



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 Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod
Commercial Street
Gilfach
Bargoed
CF81 8JG**

Date of inspection: January 2012

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 Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod was established in 1963.

It is situated in the village of Gilfach on the outskirts of the town of Bargoed in the middle of the Rhymney Valley. The school serves the catchment area of Bargoed and Gilfach. Occasionally, pupils come from other towns and villages in the valley.

The number of pupils has increased over the years and there are now 196 pupils at the school, including a full-time nursery class.

The area is described as economically disadvantaged. Seventeen point eight per cent (17.8%) of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the national figure.

Fifty-three pupils are on the additional learning needs register, and two pupils have statements of special educational needs.

Ninety-three per cent (93%) of pupils come from homes where English is the main language. No pupils at the school come from an ethnic background.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2011 and the deputy headteacher since October 2011.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £2,530 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in Caerphilly is £6,779 and the minimum is £2,494. Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargod is 72nd of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

This school is good because:

- it has demonstrated success in developing bilingualism from an early age;
- most pupils make appropriate progress during their period at the school;
- there is teaching of good standard in all classes and the learning assistants contribute to this;
- pupils' standards of behaviour and commitment to their tasks are very good;
- the way in which the school promotes pupils' wellbeing is very effective;
- the provision in the Foundation Phase lays very strong foundations for the school's pupils; and
- there are strong links and effective co-operation between the school and partnerships.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for employment are good because:

- the headteacher has a robust vision that has been owned by everyone involved with the school;
- the governors work very effectively and have good knowledge of pupils' achievement and the school's work;
- there has been a history of implementing priorities for improvement;
- financial management and planning are of good quality;
- the school has good knowledge of the performance of groups of pupils and individuals; and
- the school's co-ordinators understand their roles for leading in their areas.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise the standards of boys' attainment;
- R2 increase the percentage of pupils who achieve at the higher level at the end of key stage 2;
- R3 raise standards of extended writing across the curriculum in key stage 2;
- R4 improve the pupils' handwriting and presentation of work;
- R5 ensure continuity in medium-term planning and planning for progression in the development of skills across the curriculum in key stage 2;
- R6 ensure that self-evaluation processes and strategic planning for improvement place a specific focus on pupils' outcomes; and
- R7 develop the use of further assessment for learning in order to raise standards.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most pupils listen attentively and work diligently during lessons and show progress in their achievement over a period of time.

Pupils make very good progress in their oral ability in Welsh very quickly after beginning at the school. By the end of the Foundation Phase, the majority respond well orally. At the top end of the school, most pupils communicate confidently in both languages. The reading standard of most pupils in both languages is appropriate to their age and ability. Within the Foundation Phase, pupils are familiar with a range of reading strategies and use them effectively. In key stage 2, many pupils read aloud fluently, accurately and with increasing expression and they show understanding of texts.

The development of writing across the school is appropriate and the majority of pupils write effectively in their language books by the end of key stage 2. However, key stage 2 pupils do not make enough progress in their ability to write for different purposes across the subjects. The majority of pupils across the school do not pay enough attention to neatness of handwriting and presentation of work.

Standards at the end of key stage 1 show definite progress in comparison with the results of pupils' assessments on entry to the school. Pupils' performance in science has been high in comparison with that of other schools in the family and the average for Wales, with progress in mathematics by 2011. The performance in Welsh compares favourably with the performance of the family of schools and the average for Wales. The results for mathematics and science in 2011 placed the school in the upper 50% of similar schools on the basis of percentages pupils entitled to free school meals, although results for Welsh were among the lower 50% of those for similar schools.

The proportion of pupils in key stage 1 that reach the higher level in Welsh, mathematics and science is close to the average for the family of similar schools but a little lower than the average for Wales.

At the end of key stage 2 in 2011, pupils' performance in Welsh, English, mathematics and science compared well with the performance of the family of schools and the average for Wales. Welsh and English results showed progress on the previous years, when the school's performance had been a little lower than the averages of the family of schools and Wales. In 2011, the results for Welsh and English were in the upper 50% of those for similar schools on the basis of free-school-meal benchmarks, although results for mathematics and science were in the lower 50%.

The proportion of pupils who reach the higher level in Welsh, English, mathematics and science in key stage 2 is very low compared with the family of schools and national averages.

At the expected levels, girls have performed considerably better than boys in every subject at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, although the gap in relation to performance in Welsh and English has closed over the last two years at the top end of the school.

Pupils who are entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional learning needs are making good progress.

Wellbeing: Good

The school is an inclusive, happy and very caring community. Pupils feel safe there and they have confidence in the school's ability to deal with any concern. They understand the importance of eating healthily and a good number of pupils take part in physical activities that are offered during the day and in after-school clubs.

Attendance rates are close to the national average but a little lower than the average for similar schools on the basis of entitlement to free school meals. Most pupils arrive at school punctually.

Pupils behave excellently and they show respect and care for one another. There have been no permanent or temporary exclusions during recent years.

Nearly all pupils show interest in their work and concentrate very well in lessons. Pupils have a feeling of commitment to their community and they benefit from a good range of community activities such as visiting the old people's home, taking part in various concerts and visiting a bank and local businesses in order to understand how the world of business and the financial world work.

Pupils have an appropriate understanding of other cultures and religions. Most pupils are aware of the need to care for the environment, including their local community.

Through the school council, the eco council, questionnaires and discussions, pupils have good opportunities to express their opinion and contribute to the school's life and work.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Adequate

Foundation Phase staff plan together well and offer pupils a variety of rich learning experiences. The plans are detailed and develop pupils' skills in an ordered way and in sequence.

However, in key stage 2, planning is inconsistent in terms of detail, content and activities that capture pupils' interest. There is a mixture of prepared and school plans and there is no progression of stimulating experiences for pupils within themes, especially in skills. Although pupils write at length in their language lessons, over-reliance on work sheets in other subjects decreases the opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum.

There is a suitable procedure in place for giving support to specific groups of pupils. In the best practice, there is differentiated planning in order to support and extend pupils, with staff comments and pupils' achievement affecting the day to day planning. This is not apparent enough in every class, especially for pupils of higher ability.

Provision for sustainable development and global citizenship is effective. Joint worship is used to give attention to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is developed very strongly throughout the school.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is consistently good across the school. All teachers have good knowledge of pupils' attainment and many differentiate tasks appropriately in their classes. There is a very good working relationship between pupils and all the school's staff. There is a very high quality team of support staff at the school and they are used very effectively in all classes.

The pace of lessons is effective and ensures that pupils are engaged well on tasks. Many teachers question and challenge pupils effectively, and tasks and support are differentiated appropriately. All of the school's staff offer good language models to pupils.

Elements of assessment for learning are implemented effectively in the school. The majority of pupils know the aim of a lesson and what their personal targets in literacy are. In a few classes, teachers share success criteria with pupils and give appropriate opportunities for pupils to self-assess. These practices are not sufficiently embedded throughout the school. The written feedback for pupils identifies strengths and areas for improvement appropriately. Pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to these comments. Reports to parents meet the statutory requirements and all pupils contribute very effectively to them annually by writing a record of their own development.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school looks after its pupils very well and identifies their needs early.

Pupils are encouraged to express opinions regularly, to contribute effectively to developments within the school and to be part of activities in the local community. The school council operates very effectively and influences aspects of school life. Living healthily is promoted effectively.

The school very successfully promotes a positive attitude towards behaviour. It has a good personal and social education programme, which is implemented regularly. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development receives appropriate attention. Daily assemblies are held, which have a definite focus on promoting children's awareness of important values such as respect and fairness.

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

The school makes good use of specialist services and links with external agencies such as the authority's partnership co-ordinator, advisory teachers and occupational therapists. There are effective arrangements in the school for promoting attendance and punctuality.

There is good provision for pupils with additional learning needs and the school makes very effective use of ancillary staff to support them.

Learning environment: Good

The school's ethos is a very caring one, which promotes co-operation, sharing and respect for others. All pupils have an opportunity to be a part of the school's activities and they are glad of these opportunities. The school is very effective in preparing pupils for the next steps in life.

The school presents appropriate values and places a specific focus on a different value every month. Pupils learn to celebrate cultural differences through role areas and various displays. Good use is made of all parts of the school building. The environment is colourful and stimulating with various displays that promote learning effectively.

The classrooms are attractive and stimulating, with displays promoting learning. Lesson organisation is good and there are good resources in each class in order to achieve tasks effectively. The buildings and the site are well maintained.

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

The headteacher has a strong vision for the school, which is summarised in its motto, 'Strong roots, bright future'. The staff and governors have been an active part of the process of establishing the vision, and pupils show a firm understanding of it.

The senior management team offers effective leadership and management. It shares expectations clearly, and the strategic plans have a positive influence on provision.

Subject responsibilities have been shared appropriately, and all teachers contribute beneficially to leadership across the school. The staff meetings contribute in an influential way to monitoring and evaluation processes.

The support of the governing body is strong. The governors are very aware of pupils' standards of achievement. They are prepared to support the school as a critical friend, and ask relevant questions that hold the school to account on the basis of the information they receive. They meet the statutory requirements in terms of their responsibilities, and play an active and positive part in visiting lessons, and discussing with teachers and the school council.

The school responds actively to national priorities. Raising literacy standards is a constant priority, the Foundation Phase has been embedded well, and attention has been given to developing assessment for learning. By working closely with the local authority and the advisory service, the school pays due attention to local priorities.

Improving quality: Adequate

There are suitable arrangements in place for self-evaluation. The school has a wealth of information from a wide range of sources that is used appropriately to evaluate the school's performance and to identify relevant priorities. The school measures and records the performance of groups and individuals but the processes to analyse and summarise data findings are not sufficiently effective. The school asks the opinion of pupils, staff and parents/carers regularly, and responds appropriately to the findings.

Subject co-ordinators monitor and evaluate their areas appropriately in turn and report on progress. The findings have given a good basis for discussing the standardisation and moderation of language work in staff meetings, and they contribute useful information to the self-evaluation process.

The self-evaluation report identifies strengths and areas for development well, although some sections are too descriptive. The link between the self-evaluation process and the school development plan is not robust enough, and some important priorities have not been included, such as boys' underachievement and the need to extend the most able pupils. The priorities of the school development plan have been timetabled effectively and it notes staff's operational responsibilities. But the School Development Plan's success criteria do not focus specifically enough on pupils' outcomes.

The school is part of a learning community, and professional networks across Welsh-medium schools in the area have had a positive effect on the provision for oracy.

Partnership working: Good

The school has very positive links with parents and carers. Almost all of them are supportive of the school's work and contribute to it in practical ways, for example visiting classes to speak about their jobs and assisting in establishing a Credit Union.

The links with the Cylch Meithrin, which is on the school campus, work effectively. The relationship with the local secondary school is very strong, and pupils benefit considerably from various transition activities. One obvious strength is the weekly lessons from a teacher from the secondary school, which prepares pupils especially well for the next stage of their education. There is an effective procedure for standardising and moderating pupils' work with the secondary school and also with the Welsh-medium schools in the cluster.

The school takes appropriate advantage of institutions such as the health service and safeguarding agencies, and of the local authority's services. It has subscribed to a number of relevant service level agreements.

During the last two years, the school has developed a useful relationship with business communities in the area, as part of the activities to improve standards of literacy and numeracy. This is very good practice.

There is a beneficial link with teacher training institutions and the school assists in training students to be child carers.

Resource management: Good

The headteacher and governors make effective use of money in order to ensure an appropriate level of staff that are trained and qualified to deliver the curriculum. They plan appropriately to strengthen the leadership team.

The classroom assistants are a very effective part of the staff and have a positive influence on learning and teaching. Subject co-ordinators operate appropriately to improve the provision in order to develop their areas further.

The school ensures that the curriculum is delivered and implemented effectively. The performance management systems work successfully to ensure appropriate objectives for teachers that support the school's priorities. The school provides suitable training internally, with the support of the local authority and dedicated training agencies.

The school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In key stage 1 over the last four years, the percentage of pupils who attain level 2 in the core subject indicator (the expected performance in Welsh or English, mathematics and science) has varied. In 2008, the school's performance was equal to the family average but higher than the average for Wales as a whole. In 2009 and 2010, performance was lower than family and Wales averages and, in 2011, it was higher than family and Wales averages.

The results for key stage 1 pupils in Welsh over four years have varied in comparison with those of the family of schools, but have been better than the average for Wales except in 2010. Achievement in writing is lower than in oracy and reading in comparison with the family average. In mathematics, the results were higher than the averages for the family and Wales for 2008 and 2011; in 2009 and 2010, they were lower. Science results have been consistently higher than the averages for the family and Wales over the four years.

The results at the end of key stage 1 place the school among the upper 50% of similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals in the core subject indicator, mathematics and science, and in the lower 50% in Welsh.

The percentage who attain level 3 has improved over the last four years with a pattern of performing close to the family of similar schools average but lower than the average for Wales in every subject.

Boys have not performed as well as girls in terms of achieving level 2 in Welsh, mathematics or science over the last four years. The pattern is different for level 3, with girls excelling in Welsh and boys excelling in mathematics and science.

The percentage of key stage 2 pupils who attain the expected level within the core subject indicator over four years has been lower than the Wales average over the last four years and higher than the family average twice.

The percentage of pupils who attain the expected level in English has been lower than the family and Wales averages every year until 2011, when it was higher than both.

The results for key stage 2 pupils in Welsh over four years were lower than the family and Wales averages in 2009 and 2010, but higher in 2008 and 2011.

The percentage of pupils who reach level 4 in mathematics has been consistently close to the family and Wales averages over four years. The results for key stage 2 pupils in science have been higher than the family and Wales averages over the last three years, although lower in 2008.

In comparison with schools that have similar levels of free school meals, the school is among the upper 50% in English, Welsh and the core subject indicator, and in the lower 50% for mathematics and science.

The percentage who attain level 5 in key stage 2 is consistently lower than the family and Wales averages in every subject. Boys do not perform as well as girls in terms of achieving Level 4 in English, Welsh, mathematics or science. The gap between English and Welsh has decreased over the last two years. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls at level 5, except in mathematics where boys have excelled over the last two years.

There are no significant differences within the data at the end of both key stages in connection with pupils who are entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional learning needs. These pupils, on the whole, attain levels in line with their ability.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to pupil questionnaires

Of the 72 responses received from pupils, all feel that the school teaches them how to keep healthy, and that there are enough books, equipment and computers for them to do their work.

Nearly all feel safe at school, that there are many opportunities for them to do physical exercise, and that they are doing well at school. In addition, nearly all feel that teachers and other adults at the school help them to learn and make progress. They are also of the opinion that they know what to do and to whom to speak if they find their work difficult, and that homework helps them to understand and improve their work at school.

Most think that the school deals well with any bullying and are of the opinion that they know to whom to speak if they are worried or anxious. They also feel that all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Many are of the opinion that other children behave well and that they can do their work.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Of the 30 responses received from parents, all are satisfied with the school in general and are of the opinion that their child likes the school. They feel that their child has received support to settle in well on entry to the school, that pupils behave well there and that teaching is good. They are also of the opinion that staff treat all children with respect and expect pupils to work hard and do their best.

All parents feel that homework that is given builds well on what children learn at school, that staff treat all children fairly and with respect and that their child is encouraged to do physical exercise regularly. They are of the opinion that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any specific individual needs, that they receive regular information about their child's progress and that they feel comfortable in asking the school a question, making suggestions or identifying a problem. Parents feel that the school helps their children to become more mature and shoulder responsibility and that the school is well run.

Most parents are of the opinion that their child is making good progress at school and feel safe there. They also state that they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints and that there is a good variety of activities, including trips or visits.

Most are of the opinion that their child has been prepared well for moving on to the next school.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Stella Gruffydd	Reporting Inspector
Terwyn Tomos	Team Inspector
Glenda Jones	Lay Inspector
Helen Jennings	Peer Inspector
Marion Evans	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority. If it is available, the data report can be seen on our website alongside this report.

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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FPYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	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

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.