



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 Y Foel
Ffordd y Llan
Cilcain
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 5NW**

Date of inspection: October 2011

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Ysgol Y Foel Community Primary School is situated in the village of Cilcain, near Mold in Flintshire. The school serves the village and the surrounding semi-rural area. Most children are admitted to the school in the term following their third birthday. There are currently 76 full-time pupils on roll. In addition, there are six nursery-aged pupils who attend the school every morning.

Many pupils come from economically advantaged backgrounds. No pupils receive free school meals. Four per cent of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs. Three pupils have statements of special educational need. Many pupils enter the school with above average basic skills.

Nearly all pupils are white British and speak English at home. A very few come from homes where Welsh or another language is also spoken. Welsh is taught as a second language.

The current headteacher was appointed in January 2010. Prior to his appointment, there had been a lack of consistency in leadership which led to an unsettled period for the staff and governing body.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Y Foel is £3,217, which compares with a maximum of £7,635 and a minimum of £2,660 for primary schools in Flintshire. The school has the 33rd highest budget per pupil out of the 74 primary schools in Flintshire.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate because:

- many pupils achieve good standards in lessons observed;
- the school is a happy, caring and safe place to learn;
- pupils' wellbeing is good, their behaviour is exemplary and they have positive attitudes to learning; and
- most pupils communicate effectively and develop good literacy skills during their time at the school.

However:

- learning activities do not always meet the needs and abilities of all pupils well enough;
- the quality of teaching is not consistently good; and
- pupils identified as needing additional help with literacy and numeracy do not always receive appropriate support at an early enough stage.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the relatively new headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision for the development of the school and have worked hard to secure the support of all stakeholders;
- strategic leaders use data and other first-hand evidence effectively to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- leaders have highlighted priorities and set relevant targets for improvement that are clearly linked to the outcomes of self-evaluation; and
- recent developments have improved provision and outcomes for pupils in a few key areas.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise standards of thinking and independent learning skills across the school;
- R2 provide learning experiences that consistently challenge all pupils, particularly the more able;
- R3 develop a comprehensive overview of planning for skill development to ensure continuity and progression across phases and areas of learning;
- R4 provide appropriate support at an early stage for pupils identified as needing additional help with literacy and numeracy; and
- R5 address underperformance in teaching more rigorously.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Many pupils enter the school with well above average skills in literacy and numeracy and most have good social skills. By the age of seven, many pupils have made good progress in English, mathematics and science. However, not enough pupils achieve the higher level 3 in these subjects, taking into account their good starting points.

By the age of 11, most pupils' reach the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Attainment at the higher level 5 in English and science compares well with that of other, similar schools, but outcomes for more able pupils in mathematics are not as good as they could be.

In the lessons observed, most pupils recall previous learning well and make appropriate progress in new learning. However, in a minority of lessons, more able pupils do not make good enough progress because the activities do not allow them to fully develop their thinking and learning.

Most pupils speak clearly and confidently. Many have an extensive vocabulary and express themselves maturely. Most pupils enjoy reading and do so competently for their age. Many use appropriate expression when reading aloud and they understand the subject matter well. Many very young pupils demonstrate confident mark-making skills and Year 2 pupils write well in different forms. Many write in sentences, using a good range of punctuation correctly. The majority develop good phonic awareness and make sensible attempts at spelling familiar words. By the end of key stage 2 many pupils use a wide vocabulary to write extensively in a range of forms. Their writing is structured effectively and shows a good awareness of the need to capture the interest of the reader.

Most pupils have appropriate numeracy skills overall, but they do not always apply them enough across different subject areas. Pupils throughout the school make appropriate progress in developing their information and communication technology skills. However, progress in higher order skills, such as the use of databases and spreadsheets, is limited.

Foundation Phase pupils achieve good standards in Welsh. They count to ten correctly and know the names of various shapes and body parts. The most confident pupils use Welsh spontaneously in their play and as they work. Many key stage 2 pupils read and understand simple books and speak clearly, using accurate pronunciation. The majority write simple sentences independently, following a learnt pattern.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils are proud of their school and speak positively about their experiences. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils treat each other with courtesy and respect.

Attendance is very good and has improved steadily, rising from 94.7% to 95.9% per cent over the past three years.

Most pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and understand the importance of regular exercise. Nearly all say that they feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they are worried or concerned.

The school council is well established and makes a positive contribution to school life. The members understand the importance of their role and feel that the headteacher and governors listen to their views and act on them when appropriate. Pupils play an active part in the local community.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and contribute effectively to discussions. All pupils work well collaboratively. However, thinking and independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

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

The school provides a suitable range of opportunities and learning experiences for the majority of pupils. Staff enhance learning experiences with a good range of visits and visitors, residential opportunities and extra-curricular clubs. However, activities in lessons do not always meet the needs and abilities of all pupils because they are not always challenging enough. Teachers use too many worksheets and this limits the progress that children make.

Teachers identify appropriate opportunities to develop communication, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in short and medium-term planning. When given appropriate opportunities, pupils successfully identify the skills that they have developed during sessions. However, the school has no overview of skill development that ensures continuity and progression across phases and areas of learning.

Provision for developing pupils' Welsh language skills and the Welsh dimension is good. Nearly all staff use Welsh regularly and encourage pupils to speak Welsh frequently. Most pupils have regular access to plenty of appropriate Welsh books and see good examples of written Welsh around the school. As a result, pupils recognise it as a real means of communication and they feel confident to use it themselves. Opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the cultural, historical and environmental characteristics of Wales are appropriate.

Most pupils are aware of the need to recycle, save energy and act sustainably. Members of the eco committee are conscientious and proud that the school is working towards the Green Flag award. Although pupils understand issues to do with sustainability, opportunities to develop an appreciation of global citizenship and the wider world are limited.

Teaching: Adequate

There are examples of good teaching in the school. However, too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching overall means that a minority of pupils do not achieve the very high standards of which they are capable.

In lessons where teaching is good, teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge. Planning is focussed and detailed, activities are appropriate to the needs of pupils and teachers make effective use of support staff. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the positive teacher-pupil relationships contribute effectively to learning. In these lessons, practitioners are good language models in both English and Welsh.

Where teaching is adequate, teachers and support staff often work well together, but do not have high enough expectations of pupils. There is an over emphasis on the use of worksheets and this limits the effective development of pupils' thinking and independent learning skills. Teachers have suitable plans in place, but learning activities do not challenge and extend pupils well enough.

All teachers provide feedback to pupils that helps them know how well they are doing, but most have only recently started to identify what pupils need to do to improve. Many pupils set their own short-term targets and a few evaluate their progress. As these practices are new, staff do not yet apply them consistently and it is too early to identify improvements in standards. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievement, setting end-of-year targets and tracking pupil progress are also at a very early stage of development. Reports to parents comply with statutory requirements and provide good information about pupil progress. Parents have appropriate opportunities to respond to these reports.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The overall provision for the development of pupils' health and wellbeing is appropriate. There are suitable policies and procedures for ensuring good behaviour and for dealing with issues such as bullying. Staff promote the development of pupils' spiritual, social and moral development effectively through collective worship and personal and social education. This provision has a positive influence on pupils' wellbeing.

The school has good partnerships with services such as the speech and language therapists and the education psychologist. The school liaison police officer visits each term to talk to children about a variety of issues that affect their learning and wellbeing, including internet safety. These partnerships also have a positive influence on standards and wellbeing at the school.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safe guarding.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is adequate. The school has a limited range of appropriate assessment procedures in place. However, the information from these assessments is not used well enough to identify how staff can best help pupils who struggle with literacy and numeracy. These pupils do not always receive appropriate support at an early enough stage. There are appropriate

individual education plans in place for a few pupils with specific learning needs and these plans identify relevant targets. Teachers encourage parents to be fully involved, but pupils' involvement is at an early stage of development.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community and appropriate policies are in place to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The school ensures that pupils with disabilities and medical needs have appropriate support in place to promote independence.

The school provides a wide range of good quality learning resources which meet the pupils' needs. Displays help to create a stimulating learning environment which promotes and enriches pupils' learning. Although there is considerable building work being carried out at present, staff have adapted the indoor space effectively to provide appropriately for the Foundation Phase. The buildings and grounds are of a good standard and are well maintained.

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

The relatively new headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision and a set of aims that are relevant to the school. These focus appropriately on meeting the needs of pupils and ensuring high standards. The headteacher has worked hard to communicate these aims effectively and secure the support of all stakeholders. Staff roles are clearly defined. However, the headteacher's heavy day-to-day workload means that he cannot always fulfil his strategic responsibilities.

Leaders evaluate the performance of all staff and set appropriate targets for development that are closely linked to school improvement and national priorities. However, the headteacher does not always address underperformance in teaching rigorously enough to ensure effective and rapid improvement of teaching skills.

Governors carry out their roles effectively and conscientiously. They are well informed about the school's performance. This enables them to provide the headteacher with appropriate support, yet allows them to challenge the school effectively in relation to standards and quality.

The school pays good attention to national and local priorities. It makes appropriate use of its school effectiveness grant to improve aspects of literacy and numeracy and this is beginning to improve standards. Staff have made generally good progress with the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive. They draw effectively on a wide range of sources, including data, observations of teaching and learning and

discussions with staff. The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school.

The headteacher gathers the views of staff, pupils, parents and the local authority and he uses the governors' expertise well to inform the self-evaluation report.

The school focuses appropriately on specific priorities to ensure improvement in key areas. For example, the headteacher has set challenging targets for the coming year to raise level 3 and level 5 attainment in mathematics. The headteacher analyses data and monitors targets and progress carefully. He reports to governors and parents regularly to ensure the full engagement of stakeholders. There are clear links between the self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan. The school has made generally good progress in relation the recommendations from the last inspection.

There are appropriate opportunities for staff to share practice with one another and to learn from practice in other schools. For example, the school's involvement in a professional learning network which focuses on problem-solving in mathematics is effective in improving planning and teaching in elements of the mathematics curriculum.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well in partnership with other providers, including parents, the local community, other schools and the local authority's learning support services. These links enrich the school's provision well and help to improve pupil outcomes. The headteacher actively seeks the views of parents and responds swiftly to suggestions which he feels will benefit pupils. Most parents feel that arrangements made for pupils new to the school are effective and help pupils to settle quickly.

The school has been involved in several successful projects with other small schools in the area, such as the joint funding of an artist in residence and an annual mathematics problem solving day. These experiences have had a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and helped ease their transition to secondary school.

The school collaborates well with its partner schools and pools resources for events such as educational visits effectively. This allows all pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 the opportunity to participate in residential trips which would not be possible otherwise.

Resource management: Good

The headteacher deploys staff and resources effectively. Teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge overall. An appropriate performance management system is in place and all teachers share a common target related to whole school development, as well as targets related to personal objectives.

The headteacher and the finance committee of the governing body keep school expenditure under regular review. The school's spending decisions relate well to the priorities set out in the school improvement plan and pupils' learning needs.

The school makes good use of additional funds raised by the parent teacher association to enhance information and communication technology facilities.

Overall, pupil outcomes are good and the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The number of pupils in each year group at Ysgol Y Foel is small and varies considerably from year to year so data needs to be treated cautiously.

Many pupils enter the school with well above average skills in literacy and numeracy and most have good social skills. By the age of seven, at the end of key stage 1, many pupils have made good progress. Most attain the expected level 2, in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Results at the higher level 3 fluctuate considerably from year to year, moving between the bottom 25% and the top 25% of results for schools with similar levels of free school meals. Although this is mainly due to the small numbers of children in each year group, in general, not enough pupils achieve level 3 in the core subjects, taking into account their good starting points. In this respect, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in 2011 and 2009 do not compare favourably with those of other schools in the family.

By the age of 11, at the end of key stage 2, most pupils reach the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science. Outcomes at this level compare well in relation to with national, local and family benchmarks. Attainment at the higher level 5 in English and science are generally in line with the family average. However, this is not the case in mathematics, where performance at level 5 has gradually decreased over the past three years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Eleven parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Most expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school and this is in line with national comparisons. All parents say that their children like school and feel safe there. They feel that pupils are helped to settle when they join the school. All think that behaviour is good and they feel confident that staff treat their children fairly and with respect. All agree that the school encourages their children to eat healthily and take regular exercise. All parents who responded think that the school is well run and they understand what to do if they wish to make a complaint. Many parents think that their children are making appropriate progress. However, a significant minority do not feel that they know enough about how well their children are doing and do not feel that homework always builds well on what their children are doing at school. Many parents think teaching is good and know that teachers expect pupils to do their best. Most believe that teachers help their children to become more mature and take on responsibility, although a few are unsure about how well prepared their children will be for the move to the secondary school. A minority of parents do not think that their children receive enough additional support for their additional learning needs.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Forty-three pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire and most were very positive. All agree that the school helps them to be healthy and provides them with plenty of opportunities to be physically active. All feel that they are doing well and think that teachers and support staff help them to learn and make progress. Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school and most know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset or are finding their work difficult. Most think that bullying is dealt with effectively. Nearly all think that there are enough resources to enable them to learn effectively and they believe that homework helps them to improve on their work in school. A minority are concerned that behaviour in lessons is not always good enough and that this sometimes prevents them from getting their work done as well as they could, although there are fewer concerns about behaviour during lunch and break times.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Morgan	Reporting Inspector
Penny Lewis	Team Inspector
Sarah Hurst	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Paul Harries	Peer Inspector
Spencer Williams	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

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' (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