance in comparison with that of similar schools and in comparison with national averages.

At the end of the Foundation Phase, over a period of three years, the school's performance at the expected outcome (outcome 5) has varied, moving it between the top 25% and the bottom 25% of similar schools for literacy development and numeracy development. However, performance at the higher outcome (outcome 6) has moved the school between the upper 50% and the bottom 25% for literacy development. The school has been consistently in the bottom 25% of similar schools for mathematical development.

In key stage 2, overall, the school's performance at the expected level 4 has placed it in the top 25% over the last four years in comparison with similar schools in English, mathematics and science. However, the school's performance has varied, moving it between the lower 50% and the bottom 25% in Welsh over the same period. The school's performance in Welsh, English, mathematics and science at the higher level (level 5) has moved it between the bottom 25% and the top 25%.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and know to whom to turn for advice or to discuss any concerns that they have. They behave well in lessons and at other times during the day, and respond courteously to each other and to adults.

Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and take advantage of appropriate opportunities to express an opinion through their contribution to the activities of the school council. They make decisions that have a positive effect on the wellbeing of their fellow pupils; for example, the school council was responsible for raising money to buy play equipment for the playground and it runs the fruit shop. Both of these initiatives have contributed effectively to pupils' sound understanding of the importance of keeping fit and eating and drinking healthily.

Pupils contribute valuably to charitable work by raising money in social events in the community. This develops their social skills and their life skills effectively.

In comparison with similar schools, pupils' attendance has placed the school in the top 25% over a period of three years. This is a strong feature. Nearly all pupils arrive at school punctually.

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

The school provides a wide range of stimulating experiences for its pupils, which respond fully to the requirements of the Foundation Phase, the National Curriculum and religious education. Teachers provide a variety of interesting experiences, which gain the interest and curiosity of most pupils. They ensure that the learning experiences build successfully on their previous learning throughout the school.

Appropriate attention is paid to most of the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework in their schemes of work. Provision for ensuring that pupils of all ages acquire literacy and numeracy skills is effective and leads to good standards of achievement. Entrepreneurial activities, which include planting, growing and then selling vegetables, contribute significantly to developing pupils' numeracy skills throughout the school.

A good variety of opportunities is provided to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the celebrations, history and culture of Wales. Visits by local artists such as Wyn Melville Jones and by guest poets such as Eurig Salisbury reinforce pupils' knowledge of their identity and their involvement in their local area.

Lessons, educational visits and the school's recycling practices contribute well towards increasing pupils' understanding and values of sustainable development and global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

There is a strong working relationship between adults and pupils across the school. Teachers make effective use of a variety of teaching methods that ensure that most pupils achieve well and develop independent learning skills successfully. Teachers question skilfully and refer to what pupils already know in order to extend their understanding and raise their standards. In a very few cases, there is a lack of opportunities to extend pupils' oral skills in group discussions.

Teachers have a sound understanding of the curriculum and take advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' skills successfully. All staff model polished language well and this contributes appropriately to strengthening pupils' oral language successfully.

Assessment for learning strategies have been embedded well and pupils' work is marked regularly. Teachers' comments provide constructive feedback for pupils. In most cases, what pupils have achieved well is identified clearly, as well as what they need to do in order to improve. This marking method is used effectively by teachers to set personal targets for improvement. Pupils respond appropriately to comments and targets in order to improve their work. They are beginning to contribute effectively to the process of assessing their own work and that of their peers in order to ensure improvement.

The school has successful procedures for assessing, monitoring and recording pupils' progress. Teachers make good use of standardised tests and pupil progress data. As a result, staff have good knowledge in order to prioritise appropriate support for pupils, including the few who underachieve. This improves provision for them.

Parents receive valuable information about their children's progress and annual reports respond fully to statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school promotes pupils' health and wellbeing through sports lessons and clubs such as the running club. Prominence is given to ensuring that all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. There are good opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities through their work with the school council and the eco council through a range of activities with the community. The school's procedures and policies for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are maintained thoroughly. By ensuring opportunities for pupils to take part in special services in local chapels and the local church, the school encourages pupils' spiritual development effectively.

The school makes effective use of the knowledge and guidance of external specialist agencies to support pupils. Valuable links between the school and a variety of external agencies such as the police and the health service increase pupils' awareness of the importance of keeping healthy and safe.

The school identifies pupils' educational needs quickly and develops successful support for them. Pupils who need additional support receive good attention in intervention groups and in the classrooms. Pupils produce their individual education plans jointly with teachers and support staff. These are shared with parents in order to ensure successful co-operation between the school and home.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school's ethos is homely and inclusive and promotes equal opportunities for all pupils. The school is a close and welcoming community in which pupils and teachers show respect and care for each other. A stimulating learning environment, as well as attractive displays, enrich pupils' learning experiences successfully.

The school's policies, plans and procedures promote equality and social diversity robustly.

The school has an extensive supply of good quality resources that enrich pupils' learning well. The successful partnership with parents has helped the school to create a high quality outdoor area, which has a valuable effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. For example, through an enterprise project, pupils plant an extensive variety of vegetables and fruit including bananas and grapes. The whole site is well maintained.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher has a clear strategic vision, which is shared effectively with members of the school community. The headteacher has established a beneficial management structure that shares responsibilities successfully. This ensures that the best use is made of staff's expertise to fulfil strategic aims, plans and responsibilities successfully.

Leaders convey high expectations for ensuring improvement and they challenge staff positively and effectively. Through the headteacher's skilful leadership, the school plans jointly for improvement successfully with the other schools in the federation. They have addressed a number of national and local priorities well and this has a positive effect on provision and standards. For example, the literacy and numeracy co-ordinator has developed good use of ICT in order to raise standards in Welsh.

Governors support the school well and are aware of its priorities. The headteacher's thorough reports ensure that they have relevant information about the school's performance in order to challenge it appropriately to address any underperformance. Co-ordinators and leaders co-operate appropriately with governors in order to monitor standards and the quality of provision. They have begun to monitor lessons, scrutinise books and discuss work with pupils appropriately.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They make good use of effective self-evaluation procedures, which include evaluating and monitoring data and the quality of education regularly. Leaders and co-ordinators make effective use of direct evidence about the quality of teaching in order to monitor achievement in the core subjects and in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The self-evaluation procedure gives suitable consideration to the opinion of pupils, parents and the wider community about aspects of school life.

There is a close link between the findings of the self-evaluation procedure and the priorities that are identified in the school improvement plan. This plan includes challenging targets that address the school's priorities successfully. It includes clear success criteria to measure progress, and timescales and costs. All members of staff have a purposeful and specific role in implementing aspects of the plan.

Leaders evaluate progress against the priorities in the plan regularly and give consideration to this when forming an improvement plan for the following year.

Partnership working: Good

The school co-operates effectively with a range of useful partners to support its pupils' wellbeing and achievement. There is an effective partnership between parents and the school. Parents appreciate the strong sense of a partnership that has been fostered between the home and the school, which enables them to contribute fully to supporting their children's education.

The school has effective partnerships with the two other schools within the federation of three schools. This has a successful effect on raising pupils' standards. A good example of this is the co-operation to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. The partnership is also effective in the joint planning of work programmes, which have a positive effect on all the school's pupils. The three schools co-operate effectively to standardise and moderate teachers' assessments. As a result, teachers have a better awareness of pupils' levels of work and standards.

There are appropriate partnerships between the school and a number of local authority agencies. This has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and attainment.

There are strong links with the local community, and members of the community visit the school to share experiences and hold activities with pupils. A good example of this is the gardening club and numerous sports clubs.

The close links with the local 'Ti a Fi' playgroup ensures that children settle easily when they start school. Arrangements for transferring to the secondary school are effective and prepare Year 6 pupils successfully for the next stage in their education.

Resource management: Good

The school has an adequate supply of teachers and classroom assistants to cover all aspects of the curriculum. Members of staff co-operate effectively with each other and support pupils successfully. The partnership that exists between the three schools in the federation enables the school to share resources and staff expertise efficiently. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment periods effectively to raise standards.

The thorough processes for managing the performance of all staff lead to setting valuable targets that are linked to the school's priorities for improvement and their professional development. This has a positive influence on the quality of teaching and learning. All of the school staff benefit from the training that arises from these performance management arrangements. For example, the classroom assistants have received training on developing early reading skills, which has had a positive effect on reading outcomes in the Foundation Phase.

The school works effectively within professional learning communities, which contribute well to enriching the school's provision. A good example is the co-operation to raise standards in science by drawing on teachers' subject knowledge within the partnership.

The headteacher and governors monitor and manage funds carefully. The school's expenditure decisions link well to the priorities for improvement.

The pupil deprivation grant is used effectively to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of specific groups of pupils. These pupils make sound progress against their personal targets.

The school makes efficient use of resources by working as a federation of three schools. This has contributed well to the robust standards achieved by pupils. As a result, the school provides good value for money

Appendix 1: Commentary on performance data

There are many very small cohorts in many of the years of performance data for the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 for this school. In such a case, we do not include a performance data table.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government website, My Local School, in the link below.

<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/index.html?lang=eng>

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to the learner questionnaire

Primary survey (all pupils)

Fewer than 10 responses were received. No data is shown.

Response to the parent questionnaire

Denotes the benchmark – this is a total of all responses to date since September 2010.

	response s	NiferLo	Agree Cytuno'n	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytun	Disagree Anghytun	know Ddim yn	
Overall I am satisfied with the school.	16	11 69%	5 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r ysgol yn gyffredinol.
		63%	33%	3%	1%			
My child likes this school.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn hoffi'r ysgol hon.
		73%	25%	1%	0%			
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the school.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn yr ysgol.
		72%	25%	1%	0%			
My child is making good progress at school.	16	12 75%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn yr ysgol.
		61%	34%	3%	1%			
Pupils behave well in school.	16	9 56%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3	Mae disgyblion yn ymddwyn yn dda yn yr ysgol.
		46%	45%	4%	1%			
Teaching is good.	16	11 69%	5 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		60%	35%	2%	0%			
Staff expect my child to work hard and do his or her best.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn disgwyl i fy mhentyn weithio'n galed ac i wneud ei orau.
		63%	33%	1%	0%			
The homework that is given builds well on what my child learns in school.	16	10 62%	5 31%	1 6%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r gwaith cartref sy'n cael ei roi yn adeiladu'n dda ar yr hyn mae fy mhentyn yn ei ddysgu yn yr ysgol.
		47%	40%	6%	1%			
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	16	10 62%	6 38%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		58%	33%	4%	1%			
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	16	12 75%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Caiff fy mhentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		59%	36%	2%	0%			
My child is safe at school.	16	12 75%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn ddiogel yn yr ysgol.
		66%	31%	1%	0%			

	response s	Nifer o Cyntun Agree Cytuno Disagree Anghytun Disagree Anghytun know Ddim yn					
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs'.	15	11 73%	4 27%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		50%	34%	4%	1%		
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	16	12 75%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhentyn.
		49%	40%	8%	2%		
I feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n esmwyth ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r ysgol, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		62%	31%	4%	2%		
I understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.	16	11 69%	5 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n deall trefn yr ysgol ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		45%	38%	7%	2%		
The school helps my child to become more mature and take on responsibility.	16	12 75%	4 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r ysgol yn helpu fy mhentyn i ddod yn fwy aeddfed ac i ysgwyddo cyfrifoldeb.
		56%	38%	2%	0%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to the next school or college or work.	13	7 54%	5 38%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol nesaf neu goleg neu waith.
		43%	33%	4%	1%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	16	13 81%	3 19%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		54%	38%	5%	1%		
The school is well run.	16	11 69%	5 31%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r ysgol yn cael ei rhedeg yn dda.
		61%	32%	3%	2%		

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Mr Kevin Davies	Reporting Inspector
Michaela Leyshon	Lay Inspector
Mr Gareth Sion Lloyd Owen	Peer Inspector
Joyce George (Headteacher)	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
- 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
- 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 eligible for 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 eligible for 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 eligible for 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.