



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 Gynradd Pennal
Pennal
Machynlleth
Gwynedd
SY20 9JT**

Date of inspection: June 2011

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

The pupils, who range from three to 11 years old, come to this small school from the village of Pennal and the surrounding rural area. Pennal is about five miles from the town of Machynlleth in the Gwynedd local authority area.

There are twenty-two pupils of compulsory school age in the school and eight pupils of three and four years old. This shows a reduction of close to 25% in the numbers of pupils since the last inspection. The pupils are taught in two classes by two full-time teachers. The school has the fourth highest level of challenge within the family of schools to which it belongs. No children have been entitled to free school meals for the last two years. This is considerably lower than the county and national percentages.

Eighteen per cent (18%) of pupils receive additional support for special educational needs. This figure is lower than the national average. Three pupils are statemented and one is on School Action +. No exclusions were recorded, either temporary or permanent, in the year before the inspection.

Fourteen percent (14%) of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is the main language of the household. Almost all of the pupils are from a White British ethnic background.

The acting headteacher has been in post for close to three years. There are plans in place to federate the school with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas.

The individual school budget in 2010-2011 per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Pennal is £4,153, which compares with a maximum of £8,442 and a minimum of £2,717 for primary schools in Gwynedd. The school has the 29th highest budget per pupil of the 103 primary schools in Gwynedd.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- the percentage of pupils who reach the expected levels in both key stages over time compares favourably with similar schools;
- the pupils' thinking and problem solving skills are very good in key stage 2;
- the achievement in terms of the pupils' learning and progress in lessons across the school is generally good;
- the pupils with additional learning needs are making good progress; and
- the pupils are extremely polite, work together effectively and behave well.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the self-evaluation process is thorough and feeds the school development plan appropriately;
- the school has made good progress in a number of areas recently; and
- the co-operation with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas is developing effectively and has improved the quality of the provision in a number of areas.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

R1 improve the strategic partnership with the secondary school to ensure quality and joint understanding of standards;

R2 ensure that the provision satisfies the needs of every pupil consistently; and

R3 sharpen the role of the governors as critical friends.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The progress against the recommendations will be monitored by the local education authority.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The results of the children's foundation assessments when starting school consistently show that the children have higher skills than expected for their age. At the end of the Foundation Phase, standards in all of the skills, especially oral communication, show appropriate, good progress.

Most of the pupils are able to communicate effectively in spoken Welsh by the end of key stage 1. Their reading and writing skills are also developing appropriately. By the end of key stage 2, the standards of literacy skills in terms of oral and reading are good in Welsh and English. The pupils use language appropriately in discussion and they succeed well in reading in one language and using information in the other. The majority read meaningfully in both languages and the standards of writing in both languages by the end of Year 6 are appropriate.

Achievement in the pupils' learning and progress in lessons across the school are generally good. Many pupils have sound recall of previous learning and build upon it appropriately. Nearly all pupils work together well and respond appropriately to the tasks set and to the questions asked by the teachers. By the end of Year 6, the pupils' thinking skills and problem-solving skills have developed very well, as has their ability to work independently.

The pupils' awareness of the rich history and legends of their area and of Wales is good and creates pride in their area.

Pupils' performance is generally good and compares very favourably with that in other schools within the family in both key stages. In three of the last four years, the pupils have succeeded in reaching the expected levels in Welsh (and English in key stage 2), mathematics and science. This is significantly higher than the averages for the family of schools and Wales as a whole, and places the school in the highest 25% of its family of schools in terms of the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In general, the percentage of pupils who reach level 3, in key stage 1, in the three subjects, has been higher than the family average during the past four years.

The percentage of pupils who reach level 5 at the end of key stage 2 is higher than expected in mathematics, but lower than the family and Wales averages in science, Welsh and English.

Over three of the last four years, there has been no significant difference between the comparative performance of boys and girls. In general, pupils who have additional learning needs make good progress.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils feel very safe and happy in school and they know to whom to turn for help and advice. They are extremely polite, work together effectively and behave well. As a result, the personal and social and cultural development of nearly every child is good.

Every child has an appropriate awareness of the need to keep fit and to eat healthily. A high proportion of pupils take advantage of fitness activities, sport and relevant activities after school. They benefit from the link with organisations and individuals in order to strengthen their knowledge of the local area, and foster social and life skills.

In general, the levels of pupils' attendance are good. The pupils' punctuality is good.

The school council contributes very appropriately to decision-making processes within the school. The members of the council respond conscientiously beyond their responsibilities and are very aware of green issues. As a result, the pupils have good foundations for life and work outside the school.

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

The school provides a wide and balanced range of experiences that respond well to the pupils' needs. The planning gives due attention to developing the skills. As a result, the pupils have a number of appropriate experiences that have a positive effect on standards. The provision for developing thinking and problem-solving skills is a strength and boosts the pupils' independence very well.

The opportunities provided for pupils to undertake extended writing on topics in Welsh and English are appropriate.

The provision for the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is good. The contribution of visitors such as literary figures captures and develops the pupils' interest and understanding well.

The provision for global citizenship receives due attention within the school. For example, the experience of adopting a child from a developing country extends the children's understanding of the needs of those who are less fortunate well. The provision for sustainability is enriched through a joint project with Dyfi Woodlands.

Teaching: Good

The teachers use a good range of teaching methods. The teachers' subject knowledge is sound and they plan a range of activities that stimulate the pupils' interest and commitment. Through effective questioning the teachers challenge the pupils to think. In general, the teaching provides appropriate differentiated work; however, it does not satisfy the needs of every pupil consistently enough.

There is a supportive ethos and a diligent atmosphere in every class. The support for pupils with additional learning needs is good and effective use is made of support staff in order to meet the specific requirements of pupils.

On the whole, assessment for learning strategies are developing appropriately across the school. Learning goals and success criteria are shared effectively with the pupils. By the time the pupils reach key stage 2, the teachers ensure that the pupils play an active role in the process of assessing their work and the work of their peers. As a result, the work is relevant to them and they have a good understanding of what needs to be improved.

Where the quality of marking is good, constructive comments are made, but in some places the comments are not sufficient to lead to improvement.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an inclusive, happy and caring community. There is a due emphasis on personal and social education that contributes effectively to the welfare of the pupils. The school promotes healthy eating and healthy ways of living well.

Across the school, learning experiences offer stimulating opportunities to promote the learners' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The learners' active participation in Welsh and community cultural activities is good.

There is a close and very effective working relationship with parents and carers and the school considers their viewpoints fully. Regular questionnaires for pupils and the school council ensure that the pupils have a voice in the decision-making process.

The school's work is supported well by a number of specialist services and advantage is taken of the advice of specialists when needed.

The school provides appropriate support for children with additional learning needs and the school co-operates effectively with the external agencies to ensure good progress. The pupils who are statemented receive appropriate support in line with the requirements of their statements.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school staff succeed in creating a community, homely ethos that is totally inclusive. They promote equal opportunities and the pupils' understanding of diversity and other cultures well. The school has an appropriate policy on racial equality.

On the whole, the condition of the school buildings and grounds is good. The learning rooms are suitable and there are appropriate facilities for the children in the Foundation Phase. Although the hall is small, the school makes good use of it.

In co-operation with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas, it is ensured that the pupils have opportunities for gymnastics and sports that would not otherwise be possible. The learning materials and displays of work are of good quality and offer an attractive learning environment that celebrates good work and the pupils' successes.

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

The acting headteacher has developed a vision and values that are supported and promoted by the governors and the staff. A clear direction is set for the school, and the school has made good progress in a number of areas in recent times, for example, the thorough self-evaluation process and the progress in the quality of the provision because of the co-operation with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas.

The school has a wide range of management and curricular policies and an appropriate timetable has been established for them to be reviewed. The teachers and support staff have clear roles that are fulfilled consistently well.

The governing body meets regularly and discusses the headteacher's reports thoroughly. They visit the school as part of the self-evaluation process and observe lessons. They are increasingly building their understanding of the school data and elements that the school needs to improve. At the moment, they have not got the full information in terms of improvement targets in order to challenge the school probing enough as a critical friend.

The school succeeds in giving due attention to national and local priorities. The pupils' thinking skills are developed very well throughout the school and a clear voice is given to the pupils to decide on aspects of the school's work. The close co-operation with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas and the steps towards formal federalisation are going forward successfully. The federalisation initiative is supported by the governing body.

Improving quality: Good

The school has a thorough self-evaluation process, which feeds appropriately into the school's development plan. The procedure includes evaluating standards and provision across the classes jointly with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas. A self-evaluation report was created, which gives a correct picture of the school as a whole. The school includes teachers, the children and the governors very effectively in the self-evaluation process.

The school development plan is of good quality and contains an evaluation of the previous plan and the priorities that emerge from the self-evaluation process. It outlines the main priorities for development and includes details of the school's intentions. However, the targets in each case are not quantitative enough, and as a result it is not easy for managers to measure progress.

The school has an appropriate procedure for performance management, which offers opportunities for continuous professional development. Networking with other

schools and sharing of professional practice are developing effectively and enrich the provision for the school's pupils.

Partnership working: Adequate

Appropriate partnerships exist between the school, the governors, the parents, the community and the local authority. These partnerships contribute effectively towards enriching the provision and improving outcomes for the benefit of the pupils. The parents at the school are very supportive and state that they receive regular information about their children's progress and that they are very satisfied with every aspect of school life.

The co-operation with Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas is developing effectively and has raised confidence and improved the quality of the provision in a number of areas.

To date, the partnership with the secondary school and the cluster has developed to ensure quality and a joint understanding of standards at the end of key stage 2.

Resource management: Good

The staffing levels of the school are appropriate and ensure good standards. The teachers work well with the classroom support staff. The support staff fulfil their role effectively in order to ensure appropriate support for the pupils and they make an important contribution to the life and work of the school.

The teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment time efficiently, and this has a positive effect on the standard of planning. The expertise of the staff of Ysgol Dyffryn Dulas is used well in order to enrich the pupils' experiences.

The governing body is careful in keeping an eye on the budget. The governors spend in line with the priorities of the school development plan, and ensure that there is not too much money in reserve. The teaching resources are managed well.

In general, considering the use that is made of the budget to maintain and raise standards, along with good leadership and management, the school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Seven responses to parent questionnaires were received:

they were unanimous:

- that the school is run well and that they are generally satisfied with the school;
- that the teaching is good and that the staff expect the children to work hard and do their best;
- that they get regular information on their children's progress;
- that their children like school and make good progress;
- that their children are safe in the school and are given support to settle down well;
- that children get appropriate additional support in terms of any individual specific needs;
- that their children are encouraged to be healthy and do physical exercise;
- that they feel comfortable about asking a question of the school, making a suggestion or raising a problem;
- that the school helps the children to become more mature and shoulder responsibility and that their children are prepared well for moving on to the next school;
- that pupils behave well; and
- that staff treat every child fairly and with respect;

and each one believes that:

- the homework that is given builds well on that which is learnt in school;
- there is a good variety of activities, including trips or visits; and
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifteen responses from key stage 2 pupils were received and they were unanimous:

- that they feel safe at school;
- that children behave well at playtime and at lunch time;
- that they know what to do and to whom to talk if they see that the work is difficult or are worried or concerned about something;
- that the teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress;
- that the school teaches them how to stay healthy and that there are many opportunities in the school to do regular physical exercise; and
- that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Almost all believe that:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- nearly all the children behave well at play time and at lunch time; and that
- homework helps them to understand and improve their work at school.

A few believe:

- that they are not doing well at school.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Maldwyn Pryse	Reporting Inspector
Clive Phillips	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Anwen Griffith	Peer Inspector
Rhys Williams	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

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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