



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

**Gowerton Comprehensive School
Cecil Road
Gowerton
Swansea
SA4 3DL**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

Mr Peter Harris

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

Gowerton Comprehensive School is an English-medium 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of 1212 students and pupils, including 158 in the sixth form compared with 1326 pupils and students when the school was last inspected.

Just over 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM) compared with the Welsh average of about 15% for secondary schools. Very few pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. A very small percentage of learners currently learns English as an additional language.

The school's intake represents the full range of ability. Just under 6% of pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). This figure is slightly below the average for Wales as a whole.

The headteacher took up his post in 2007. The present senior leadership team (SLT) is comprised of three assistant headteachers, a business manager and two seconded members of staff. Of the present SLT, the three assistant headteachers were in post at the time the school was last inspected.

The school seeks to provide equal opportunities for all learners to achieve the greatest possible success.

The school works in close partnership with seven other secondary schools and the local further education college to enhance provision at key stage 4 and in the sixth form.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Gowerton School is £3773 which compares with a maximum of £5430 and a minimum of £3544 for secondary schools in Swansea. The school has the 12th highest budget per pupil out of the 15 secondary schools in Swansea.

Summary

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

Current performance

This is a good school because:

- standards are good and improving;
- there is an outstandingly strong ethos;
- learners' wellbeing is excellent;
- the provision is successful in meeting learners' needs, and
- leadership and management is particularly effective.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because of the:

- inspiring leadership of the headteacher;
- exemplary support offered by senior leaders;
- very good staff team, all of whom are committed to improvement;
- very good systems of quality assurance and planning for improvement; and
- successful track record over the last three years that has seen significant improvements in examination results, attendance and behaviour.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the staff and governors of Gowerton School need to:

R1: continue to improve further the standards of pupils and students;

R2: continue to develop learners' bilingual competency and the Welsh dimension of the curriculum; and

R3: work with the local authority to address the shortcomings in accommodation identified in this report.

These recommendations feature in the school's current development plan.

What happens next?

Gowerton School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In key stage 3 results are above national and family (1) averages in English, mathematics, science and all three core subjects combined (CSI) (2). When compared with similar schools in terms of FSM benchmarks, results in mathematics, science and the CSI are above average; those in mathematics are in the top 25%. Over the past three years, pupils' progress from the previous key stage has been good.

On the whole, in key stage 4, performance on nearly all indicators has improved over the last three years where it has been above the national average and that of the family of schools. In two out of the last three years, the performance reached by pupils against most indicators has been in the top 50% of similar schools in terms of FSM. Pupils make good progress over this key stage and very few leave school without a qualification.

In the sixth form, learners' attainment at the level 3 threshold and the wider points score is above local and national averages. This represents a good level of achievement for these students.

(1) Families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds, and having special education needs.

(2) The core subject indicator (CSI) refers to the percentage of pupils who gain the expected level in Welsh or English, mathematics and science combined.

In all key stages, girls attain higher standards than boys though the gap in relative performance is smaller than average. Specific groups of pupils, including those entitled to FSM, those with English as an additional language (EAL), and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress in line with their abilities. Nearly all pupils with SEN achieve outcomes that are significantly higher than expected.

Pupils make valuable progress in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to move on to the next stage of learning. Most remain in full-time education at the end of year 11 and a large majority goes on to higher education after the sixth form. Nearly all pupils leaving school in summer 2010 entered further education, training or employment. These figures are much better than national averages.

Nearly all learners make good progress in lessons. Pupils and students apply themselves well to tasks and display very positive attitudes to learning. They work very productively in pairs and groups, as well as independently. Most listen well to teachers and each other and this supports their progress in learning. Many have accomplished problem solving skills and a significant majority knows how to improve its work.

Learners' work is well presented and well written. They demonstrate good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. In their books there is a wide range of good extended writing with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most pupils use their reading skills well to extract meaning and can present information in a wide variety of forms and styles. Pupils' numeracy skills are good; their information and communications technology (ICT) skills are impressive.

Overall, pupils make good progress in Welsh second language classes, particularly in key stage 3. Learners are aware of their Welsh identity and a small minority makes use of Welsh-language skills around the school.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Pupils' attendance levels over the last three years are outstanding and place the school in the top quarter of similar schools in Wales. The school's exclusion rates are very low. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary; they are enthusiastic learners and have extremely positive attitudes towards their studies. Pupils are courteous and relate well to one another, to their teachers and to other adults.

School council and year forums are particularly effective in contributing towards self-evaluation processes and the development of key school policies, including the school development plan.

Pupils and students feel very safe and well supported in the school. They know who to contact if they have any academic, personal or social issues to discuss. Learners have a very good understanding of healthy eating and many take advantage of the opportunities provided to improve fitness levels through participating in an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities.

Pupils take part in a very wide range of community events and have well developed social and life skills. They participate extremely effectively in charity and community

work. This is helping them to move on with confidence to the next stage of their learning.

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

The school meets statutory learning needs in full. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all learners. It complies fully with the requirements of the Learning Pathways 14-19, meeting the needs of employers and the community. Arrangements to support pupils' and students' choices are particularly effective. Pupil choice determines the curriculum and learners are offered a very wide range of subjects.

Overall provision for the development of skills across the school is good. For ICT it is excellent, with sector leading use of internet applications. Other strategies to develop key skills have been based upon the highly successful introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) and Essential Skills Wales (ESW) qualifications.

All pupils study Welsh second language in key stage 3 and 4. Appropriate plans for developing bilingualism and fostering the Welsh dimension are in place.

Provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC) is good.

Teaching: Good

Nearly all teaching is good, with a high proportion of excellent lessons. The school promotes best practice extremely well and teachers take full benefit of the high quality staff development provided.

Where teaching is good or better learning is very well organised and involves every learner. Teachers use a wide range teaching strategies of good quality. They use resources, including ICT resources, of high quality to provide interesting and stimulating lessons which are well matched to pupils' needs.

Staff pupil relationships are particularly strong and foster very positive attitudes among learners. High expectations, brisk pace, shared intentions and a well distributed range of questioning maintain pupils' motivation and application. Teachers provide very good individual support during lessons.

Where teaching is less effective, the work is insufficiently adapted to pupils' needs. Too much time is devoted to teacher led activities and the pace of learning is slow.

Marking is regular and useful. Learners generally receive feedback of high quality and advice on how to improve.

Pupil attainment is systematically and accurately assessed. Staff use this information very effectively to monitor progress against expectations.

Parents receive reports of very good quality. These provide detailed information on progress, and specific pointers for improvement. A high proportion of this feedback is outstanding.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The care, support and guidance provided for learners are significant strengths of the school. The school takes very good steps to ensure that learners adopt healthy lifestyles.

Concerns regarding pupils' wellbeing are dealt with in a very accomplished manner by pastoral staff. A large number of specialist services gives excellent support to the school and exemplary advice and guidance is given to the learners at all key stages. The child welfare manager makes an exceptional contribution to the school. A very extensive range of extra-curricular activities makes an outstanding contribution to learners' cultural and social development.

The school has appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding pupils.

The school's personal and social education (PSE) programme is consistently good. Outside agencies are used well to enhance the delivery of the course. Assemblies make a good contribution to the spiritual and moral ethos of the school.

Provision for pupils with ALN is outstanding. The staff of the very well managed inclusion centre and specialist teaching facility provides excellent support to learners. Individual education plans are extensive and targets are monitored regularly. Literacy and numeracy catch-up programmes and support for more able and talented pupils are highly effective.

Parents of pupils with ALN are beneficially involved in the support that their children receive.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a very positive and inclusive ethos; it has established an extremely safe and supportive learning environment. The individual well-being and academic progress of every learner are core values and are appreciated by pupils and parents. This makes an outstanding contribution to learners' progress.

Respect and consideration for others are outstanding features of the school. These are reflected in the mature attitudes displayed by almost all learners. The school successfully secures equal access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Social equality and discrimination issues are very effectively addressed within the comprehensive PSE programme.

There are sufficient resources which are well matched to learners' needs.

Overall, the standard of accommodation is adequate. The school benefits from good facilities for science and catering. The school hall and library provide suitable settings.

Although the accommodation is well maintained, there are shortcomings in the provision for physical education and the temporary classrooms.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision and a commitment to raising standards. He inspires colleagues successfully to share his high expectations and has ensured that the whole school community is fully committed to improvement. He has provided very clear strategic direction which has resulted in significant improvement.

He is ably supported by members of the SLT. Together they provide effective guidance to middle leaders. Areas of responsibility are clearly delineated and there are high levels of accountability.

Middle leaders make a valuable contribution to raising standards. Clear channels of communication ensure that all members of staff collaborate effectively to identify and address priorities for improvement.

Leaders use relevant data to set stringent targets for improvement. Policies and initiatives, including those that meet local and national priorities, are implemented consistently through working with the Local Authority.

Governors are very well informed and their skills and expertise are used well to challenge and support the school.

Improving quality: Excellent

Self-evaluation and planning for improvement are strengths of the school. Over the past three years the school has delivered a notable improvement in standards.

The headteacher, senior and middle managers analyse a wide range of performance data in a very effective way. The rigour of the school's decisions is strengthened by the inclusion of external experts in the evaluation teams. Teachers at all levels have an accurate understanding of the standards achieved.

The school uses the results of self-evaluation in an excellent way to plan for improvement. All the school's employees have been consulted about the school's performance and have contributed to the development plans. This has resulted in an exceptionally high degree of commitment by all staff.

Staff development needs are diagnosed carefully and the school meets nearly all of these in a variety of creative ways. The opportunities given to all the school's employees to develop their careers are exemplary. The school has developed good links with a number of other schools and these make a substantial contribution to developing and sharing of good practice.

The school has made very good progress in addressing the key issues from the last inspection.

Partnership working: Good

There are a number of good partnerships and initiatives in place. The school makes a very successful contribution to the local consortium. This has led to a worthwhile

extension of pupil choice and individual learning pathways. There are strong links with the family of primary schools. Transition arrangements are very effective in ensuring continuity of curricular progression and pupil wellbeing.

Community links are particularly positive. Communication with parents is excellent and contributes to pupils doing well. This is enhanced by innovative uses of ICT. The school works effectively with local business to prepare pupils for the world of work.

There are effective mechanisms for sharing good practice with other schools. This makes a significant contribution to staff development, provision and standards.

The headteacher has successfully broadened the outlook of the school with regard to working with external partners in a strategic way. This enhances joint planning, collaboration and quality assurance in order to achieve the highest possible standards.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its staffing and financial resources well.

Teachers are well qualified and are deployed effectively to teach the curriculum. Teaching assistants support pupils successfully in their learning and associate staff are well experienced and efficient. Effective use is made of teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time.

The development needs of all staff are identified and met through a robust system of performance management and professional development. The school meets statutory requirements relating to the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body use the budget in a strategic way to address development priorities. Spending is effectively administered and monitored by the school's business manager.

Sufficient resources are allocated equitably to departments and to relevant priorities of the school improvement plan.

The ways in which the school has successfully eliminated its budget deficit and raised overall standards provide good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Eighty eight parent questionnaires were completed, representing a good proportion of the total number of parents. Overall, they expressed positive views about the school. Nearly all say that the school communicates high expectations and want their children to work hard and to do their best. Nearly all parents are satisfied with the school and say their children like being there. Most feel that their children are safe at school and that their children are making good progress. They report that the teaching is good and that their children are well prepared for moving on to college or work. Most say that the school is well run and find it approachable if they have any questions or concerns. Many feel they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by around 22% of the learners, who were selected at random. All feel safe in school. They report that there is always someone to talk to in order to get advice. Teachers support their learning and encourage learners to take responsibility. All feel they are doing well in school, that there are enough resources to enable them to learn well and they have many opportunities to get regular exercise. They say that teaching is good and that the school helps them to be ready for the next stage of education, training or work. Learners also say that they are treated with respect, and that they are helped to understand and respect people from different backgrounds. A majority of learners feel that the school listens to their views and think behaviour is good.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Peter Harris	Reporting Inspector
Andrew Herdman	Team Inspector
Delyth Williams	Team Inspector
David Hughes	Team Inspector
Emyr W Roberts	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Susan Mitchell	Peer Inspector
Carol Clayton	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