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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Prestatyn High School
2 Princes Avenue
Prestatyn
Denbighshire
LL19 8RS**

Date of inspection: December 2010

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

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

Prestatyn High School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school maintained by Denbighshire local authority. There are currently 1,769 pupils on roll, including 339 in the sixth form. This compares with 1,721, including 278 in the sixth form, at the time of the previous inspection in October 2004.

The school serves the town of Prestatyn and the surrounding villages. Over 16% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is just above the local authority average and close to the Wales average over the last three years. Ten per cent of pupils live in the 20% most deprived parts of Wales.

Nearly all pupils are from English speaking homes. Twenty-eight pupils (1.5%) receive support for English as an additional language. Currently 18% of the pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, with 1.5% having statements of special educational needs.

The current headteacher has been in post since April 2006 and the leadership team has seen significant changes since the last inspection. There have been recent improvements in information and communications technology (ICT) resources, and there is a newly built post-16 learning centre.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget, per pupil, for Prestatyn High School is £3,790, which compares with a maximum of £4,314 and a minimum of £3,790 for secondary schools in Denbighshire. The school has the lowest budget per pupil of the eight secondary schools in Denbighshire.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- there is a clear upward trend in pupil performance at key stage 3 and key stage 4;
- the relationship between pupils and teachers is very good;
- teachers ask open-ended questions that encourage pupils to reflect on their learning; and
- pupils feel safe and well supported in the school.

Prospects for improvement

The school has good prospects for improvement because of:

- the high, and realistic, expectations of the headteacher and senior leaders;
- the clear identification of the important areas for improvement in the school development plan;
- staff having a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities; and
- the school's extensive work with a wide range of partners.

Recommendations

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

- R1 improve the attainment outcomes in the sixth form;
- R2 increase the proportion of pupils that gain a recognised qualification in Welsh second language, and are entered for the full course;
- R3 improve the delivery of key skills across the curriculum, in particular literacy skills;
- R4 further develop the role and contribution of middle managers to the school's self-evaluation process; and
- R5 address the shortcomings in the accommodation for physical education and science through close liaison with the local authority.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

There has been an upward trend in the school's overall results, at key stage 3 and key stage 4, over the last three years. In nearly all of the results in 2010 the school is above the average when compared with similar schools based on free school meals benchmarks.

For the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science) at key stage 3, the school is in the top half of similar schools based on free school meals benchmarks. In the previous two years, the school was in the lowest quarter. The school performs below the family of schools for English, but is in the top half of similar schools according to free school meals benchmarks. Mathematics and science have steadily improved over the last three years. Performance in mathematics is now in the top half of that for similar schools and performance in science is in the top quarter. At level 6 and above, performance in mathematics is better than that for the family of schools and the Wales average, although performance in English and science is below the family and the Wales average.

At key stage 4, the level 1 (equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G) and level 2 (the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C) thresholds, including English and mathematics, are above the average. Significant progress has been made in the percentage of pupils that are now achieving the level 2 threshold, including English and mathematics. In 2010, 47% of pupils achieved this threshold as compared to 40% in 2009. The school is now performing in line with the family of schools. The school is also above the average for the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator. In the previous two years, the school was in the lowest quarter of similar schools for these three indicators. The average wider points score (comprising all externally approved qualifications at age 16) shows the school still to be performing below the average. In 2010, performance in English and mathematics at the level 2 threshold is below the family and Wales averages. In science, it is slightly below the family average but above the Wales average. Only four pupils left the school without a qualification in 2010 and the proportion of pupils not engaged in education, employment or training is below both the family and Wales averages. Pupils make good progress from previous key stages.

In the sixth form, the level 3 threshold (equivalent to 2 A levels at grade A to E) and wider points score (comprising all externally approved qualifications at age 18) are below the Wales averages, and the overall A level subject performance is lower than that in the previous year. Performance in the Welsh Baccalaureate is improving and most students (81%) who complete the advanced course achieve accreditation.

Boys performed better than the girls across most key indicators in key stage 3 in 2010. There has been a significant improvement in the performance of boys across nine subjects. The gap between the performance of boys and girls at key stage 3 is

smaller than the national average. At key stage 4, girls performed better than boys in all key indicators. Pupils who are entitled to free school meals, those with additional learning needs and those from minority ethnic groups make the expected progress.

Many pupils make good progress in lessons. In the good lessons observed, pupils of all abilities demonstrate the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding that enable them to build on their learning. They are also able to apply, and develop, literacy and numeracy skills well. Although the overall application of literacy is well planned for by the school, there is inconsistency in its delivery across departments, resulting in pupils not making the expected progress. Pupils can use the relevant technical vocabulary with confidence within subjects. Most pupils can work well both as independent learners and in groups. In the majority of lessons, pupils are able to respond constructively to teachers' questions. They offer constructive views on their work and how they can improve.

In key stage 3, pupils' achievement in Welsh second language is good when compared with that of similar schools. Pupils make good progress in Welsh lessons and performance has been in the top half of that for similar schools for the last two years. At key stage 4, only 40% of pupils who completed the Welsh short course achieved the level 2 qualification. This is lower than the national average. Not enough pupils gain a recognised qualification in Welsh at key stage 4. In lessons, registration periods and assemblies, pupils make good use of their knowledge of Welsh in contexts other than Welsh lessons.

Wellbeing: Good

The majority of pupils have a positive attitude towards healthy living and many pupils participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and many say that the school deals effectively with any incidents of bullying.

Attendance is above that of similar schools. A minority of pupils are not always punctual to lessons.

Most pupils are well behaved. However, a minority of pupils feel that poor behaviour is impacting negatively on their learning. There has been a reduction in fixed-term exclusions over the last three years, with a significant reduction in the number of days lost as a result of exclusions.

Most pupils show respect to one another as well as to staff and have positive attitudes towards their learning. The social and life skills of many pupils are good. They effectively develop the skills necessary to move on to the next stage of their learning.

The school council, supported by the house councils, plays an active and successful role in improving the school environment and in reviewing school policies. Pupils are also involved in making decisions through the Fair Trade and Eco schools committees. Associate pupil governors provide a valuable link between pupils and the governing body.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is broad and meets appropriately the needs of pupils and the local community.

The 14-19 curriculum provides a variety of options, with a wide range of vocational courses available. Collaborative arrangements with the local college at key stage 4 enhance the choices for pupils. However, collaboration is more limited at post-16. The key stage 4 options menu is drawn up after full consultation with the pupils. The school exceeds the requirements of the Learning and Skills Measure at key stage 4 and post-16.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning experiences through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sports.

Whole-school planning for key skills is good, although the delivery is inconsistent across the curriculum. While planning for oral communication is good, opportunities for the development of other aspects of literacy, ICT and numeracy vary too much. There has been insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's work in developing skills. A minority of students achieve essential skills qualifications.

There is a well-planned and effective programme for promoting the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension. The use of incidental Welsh by teachers is good. Pupils in a bilingual Year 7 class are making accelerated progress in Welsh. However, the take-up of the Welsh full course at key stage 4 is an area for improvement.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The opportunities include effective themed days and links with an international, underprivileged community. The school's eco-committee is active in monitoring energy usage and recycling.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and many plan lessons thoroughly. In the majority of lessons, a good range of challenging tasks and well-planned activities effectively develop knowledge, understanding and skills. Many teachers ask open-ended questions that encourage pupils to think and develop good understanding.

The quality of relationships between pupils and teachers is very good and there is a purposeful learning environment. Teachers deal effectively with occasional instances of low level disruption.

In a few lessons, there is a lack of pace and challenge. In these lessons, teachers ask closed questions which reduce pupils' opportunities to reason and expand on

their oral contributions. Also in these cases, work is not appropriately matched to pupils' needs.

The school operates a rigorous system to identify pupil underperformance and, where necessary, provides individual pupils and groups with good additional support.

There are many good examples of pupils being encouraged to evaluate their own work and learn effectively from each other. This is clearly developing pupils' own independent learning skills. Many teachers give helpful written and oral feedback so that pupils gain a clear understanding of how to improve. However, a few teachers do not do this effectively.

The school's reporting system is a strength. Parents receive valuable information on their child's progress very frequently in interim progress checks. A comprehensive end of year report effectively informs parents about their child's progress in individual subjects and skills. Helpful comments mean that pupils know how to achieve their individual targets.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school's well-planned personal and social education programme effectively encourages pupils to make healthy choices. This is usefully supported by the food technology, religious education and physical education departments, and a programme of drama workshops. Together, these deal well with emotional wellbeing, sexual health, and substance misuse.

Pupils learn effectively about aspects of spiritual development in religious education, 'opening minds' and personal and social education lessons. There is a well-structured programme of school assemblies and registration periods to encourage pupils to consider a range of faiths.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding pupils.

In partnership with parents, the school encourages all pupils to behave well. The school monitors behaviour efficiently and encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The school has clear procedures in place that successfully deal with bullying. Pupils in the sixth form contribute significantly to the wellbeing and progress of younger pupils.

Options books and parents' evenings provide useful information and guidance. Good partnerships exist, for example with Careers Wales, to inform pupils' choices at the end of key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school benefits from well co-ordinated support provided by specialist agencies including the educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, and health professionals.

Pupils with additional learning needs are supported well by the school. Partner primary schools provide relevant information on these pupils which is used alongside a range of reliable assessments to check progress and identify needs. The extended transition programmes from key stage 2 to key stage 3 help vulnerable pupils to transfer smoothly.

The special educational needs co-ordinator constructs appropriate individual education plans in consultation with pupils, and parents. Staff receive very useful guidance so that pupils with additional learning needs are well supported. However, on occasion, in mainstream classes, tasks do not always fully meet pupils' needs. Vulnerable and challenging pupils benefit from individually tailored support programmes. A recently developed 'diary room', where pupils can discuss their concerns, is beginning to impact positively on pupils' wellbeing.

Learning environment: Good

Through the consistent application of relevant policies, the school effectively promotes all aspects of equality and diversity. The school's personal and social education programme helps develop pupils' positive attitudes towards relationships with others. The school successfully promotes an inclusive ethos.

Most areas of the school provide a stimulating learning and teaching environment. The library and learning centre are high quality facilities and are well used by pupils throughout the day. The secure school site is free of litter and kept clean, and most areas are well maintained. However, the quality of accommodation available for physical education is inadequate. The fabric of science laboratories is in a poor state of repair.

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

Senior leaders have had a positive impact on key performance indicators over the last three years. Initiatives such as the absence management policy have also led to improved pupil attendance and progress.

The headteacher has a detailed and realistic view of current performance. There are clear priorities for improvement, with a clear focus on securing further improvements in teaching and learning. Leadership is based on a strong element of openness and consultation. There are effective arrangements for gaining the views of pupils, parents and staff and a willingness to take account of any areas of concern. The health and wellbeing development group provides good opportunities for staff to raise issues with senior leaders.

Senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and work effectively as a team. A good feature of leadership is the way the school uses short-term secondments to the senior leadership team to drive forward specific developments in key areas such as improving teaching and learning, and literacy. However, these initiatives have not yet had a full impact on the quality of pupils' learning experiences.

Line management responsibilities have been clearly defined. Regular meetings between line managers and subject leaders use set agendas that result in consistency in the matters discussed. Effective performance management systems are well-established in relation to teaching staff. Systems for managing the performance of support staff are not yet fully embedded.

The role of middle managers is improving as a result of initiatives, such as the appointment of a subject leader as an associate member of the senior leadership team to provide support for other middle managers. Most middle managers make effective use of performance data to identify areas of under-performance and to inform departmental self-evaluation.

The governing body is well-informed about the school's performance. They receive regular reports on progress in the implementation of the school improvement plan. Teaching and learning are regular features of governing body meetings. Governors have appropriate opportunities to review progress against school targets and curriculum developments. They are fully involved in setting strategic priorities. Links between the governing body and subject departments, and whole-school aspects, are developing well.

The school improvement plan takes very good account of local and national priorities.

Improving quality: Good

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's 'Reflecting on Learning' policy provides an effective framework to monitor improvement strategies. Many leaders skilfully analyse and interpret a range of information and data to monitor progress and plan for improvement. Nearly all staff have a suitable input into departmental, faculty and whole-school self-evaluation procedures and documentation.

The school has a range of effective forums to gather the views of parents, governors and the wider community. Key stakeholders are involved in the self-evaluation cycle and their input contributes to the school's honest, detailed and accurate self-evaluation report. The school successfully links the outcomes of self-evaluation with the plan for school improvement.

There is a clear link between the school development plan and departmental plans and priorities. Both departmental and whole-school development plans provide a clear direction and focus for staff. In most instances, performance targets are suitably challenging with detailed success criteria. The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection report.

The school has a comprehensive in-service training programme. All staff have appropriate and varied opportunities for continuous professional development and activities are carefully matched to their areas of responsibility and performance management targets.

A number of well-established working groups, which focus on whole school and national priorities, complement this thorough programme. While these working groups are starting to impact on standards and provide opportunities for staff to extend and share good practice, outcomes are not always evaluated.

The school is beginning to develop useful links with its family of schools, with recent visits to two of the schools. A good feature is that many staff participate in the peer

observation programme. This has been well-received by staff and seen as a valuable opportunity to observe teaching and to share good practice. Evidence from lesson observations confirms that teachers use a range of effective teaching strategies.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively with a wide range of partners. There is extensive multi-agency working to support the needs of vulnerable pupils.

There are effective arrangements in place that ensure smooth transition when pupils transfer from the partner primary schools. Annotated profiles of pupils' work in the core subjects have been developed as a result of cluster moderation. The summer 2009 project enabled teachers from the school and partner primary schools to undertake lesson observations in each other's schools to promote continuity in teaching approaches.

The school has effective links with Coleg Llandrillo Cymru to support the delivery of vocational courses for 14 to 19-year-old learners, including provision for essential skills in the sixth form. The school receives information relating to pupils' progress and attendance for provision delivered in Coleg Llandrillo Cymru. However, there are no arrangements in place to quality assure this provision.

Parents are well-informed of the progress of their children and find the school approachable and responsive to any concerns they raise.

Resource management: Good

The school manages and deploys staffing and financial resources effectively. There are appropriate levels of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including the bulk purchasing of consumables for departments. The bursar and governors' finance committee have detailed information and an appropriate input into financial decisions. Expenditure is carefully prioritised and monitored regularly, and focuses strongly on improving outcomes for pupils.

There is a clear link between whole-school and departmental spending; however, departmental development plans are not fully costed. Departments are well-funded and leaders and managers use meetings well to focus on school priorities.

All staff are well deployed to address the priorities in the school development plan.

The school provides good value for money overall. However, the relative under-attainment in the sixth form and a few small classes do not represent good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 368 completed questionnaires from parents/carers. The vast majority expressed positive views about the school and are satisfied with the education provided by the school. The questionnaire responses show that pupils are well supported as they settle in at the school, and are making good progress through the key stages. However, a minority of parents do not feel that pupils behave well in the school and a few do not agree with the statement that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Nearly all parents feel that staff have high expectations and that they relate well to the pupils. Many parents also value the homework that is given and feel that it contributes well to learning. Many parents do say that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. Nearly all parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have any questions or concerns, and they feel that the school is well run.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 453 pupils, selected at random from across the age range. Most pupils feel safe in school, although about a fifth indicated that the school did not deal well with incidents of bullying. However, most pupils agree that they know whom to talk to if they are worried about any issues at school. Most pupils feel that they are doing well at school and that the teachers help them to make good progress and deal with any problems that occur. About a third of pupils feel that, on occasion, they are not able to do their work because of poor behaviour. Most pupils say that they are encouraged to take on responsibilities and are well prepared to move on to the next phase of their learning. A minority (29%) of pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 did not feel that they were given good advice when choosing their courses in key stage 4.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Ray Owen HMI	Reporting Inspector
Iolo Dafydd HMI	Team Inspector
Catherine Evans HMI	Team Inspector
Ceri Jones HMI	Team Inspector
Pauline Preston HMI	Team Inspector
Janet Waldron HMI	Team Inspector
James Kerry Jones	Lay Inspector
Eithne Hughes	Peer Inspector
Sue Pierce	School Nominee

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