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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Ysgol Maenofferen
Stryd Maenofferen
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Gwynedd
LL41 3UL**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

Gareth Wyn Roberts

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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Ysgol Maenofferen is a naturally bilingual, community school maintained by Gwynedd Local Authority (LA). The school is located in the centre of the post-industrial town of Blaenau Ffestiniog. The school serves the town and the surrounding area. According to a number of indicators, the area is disadvantaged.

There are 198 pupils and children between 3 and 11 years of age on the school roll and there is a separate class for each school year. Pupils are admitted to the school on a part-time basis in the September following their third birthday, and on a full-time basis in the September following their fourth birthday.

Twenty seven per cent [27%] of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals (FSM), which is considerably higher than the county and national averages, and slightly higher than in 2010. Forty eight (24.2%) of the pupils have additional learning needs (ALN), and three have a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Ninety eight per cent [98%] of the pupils are of white ethnic origin. Seven pupils or children learn English as an additional language but do not receive extra support. Six pupils are looked-after by the LA.

Some 82% of pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken, however 92% now speak Welsh fluently. Only 2% of pupils are not able to speak Welsh. All pupils follow a Welsh First Language course. Welsh is used as the medium of teaching up to Year 2, then both Welsh and English are used as teaching media.

The school was inspected in May 2005. The present head teacher was appointed to her post in September 2008. The deputy head teacher, who is new to the school, started in post in January 2011.

The school's per capita budget in 2010-2011 is £3247 which compares with a maximum of £8442 and a minimum of £2717 for primary schools in Gwynedd. The school has the 72nd highest budget per pupil out of the 103 primary schools in Gwynedd.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is adequate because:

- the majority of pupils make appropriate progress during their time at the school;
- attendance is good and pupils enjoy coming to school;
- pupils enjoy a good range of interesting activities;
- equal opportunity is provided for almost all pupils in an inclusive school;
- the results of end of key stage assessments, especially in mathematics and science, have not been as good as those of similar schools;
- end of key stage 1 results have not been as good as those for key stage 2;
- there is little development from Y1 to Y2, and
- the implementation of plans for delivering some of the skills in class is adequate.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the school's numerous new managerial procedures and the system of tracking and targeting specific groups of pupils, are beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' standards;
- the head teacher's vision has already brought about significant improvements in the school;
- the commitment of the staff and governing body to the pupils and school is sincere;
- the quality of teaching and pupils' ability to evaluate their own work is good overall;
- parents and governors are very supportive of the work of the school; and
- the school's current ethos and pupils' behaviour is very good, and encourages positive attitudes towards teaching and learning.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:-

- R1. improve the results of end of key stage assessments in science and mathematics;
- R2. pay particular attention to raising standards and improving end of key stage 1 provision;
- R3. continue to improve standards of reading and numeracy;
- R4. ensure that the more able children reach their full potential in all aspects of their work;
- R5. ensure that the plans for teaching the key skills are implemented consistently in all classes;
- R6. ensure that the Senior Management Team (SMT) is an effective tool for ensuring more consistent standards and improving them, and
- R7. ensure immediately that the buildings meet the current expectations as regards safety, and that they are suitable also for contemporary teaching and learning methods.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

The quality of end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 assessment of attainment results is adequate, when compared with the results of similar schools as regards the percentage of pupils entitled to FSM or schools placed within the same 'family' of schools on the basis of a number of disadvantage indicators. The reason for this is that end of key stage assessment results in science, and in mathematics in particular, between 2008 and 2010, have placed the school either in the bottom quarter or bottom half of similar schools as regards the percentage of pupils entitled to FSM. On the other hand, results in Welsh (and English at key stage 2) are usually better.

At key stage 1, results in Welsh were on a par with or better than those of Wales between 2008 and 2010; they were higher than the average results of schools in the same family in 2010, but lower than the family average in 2008 and 2009.

Results in mathematics at key stage 1 were lower than the average for Wales and schools in the same family between 2008 and 2010. Results in mathematics were not as good in 2010 as previous years.

Results in science in key stage 1 were lower than those of the family and Wales in 2008, considerably lower in 2009, but similar to those of Wales and the family in 2010.

The quality of results in mathematics between 2008 and 2010 means that the percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 1 who attain the expected level in a combination of language, mathematics and science has stayed consistently lower than the family and Wales average.

At key stage 2, results were better in 2010 than those of the previous two years. The school was in the bottom half of similar schools in terms of the FSM for the percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard in the combination of language, mathematics and science. Assessment results in 2010 did not place the school in the bottom quarter of similar schools for any indicator. Mathematics results improved but they were below the averages for the family and Wales. Results in science were better than the averages for the family and Wales in 2010.

At key stage 2 in 2009, the school was in the bottom quarter of similar schools in terms of FSM for Welsh, English, science, mathematics and the percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard in the combination of language, mathematics and science. The school's results were considerably lower than the average for the family and Wales.

At key stage 2 in 2008, the school was amongst the bottom quarter of similar schools in terms of FSM for science, mathematics and the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level in the combination of subjects. The school's results in mathematics and science were lower than the average for the family and Wales.

Results in English were higher than those of Wales but lower than those of the family. Results in Welsh were quite similar to those of Wales and the family.

There is no consistent pattern in the difference between the standards of boys and girls. This varies from subject to subject and from year to year. There is no obvious difference in the achievement of boys and girls in class.

Almost all pupils with ALN make good progress in language, reading and number even though the progress is not sufficient, necessarily, to change the percentages of pupils who reach the expected standard as there are a number of pupils with ALN in all of the classes.

The percentage of pupils attaining one level higher than the expected level by the end of the key stage in Welsh is quite similar to corresponding schools, however this is not true of the other subjects.

The majority of pupils make the expected progress. This progress is more apparent in Welsh and English than in science and mathematics. Almost all pupils in the reception class and in Y1 make outstanding progress but progress in Y2 is inadequate. There has been clear progress in the standard of Y6 pupils' work since January.

Standards of reading in Welsh and English are inconsistent. The standards of pupils' reading in the reception class and in year 1 are very good. Standards of reading of year 2 pupils are good. Many pupils, including pupils in Y3 to Y6, read aloud well. According to the results of reading tests, a minority of pupils attain good standards and the majority make satisfactory progress.

Standards of writing in both languages are good. Standards of numeracy are adequate. Shape work is good. Many pupils, however, have difficulty applying mathematics.

Standards in Welsh are good and standards of oracy are particularly good.

Wellbeing: Good

The school is a happy, organised and polite community where almost all pupils are dedicated and enthusiastic in their work. The behaviour of almost all pupils is very good during lessons and during break times. Effective and subtle support is provided for those individuals who need it, by the support staff who collaborate effectively with the teachers. Almost all pupils feel safe at the school. The care of the school community for them is good and the social skills of almost all pupils in the school are very good. They are proud of their school. Almost all pupils are of the opinion that the school responds effectively to any child who is unhappy. Almost all participate fully in their learning and contribute towards the work in question. Many are becoming more independent learners, and are beginning to make decisions for themselves. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards health education and healthy eating. They are happy to come to school as they receive care, support and, in the majority of cases, are challenged. The school's attendance figures are good.

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

Teachers provide a good range of interesting learning experiences that meet the needs of pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by links with local industries and businesses.

The curriculum for children in the Nursery, Reception and year one classes is well planned. Curricular planning for year two pupils, where the school has decided to implement the Foundation Phase requirements a year early, are adequate.

Teachers' plans for Key Stage 2 include developing communication, numeracy and information and communication technology, but so far, they have not been implemented consistently in all lessons. Individual subject co-ordinators identify opportunities for key skills development across the curriculum. With the exception of ICT, which is taught across the curriculum, arrangements to co-ordinate numeracy and communication skills at a whole school level are not sufficiently established. As a result, they have not yet contributed adequately to raising standards of numeracy and subject specific language in mathematics and science. The influence of the schemes of work on the development of pupils' thinking skills and self-assessment is inconsistent from class to class. In the majority of cases, it is good.

The local area and its people are used effectively to provide rich learning activities that enable pupils to gain good knowledge and understanding of the area's environment and history.

Welsh is the medium of teaching in the Foundation Phase and in the majority of lessons in key stage 2. Some subject aspects are taught through the medium of English at key stage 2, ensuring adequate use of both languages as a teaching medium. Good attention is paid to the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig*.

The provision to raise pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship is adequate. The school has been awarded the bronze Green Schools award, and is beginning to successfully promote initiatives such as recycling, energy saving and healthy eating. The global dimension has not been developed to the same extent.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching across the school is good overall. The quality of teaching is better, at times, than standards of achievement in the class as raising standards is a long term process. Moreover, assessment for learning is starting to have a positive impact on standards in a good number of classes.

Teaching is excellent in the Nursery, Reception and year one classes as the tasks are extremely challenging, structured and interesting and they effectively promote children's independence. In year two, the tasks do not provide a sufficient challenge for pupils' age and ability.

In the rest of the school, where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and plan a range of interesting activities which motivate the pupils. Throughout the school, there is effective collaboration between teachers and classroom assistants in the preparation and delivery of lessons. The relationship between teachers and pupils encourages respect and courtesy. There is a supportive ethos and a working atmosphere in every class. The support for pupils with ALN is good.

In general, assessment for learning strategies are good and are beginning to have an impact on pupils' confidence and independence, especially in year 6. Pupils regularly receive constructive oral feedback in response to their work, however there are numerous examples of superficial marking which does not help pupils understand how to further improve their written work.

Effective systems are in place for assessing the pupils' work and progress. The school makes consistently good use of the information collated in an attempt to raise standards. Standardisation of assessments within the school has not developed adequately to ensure that pupils' work is levelled consistently accurately.

Parents are well-informed about their children's progress. Reports to parents meet the statutory requirements, and provide clear information.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school promotes pupils' awareness of the importance of health and keeping healthy by giving good attention to healthy eating and exercise. The school has been awarded the level 1 accreditation of the Healthy School initiative.

The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development in an excellent manner and promotes their cultural development well. The school has excellent collective worship sessions.

Pupils' Personal and Social Education development is good. During circle time sessions, almost all pupils respond well. Almost all pupils respond to the opportunity to discuss their feelings and concerns.

There is a close relationship between the school and its parents. Parents say that their children are happy to come to the school and that the flow of information between the school and home is good.

Pupils' attendance is good, and parents testify that there are effective arrangements in place to share information when there is an absence.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. All staff have completed appropriate training.

The school makes effective use of specialist services, information and guidance.

The school's arrangements for responding to pupils with ALN are good. Teachers identify needs early. They provide appropriate Individual Education Plans that are constantly addressed by all staff. They monitor the progress of each pupil against the stated criteria and almost all pupils make good progress.

Learning environment: Good

One of the main strengths of the school is its happy environment and the comprehensive attention given to promoting wellbeing, friendship, tolerance and equality.

The good support is based on team work by all school staff, on nurturing each individual's self-image and on a thorough knowledge of the pupils' personal circumstances and interests.

The work is supported by detailed and up-to-date policies that pertain to areas such as preventing bullying, challenging stereotyping, racism and homophobia. They satisfy the statutory requirements.

Almost all pupils have successfully fitted into school life and good attention is given to ensuring equal opportunity for all. Pupils turn confidently to adults in the knowledge that the school responds quickly to any concerns.

The classroom councils and School Council contribute effectively to the life of the school and make useful suggestions.

The school is in a central location in its catchment area. With the exception of problems with the roof and drains in very inclement weather, the fabric of the building is solid.

Some of the classrooms are small, particularly at the top end of the Foundation Phase. One has to walk through classrooms to go from one part of the school to the other in inclement weather. However the school has made every attempt to overcome these difficulties thereby creating a stimulating and colourful atmosphere.

A welcoming foyer is a focus for visitors in a scattered building but there are also a number of other unlocked entrances to individual classes. This is a security issue which needs immediate attention.

With the support of grants and volunteers' labour of love, work is progressing to enhance various parts of the playground.

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

Leadership: Adequate

The head teacher has a clear vision for the school which she successfully communicates to the staff, the governors and the pupils. She knows the school very well. She sets a clear strategic direction which has a positive impact on the life and work of the school.

There has been a change in the membership and in the responsibilities of the school's middle and senior managers. Staff who have been recently appointed, and those who have been delegated new duties, are still familiarising themselves with their responsibilities. Although the school's management ensures strengths in terms of the planning and assessment of subjects, this new structure is not yet established enough to raise pupils' standards to their full potential. The SMT rarely meets formally and the members are not accountable for standards in the core subjects at key stage 2.

The school has a wide range of managerial and curricular policies which are implemented effectively overall. Job descriptions have recently been rewritten and provide a clear foundation for the future.

The governing body undertakes its statutory responsibilities effectively. Its members are well informed about the school's current performance and they challenge and question the school's performance conscientiously. Members visit classes regularly which enable them to provide successful support for the school in its strategic planning.

The school pays due attention to a number of current priorities at county and Assembly Government levels, however, their implementation and impact have been inconsistent so far.

Improving quality: Adequate

The self-evaluation process clearly identifies the majority of areas to be developed within the school. The school's self-evaluation procedure is beginning to include discussions with staff as well as the views of governors, parents and pupils, however there is room to develop the procedure further.

As aspects of the school's management are new, and because staff who have been recently appointed are still familiarising with their responsibilities, they have not contributed fully to the evaluation of subject standards. The self-evaluation process has neither had an adequate impact on expected standards of attainment nor managed to overcome the shortcoming in standards in mathematics that has existed for some years.

The link between the self-evaluation procedure and the School Development Plan (SDP) is good.

The SDP is detailed and has been firmly based on an evaluation of the previous plan. It is reviewed each term. The priorities are clear and the expected outcomes and the impact on standards have been described in detail. Success has been apparent up to now in areas such as creating a good ethos, improving behaviour and ensuring pupils' positive attitude to work.

Teachers work well as a team. Internally, the school holds meetings to plan the curriculum and to share the latest teaching practices, such as methods to promote good behaviour.

Partnership working: Good

The school has links with a wide range of partners.

There is a good relationship between the LA, the local advisory team and the school which has had a positive effect on teaching and learning.

The school's parents are very supportive of all the activities provided. Parents and visitors from the community make a substantial contribution towards enhancing the pupils' experiences. The pupils themselves take part in activities within the local community.

The school collaborates well with other primary schools in the cluster to produce schemes of work, to standardise pupils' work and to share good practice. This practice has had a positive impact on assessment at the end of Key Stage 2.

Good transition procedures have been established as pupils transfer to the secondary school.

Staff work effectively with external agencies and this collaboration enables staff to improve pupils' outcomes and wellbeing.

Resource management: Adequate

School managers and leaders manage staff and resources effectively. In a time of financial cutbacks, all aspects of the curriculum have been safeguarded, pupil numbers have been reduced in each class, and the school has moved from being in debt to having some money in reserve. They have ensured that there is a teacher for each school year.

The Governing Body's Finance Panel monitors the budget carefully and regularly reports back to the full body.

Effective use is made of the skills of staff by exchanging classes for four subjects. A thorough continuous professional development programme has been established for staff, based on the school's current needs. The school has been innovative in upgrading assistants' skills in the catchment area. Appropriate use is made of teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time, using processes that comply with statutory requirements. Very effective use is made of ancillary staff and support staff as they work towards agreed school aims.

The school carefully analyses its strengths and weaknesses in terms of resources. The range, quality and order of the resources in the Nursery, Reception and year one classes are excellent; however their use in year two is adequate. The resources in key stage 2 are good.

Although the school has ensured improvements to the buildings, the governors and SMT have not given full attention to some security issues on the site.

The school gives value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Ninety one parents completed the questionnaire although not all answered every question. All parents are satisfied with the school overall and say that their children like being there and that they are safe there. All also say that pupils behave well. Almost all say that the school treats every child fairly and with respect and that they are constantly informed about their children's progress. Almost all parents also say that their children receive appropriate extra support, and that the school encourages children to be healthy and to take regular exercise. Almost all feel that the school has a good variety of activities including trips or visits. Almost all parents say that they feel happy to ask a question of the school, to make suggestions or to note a problem. They understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints. A minority of the parents did not answer the question about the school's success in preparing their child well for moving to the next school, however the majority who have answered believe that it does so. Almost all parents also say that the school is well run.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Eighty seven pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Almost all of them say that they feel safe at school, and that the school deals well with any bullying. They all know who to talk to if they are worried or concerned. Almost all say that the school teaches them how to keep healthy, and all say that there are enough opportunities for them in the school to take regular exercise. Almost all say that they do well at school and all say that teachers and other adults help them to learn and to make progress. All also say that they know what to do and who to talk to if they find their work difficult. Almost all say that they have enough books and computers to do their work. Almost all also say that homework helps them to understand and improve their work at school. The majority, mainly girls, say that other children behave well so that they can do their work, and that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Gareth Wyn Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Prydwen Elfed -Owens	Team Inspector
Richard John Roberts	Lay Inspector
Geraint Wyn Jones	Peer Inspector
Meri Jones	School Nominee

Contractor: Cwmni Cynnal
Technology Unit
Bridge Street
Llangefni
Anglesey
LL77 7HL

Copies of the report

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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