



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 Maes Hyfryd Special School
Fifth Avenue
Flint
Flintshire
CH6 5QL**

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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is a special school for up to 135 pupils aged from 11 to 19 years. The school opened in September 2009 following the re-organisation of special educational provision in Flintshire. The school operates on two sites. The main, purpose-built school in Flint shares a campus with Flint High School and there is an additional teaching resource base for up to 12 pupils at Cyswyllt, Elfed High School, Buckley.

Pupils at Maes Hyfryd have a wide range of special educational needs. These include moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties including autistic spectrum disorders. Many pupils have associated communication, behavioural or sensory difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational needs.

English is the predominant language of almost all pupils. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. Three pupils are from minority ethnic groups. One third of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is higher than the all-Wales average of 20%.

The school teaches all National Curriculum subjects. Pupils in key stage 4 and key stage 5 have individualised programmes that include options from the Flintshire 14-19 accredited Learning Pathways. Pupils in key stage 5 also access modules of the Welsh Baccalaureate through partnership with Flint High School. The school has very well developed links with mainstream schools. Around half of Ysgol Maes Hyfryd pupils spend part of the week included in mainstream classes developing their skills and independence, and following mainstream accredited courses.

The school has sensory rooms, a soft playroom and good outside play and sports facilities.

Almost all pupils live within the county of Flintshire.

The 2011-2012 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is £11,804, which compares to a national average of £17,628 for all special schools in Wales.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is a good school because:

- pupils at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd achieve well;
- the headteacher and senior staff have established and communicate a clear vision for high expectations that is shared by all staff;
- the school makes good provision for pupils to acquire communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum;
- pupils achieve high standards in nationally recognised qualifications;
- there are highly effective arrangements for pupils' care support and guidance;
- the support for pupils to develop their learning and wellbeing through inclusion arrangements is an outstanding feature of the school's provision; and
- pupils gain a clear understanding of the world of work by volunteering and taking part in a wide range of activities, which support and benefit the local community.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- it uses resources highly effectively to develop and maintain an extensive range of staff outreach to support pupils' inclusion into mainstream schools;
- there is very good quality baseline assessment for each pupil and results are carefully analysed so that staff are able to set specific and measurable targets for each pupil;
- self-evaluation is well embedded and leads to school improvement; and
- senior leaders set realistic, but achievable, targets to ensure that the school continues to make good progress.

Recommendations

In order to further improve, the school needs to:

- R1 ensure that the comprehensive data from assessment is used consistently to inform planning to meet the individual needs of all pupils;
- R2 make sure that, where teaching is excellent, teachers share their good practice across the school;
- R3 ensure that marking and feedback to pupils help them to know what they need to do to improve their work; and
- R4 further develop the role of the governing body to ensure that it provides appropriate levels of challenge to the school.

What happens next?

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

The school is invited to prepare a written case study describing the excellent practice identified during inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Pupils at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd achieve well. They make good progress in meeting the targets in their individual educational programmes. It is not appropriate to compare the standards that these pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time.

In 2011, just over half of all key stage 4 pupils achieved an award in GCSE, Essential Skills Wales Award, OCR, AQA, Edexcel and BTEC. All pupils that left school left with accreditation. All four school leavers from the Elfed High School achieved grades E-G in a range of subjects at GCSE.

Also in 2011, all pupils from key stage 5 achieved success across a range of appropriate qualifications including the Welsh Baccalaureate, Entry levels and ASDAN Awards. With the support of a Learning Coach, these pupils achieve well in an increasing number of vocational opportunities arranged through the 14-19 Learning Pathways. A preparation for work skills course, run by Careers Wales and linked to the local college of further education, is helping pupils successfully to prepare for leaving school.

Ten pupils achieved a Millennium Volunteers award, with one pupil gaining a Gold award.

Many pupils achieve a National Curriculum level in English and mathematics appropriate to their ability.

In 2011, all post-16 leavers moved on to a college or appropriate placement. All 19 leavers from Year 11 continued in education, either at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd or at the local college of further education.

Nearly all pupils make good progress with their communication skills. Many pupils are confident and make effective use of appropriate vocabulary in a range of situations, including the use of scientific terms whilst conducting experiments. They enjoy interacting with each other and with adults in small group and whole class situations.

Most pupils with complex needs are developing an appropriate range of communication strategies, and use signs and symbols to augment their skills. Many of these pupils are skilful in using a picture exchange system, Makaton, 'signifiers' to express their needs and a few pupils effectively use ICT operated switch systems to help them communicate. Pupils receive effective support and guidance to develop their communication skills from two Communication Assistants. Their work has a positive impact on individual pupils' progress.

Across the school, most pupils listen well, remain focused throughout lessons and are keen to participate in discussions and learn.

Nearly all pupils use thinking skills effectively. They are considerate and kind, think about the possible outcomes of stories and show understanding for the feelings of others.

A few pupils that are more able write good extended pieces of work without support. However, many of the more able pupils are not yet working independently. This is because the work is not always set at an appropriate level for their needs and abilities and is not challenging enough.

Pupils in key stage 5 make very good use of vocational opportunities to develop their skills. For example, they prepare lunch for the café. These pupils are aware of health and hygiene requirements, demonstrate good literacy skills to follow recipes, use numeracy skills well to count and weigh ingredients, and communicate confidently with customers. They are highly effective in this activity.

The majority of pupils make appropriate progress in gaining skills in the Welsh language in relation to their needs and linguistic ability. Nearly all pupils understand simple phrases and Welsh adjectives.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Pupils feel safe in school and are keen to learn. Due to the support and encouragement that they and their parents and carers receive, pupils become more independent and learn to express themselves and to make choices. They grow in confidence. They attend regularly, unless they are unwell due to their medical conditions. There have been no permanent exclusions since the school opened.

The school places a very strong emphasis on giving inclusion opportunities in mainstream schools. Around half of the pupils spend part of the week included in mainstream classes. These valuable opportunities have a significant impact on raising the self-esteem of the pupils who take part. The outcomes are excellent. Pupils have wider curriculum opportunities, become more confident and make new friends.

Most pupils behave very well. Where pupils have difficulty in managing their behaviour, staff intervene quickly and help them to learn to understand their feelings, manage their anger and remain calm and gain control. As a result, pupils improve their behaviour over time. This reflects the highly skilled support provided for these pupils.

Pupils access a wide range of information that helps them understand how to keep themselves safe in the community. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about keeping fit and benefit from taking part in a daily 15 minute exercise session. They learn how to prepare healthy food for themselves as part of the healthy eating scheme.

All pupils who use alternative methods of communicating are fully involved in school life. This is due to the staff's expertise in using a range of systems and signs that meet pupils' needs. Individual pupils increase their independence by using tailor made communication key rings, which fit into pockets or a purse. These prompt them to remember what they need for the school or working day.

Through the school council, all pupils can influence school life and gain a good understanding of the democratic process. Pupils have changed the routine at lunchtime in order to avoid queuing, improve behaviour and make it run more smoothly. They are involved in the recruitment of staff and play an important part in supporting playground activities for their peers.

All pupils are very well prepared for life and work beyond the school. Across the school, pupils are encouraged to play a full role in the local community. They gain a clear understanding of the world of work by volunteering and taking part in a wide range of activities, which support and benefit the local community. These activities include running a café for the public, clearing footpaths, working in residential homes and a nursery. Pupils also have work placements in factories putting circuits together and constructing tables. Where appropriate, they learn to travel independently, arrive on time and organise money for the day.

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

Overall, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the wide-ranging needs of pupils. The curriculum effectively builds on pupils' previous knowledge, understanding and skills.

At key stage 4 and key stage 5, all pupils have good opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications in school, Cyswllt, the resource base at Elfed High School, and through inclusion other in mainstream settings. These qualifications range from pre entry level to GCSE.

Across key stages, pupils have access to a wide range of valuable experiences, both formal and informal, through the curriculum, inclusion and lunchtime and after-school clubs. At key stage 4 and key stage 5, the extensive option choices motivate pupils, who can choose the subjects that interest them most. Pupils have very good access to extensive work experience and volunteering opportunities in the community. The school makes very good use of the local community to widen pupils' learning experiences. This includes projects with the youth service, Theatre Clwyd and the British Trust for Conservation and Volunteering.

The school pays very careful attention to transition and plans well to prepare pupils for moving on to adult life. As a result, they make the move to the next stage of learning smoothly.

The school makes good provision for pupils to acquire communication, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Overall, schemes of work outline clearly how pupils will develop these skills.

Pupils have a good range of opportunities to learn about Welsh culture in lessons, across the curriculum and during extra-curricular activities such as the school Eisteddfod and educational visits. Welsh language provision is in the early stages of development.

Pupils learn about sustainable development and a few pupils that are more able have a good understanding of the energy saving features incorporated in to the school building and grounds. The school recognises the need to develop further the provision for global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

All teachers relate very well to their pupils. They work closely with support staff throughout the school day to make sure that all pupils are fully involved in all activities. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, and in a few cases excellent. Where this is the case, these teachers set high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour. They plan and set work that is well matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils. They set clear objectives at the beginning of their lessons and sum up what pupils have learned. They make effective use of a wide range of teaching styles and resources including information and communication technology. They pay careful attention to developing pupils' basic and communication skills. In the few instances where pupils do not behave well, staff manage the situation well so that pupils can return to work quickly with minimum disruption to their peers.

However, in a very few lessons teachers' planning is not detailed enough and does not meet the needs of all pupils. They do not carefully match work to pupils' needs and abilities or make learning objectives clear.

Assessment is comprehensive. There is very good quality baseline assessment for each pupil. The results have been carefully analysed so that staff are able to set specific and measurable targets for each pupil. However, a few staff do not always make enough use of this valuable information to inform the targets that they set with pupils for their IEPs. Individual educational plans and on-going teacher assessment ensure that pupils' progress is well monitored. Teachers are beginning to involve pupils in the assessment of how well they have worked and their progress. However, this is not yet consistent across the school.

Reports to parents and carers are clear and give them useful information about their child's achievements, wellbeing and development.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

There are highly effective arrangements for pupils' care support and guidance. Pupils benefit from a very good range of specialist services that promote their health and wellbeing. These include speech and language therapy, counselling, anger management, physiotherapy, one-to-one and group work with community nurses and a learning coach. The police liaison officer visits regularly and holds discussions about various safety issues including internet safety. Pupils with complex needs benefit from a very high standard of support with their communication, mobility and sensory needs.

Staff plan innovatively to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have valuable opportunities for reflection. They learn how to keep themselves safe and think about important issues such as alcohol, drugs and sexual behaviour. Staff make sure that all pupils learn to treat each other with

respect. They make sure that pupils have a good understanding of what they should do if they are bullied.

Where pupils need to improve their behaviour, highly skilled staff work closely with parents and carers to develop comprehensive behaviour support plans. These plans carefully identify and describe the behaviours that need to change and outline exactly how staff can help pupils improve their behaviour. The plans are carefully monitored and updated when targets have been achieved.

Individual education plans are concise and of good quality. Pupils and their parents and carers are fully involved in pupils' annual reviews. Where appropriate, pupils set their own targets and parents and carers write an evaluation of the experience so that the school can improve the process.

The school provides extensive opportunities for pupils to follow accredited courses at their local mainstream schools. These valuable experiences are helping pupils gain appropriate qualifications, learn how to relate to others and take responsibility for themselves in different situations. The support for pupils to develop their learning and wellbeing through these arrangements is an outstanding feature of the school's provision.

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

Learning environment: Good

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd treats all pupils with respect and dignity and provides an inclusive and supportive ethos. Staff promote diversity and equal opportunities well within the curriculum and in wider school activities.

The school provides a positive, caring and welcoming environment with a wide range of suitable resources to meet the needs of all pupils. Outside areas of the school are well planned and offer good opportunities for learning.

The school accommodation is of a very high standard and cared for well. Pupils take great pride in their school and are keen to show visitors around.

Resources are of good quality and well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. These effectively enhance the achievements of the pupils and ensure their participation in learning. Displays throughout the school are attractive and reflect the achievements of pupils of all abilities.

Cyswyllt, the school's provision at Elfed High School is a stimulating and supportive environment for the pupils from Ysgol Maes Hyfryd. It is well resourced and the staff have created a purposeful and caring ethos that ensures that pupils are well supported both in the base room and during their time spent in mainstream classes.

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

Since the school opened in September 2009, the headteacher and senior staff have established and communicated a clear vision. All staff share this vision. There are

comprehensive policies and plans that focus very well on meeting the learning needs of the pupils.

Senior leaders and middle managers work well across the school to support and challenge colleagues and communicate high expectations to those they manage. They set realistic, but achievable, targets to ensure that the school continues to make good progress. Leaders and managers have created a school ethos that values staff, pupils and others who work with the school.

The distributed leadership system is starting to have a positive impact on both pupil standards and staff development. Staff meetings focus appropriately on school improvement targets and result in action points to improve practice.

The governing body shares the school's vision and is very supportive of the school. It meets regularly and has appropriate sub-committees in place. However the role of the governing body in monitoring standards of achievement, challenging the school's performance and bringing about improvement is not yet fully developed.

Managers monitor and evaluate staff performance regularly and effectively through a secure performance management and appraisal system. Careful monitoring of lesson planning has resulted in significant improvements across the school in the delivery of a curriculum that meets the varied learning needs of all pupils.

Leaders use the performance management and appraisal procedures well to identify whole school training and development needs. School managers effectively identify where there is a need for staff members to receive additional levels of support and ensure that appropriate strategies are in place in a timely manner.

The school meets both local and national priorities effectively. This includes the local authority's priorities for special schools and the School Effectiveness Framework.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation processes are firmly embedded. These are based on first hand evidence collected through a wide range of strategies. All staff contribute effectively to the process and the senior management team consider local and national priorities. They effectively identify and prioritise areas for improvement and have produced a school improvement plan of high quality.

The school successfully seeks the views of pupils, parents and carers, and a good range of stakeholders. These are incorporated into a comprehensive self-evaluation report. As a result, managers have an honest and realistic view of the school and a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The school has well-established systems in place for managing performance. There are good procedures for regular classroom observation by managers. These focus effectively on the main areas in the school improvement plan. Teachers receive useful written feedback and clear actions for improvement. However, there are not enough opportunities for teachers to observe teaching and learning and benefit from each other's expertise.

In a relatively short time since opening, the school has established very valuable networks of professional practice with other schools and partners. They have exceptionally good links with the local secondary school and other secondary schools in the local authority. This helps pupils to benefit from a very wide range of learning experiences.

Staff from the school make good use of their expertise outside the school through delivering training and support to other schools. For example, they provide training on behaviour management, alternative methods of communication such as signing, and specific strategies to support teaching. This develops the capacity of mainstream schools to provide worthwhile inclusion for all pupils.

There are effective networks of professional practice within the school, which involve all teaching staff. However, it is too early to measure the impact of these on raising standards across the school as they are in the early stages of development.

The school is developing and using a good range of data to monitor the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils over time.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school works extensively with a wide range of very valuable partners in order to improve pupils' wellbeing. These include parents and carers, mainstream secondary schools, the primary special school, specialist services and outside agencies.

Working innovatively with the local secondary school, and secondary schools near pupils' homes, successfully increases the range of options and accreditation opportunities available for Maes Hyfryd pupils.

This impacts exceptionally well on the progress pupils make with their learning and the standards they achieve. Meeting and mixing socially with children from mainstream schools raises pupils self-esteem and aspirations. Pupils from the mainstream schools gain a much greater understanding of disability issues.

The school has outstanding links with the local community such as local businesses, industries, colleges and the youth service and Careers Wales. This results in pupils accessing positive and appropriate work placements and experiences that increase their confidence, widen their horizons and further develop their independence.

The school works well with parents and carers. They are very well supported by the school and highly value the very good transition arrangements for when they join the school, and when they move on to the next stage in their education or leave school. However, a few parents would like more detail in the daily planners to help them better support their children with work. They appreciate having access to the Parent Support Advisor who delivers good quality training. This has a very significant impact on increasing parents' and carers' self-confidence and meeting their children's needs.

Resource management: Excellent

The school manages its resources very effectively. There are a good range of experienced, specialist teachers and other highly skilled staff who are deployed effectively to support the pupils. Learning resources are of very high quality and are well matched to the interests and abilities of the pupils.

Staff receive good professional development opportunities as well as appropriate planning, preparation and assessment time. This makes sure that all staff can be effective and that all pupils are provided with a comprehensive range of learning experiences appropriate to their needs and abilities.

Support staff make a very important contribution to the learning, care and guidance of the pupils.

The school's financial management is highly efficient and effective. Spending priorities and training programmes link closely with the school's improvement plan and are reviewed regularly by the governing body and senior management team. The school uses resources highly effectively to develop and maintain an extensive range of staff outreach to support pupils' inclusion into mainstream schools. As a result of this support, these pupils achieve excellent outcomes.

Managers ensure that resources support and improve the learning environment. There are well-developed procedures to ensure that expenditure is allocated effectively to meet identified priorities.

The school provides very good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

The pupil questionnaire was completed by a majority of pupils prior to the inspection. They indicate that many pupils feel safe at school and know whom to talk to when they are feeling worried or have problems. Many pupils feel that they are making good progress and that teachers and adults at the school help them with their learning. They also feel that they have enough books and equipment and that the school prepares them well for the next stage of their life. However, a few pupils feel that the behaviour of other pupils is not good enough.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirteen parent/guardian questionnaires were completed. They indicate a clear satisfaction with nearly all aspects of school life. They feel that pupils make good progress at the school and that the school is well run. However, a few parents do not feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem. Out of the questionnaires returned, few parents disagreed with the statement 'staff treat all children fairly and with respect'.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Sw Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Mike Munting	Team Inspector
Meinir Rees	Team Inspector
Claire Yardley	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Gail George	Peer Inspector
Lynn Alton	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.

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 ALN terms

ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ALN: additional learning needs

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorders, includes Asperger's Syndrome

ATR: additional teacher resource

BESD, ESBD or SEBD: Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties

CoP: Code of Practice

HI: hearing impairment

MSI: multi-sensory impairment

PMLD: profound and multiple learning difficulties

SpLD: specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia

VI: visual impairment