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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on:

**Nant y Cwm School
Llanycefn
Nr Clynderwen
Pembrokeshire
SA66 7QJ**

Date of inspection: May 2013

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 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School is a co-educational independent day school for boys and girls from three to 14 years of age. The school is in the rural village of Llanycefn in Pembrokeshire. It was founded 33 years ago and is a charitable trust, managed by a board of trustees. The school is a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. It bases its educational philosophy on the founding principles of the philosopher and scientist Rudolph Steiner. These principles take account of the physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual development of the whole child.

The school is organised into two sections. The kindergarten caters for pupils from nursery age to six-year-olds and the main school for pupils from seven to 14 years of age. There are currently 65 pupils on roll. These include 28 pupils in the kindergarten and 37 pupils in the main school. There is little difference in the total number of boys and girls although the balance varies in class groups across the school.

Most pupils travel from a wide area that includes Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. About 5% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language at home. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs although almost 10% of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs. Lessons are taught in English and the school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh.

The school has a mixed-ability intake. Prior to entry, prospective pupils join the school for a trial day or part day and they attend an interview with their parents to ensure that they are familiar with the school's aim and ethos. The school offers admissions on the basis of its ability to meet the child's needs. Most pupils in the kindergarten transfer to the main school.

The school describes its ethos and purpose as 'to educate the whole child: head, heart and hand, through a stimulating and inspiring Steiner curriculum that meets the needs of each child as a unique individual. We value our place in the world, our community and friends. We work co-operatively to support young people to find a sense of purpose and direction to their lives.'

The last inspection of the school was in April 2008.

Summary

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

Current performance

The good features of the school's work include:

- pupils' good behaviour and high level of respect, care and concern for each other and staff, which contribute to a positive learning atmosphere;
- the good progress that pupils make from an early age in developing their oral communication and fine and gross motor skills;
- particularly strong partnerships with parents that impact positively on pupils' standards and wellbeing; and
- the school's strong sense of community and the highly-inclusive family ethos that underpins all aspects of school life and contributes significantly to pupils' wellbeing and learning.

However, current performance is judged as adequate overall because:

- more able pupils do not make enough progress in their learning;
- in the main school, younger pupils' progress in reading varies too much and their ability to write for a range of purposes is limited;
- in about half of lessons, there are shortcomings in the quality of teaching; and
- the quality of lesson planning and short-term curriculum planning is too varied and often lacks details of the expected outcomes for the full range of pupils.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are judged as adequate because:

- the staff, trustees, and parents and carers show great commitment to the school and its future development;
- the school systematically manages the performance of staff to support them well to improve their practice;
- mentoring arrangements for staff to reflect on, and improve their own practice, have helped the school to develop a strong learning community;
- the school's management structures and arrangements do not provide clear lines of accountability and there are limited opportunities for staff to direct and oversee important areas of the school's work;
- self-evaluation procedures are not systematic enough and do not draw upon a wide enough range of first-hand evidence to identify accurately the school's strengths and areas for development; and
- development plans do not identify clearly enough actions to improve outcomes for pupils.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have a satisfactory first aid policy that it implements effectively by ensuring that at all times there is at least one qualified first-aider, who should have attended a training course within the last three years, on every site occupied by the school and accidents and other medical emergencies are recorded appropriately, with parents informed when necessary and a record of occasions when they have been [3 (6)].

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Take steps to comply fully with the regulations for registration
- R2 Improve the quality of curriculum and lesson planning to identify expected outcomes for the full range of pupils in order to raise standards
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching to match best practice in the school and increase the level of challenge to help all pupils to achieve in line with their abilities
- R4 Improve leadership and management arrangements to provide clear direction and accountability for all aspects of the school's work
- R5 Develop more robust and rigorous arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning

What happens next?

Since the school does not meet one of the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the proprietors to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan must set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standard, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Estyn advises the proprietors to amend the current development plan to show what action the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

In lessons and over time, many pupils make steady progress in their learning. As they move through the school, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding, and develop their curriculum-related skills well. Many pupils' standards are broadly in line with their ability and context. However, more able pupils do not make enough progress. This is largely because learning activities do not challenge them enough to extend their capabilities.

Across the school, there are no significant differences in performance between boys and girls. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress relative to their abilities.

Throughout the school most pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. They listen attentively and respond well to each other and the teacher. Most pupils speak clearly and with confidence in general class discussions and ask suitable age-appropriate questions to clarify their understanding and to deepen their knowledge. Many younger pupils are articulate and have a mature vocabulary and syntax for their age. They ask thoughtful and sometimes quite searching questions, when seeking to understand new concepts and content more fully. Many older pupils offer their ideas and opinions readily. They use a rich, extended vocabulary to express their ideas in a mature way in different curriculum contexts.

Younger pupils in the main school generally make steady progress in developing their writing skills. Their handwriting is often mature and carefully formed although the quantity and breadth of their written work is too limited. For example, they do not write at length in a range of genres and across all areas of learning. Older pupils generally write well in a range of styles and for different purposes across the curriculum. They make effective use of their practice books to draft and re-draft work. However, the hand writing and presentation of a few pupils' final work is too untidy and contains too many basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The development of pupils' reading skills in lessons usually starts when they are about eight years old. Based on their starting points, pupils' early progress in reading is too varied. For example, the majority of pupils use context clues well but many pupils do not develop good sight vocabulary or strategies for decoding unfamiliar words. However, by the time pupils leave school at 14 years of age, their reading ability is generally in line with their age. For example, many older pupils use a range of texts and sources to gain a full understanding of a topic, make inferences and present their conclusions fluently.

Wellbeing: Good

Standards of pupils' wellbeing are a strength of the school. Pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of healthy living and eating. They enjoy learning

through movement and participating in a range of physical activities. As a result, they make rapid progress in developing their fine and gross motor skills from a very early age.

Nearly all pupils are well motivated and have positive attitudes towards learning. Behaviour is good in lessons and pupils show a high level of respect, care and concern for each other and the adults in the school. Pupils develop strong social skills by considering carefully the feelings of one another and the impact of their actions on others. They understand how to work well together and develop the ability to resolve conflict effectively, appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to a supportive, close-knit community. Pupils in different age groups mix very well together, with older pupils taking responsibility for organising an effective buddy system, which is valued by the pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe and supported well in the school environment.

There has been an improvement in the rate of attendance over the last three years. Most pupils attend regularly, including those who have joined the school having previously found it difficult to remain in education. Attendance is now broadly in line with national averages.

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

The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The curriculum is based on the areas of learning outlined in the Steiner curriculum framework. It provides pupils with a broad range of learning experiences, including mathematical and linguistic areas, science, humanities, French and movement education. Valuable learning experiences in areas such as the arts, painting, craftwork and gardening help pupils develop their creative, technological and physical skills. Curriculum planning is largely satisfactory although short-term planning varies too much and often lacks details of how learning experiences support pupils of differing abilities to make progress.

Across the school, a useful range of educational visits form part of the curriculum programme. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities.

The school's arrangements to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills follow the Steiner curriculum framework. The main and 'extra main' lessons focus specifically on these basic skills within a themed context. Together with a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal and social skills, these basic skills generally provide pupils with an appropriate foundation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. However, younger pupils in the main school do not have enough opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills in the different areas of learning. As a result, their progress in reading and writing is too variable. The

school does not make provision for developing pupils' information and communication technology skills.

The school's curriculum and wider activities help pupils to gain valuable experiences and to learn about sustainability and the role that they and others play in society and the world. Pupils are taught to recognise the importance of taking individual responsibility and action to make the world a better place through activities such as gardening, composting and using natural and recycled materials.

The school is active in encouraging pupils to gain a sound understanding of the culture and history of Wales. This includes celebrating St David's day and Dydd Santes Dwynwen, as well as visiting local places of historical and geographical interest.

Teaching: Adequate

Staff have constructive and supportive professional relationships with their pupils that helps to create a calm, purposeful working atmosphere, which generally fosters learning well. They have a clear understanding of their pupils' strengths and areas for development. This enables staff to respond to the individual pupils' learning needs sensitively and helps them to achieve satisfactory standards in the context of the school's curriculum.

Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound. They provide good language role models and offer a wide range of interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. In many lessons, teachers plan activities that stimulate pupils' imagination successfully and help them to develop good creative and physical skills. This enables pupils in these lessons to focus well and remain on task for a considerable length of time in relation to their age and stage of development. Many teachers use the available resources effectively, and often creatively, to enhance and consolidate pupils' learning. For example, they use dice and bean bags imaginatively to encourage younger pupils to practise the four rules of number.

However, in about half of lessons, although pupils make satisfactory progress, they could achieve more. This is most commonly because teachers' expectations are not high enough, especially of more able pupils, and learning activities do not always match the needs of pupils of differing abilities. Lesson plans often lack details of expected outcomes. As a result, the pace of the lesson is often determined by the amount of work the pupils cover rather than being planned by the teacher. This also makes it difficult for the teacher to monitor the progress of the full range of pupils towards the expected outcomes.

Many teachers provide pupils with detailed oral feedback as they carry out tasks and this helps pupils to make immediate improvements to their work. However, marking in pupils' books is often cursory and teachers do not correct spelling, punctuation and grammar consistently enough. Teachers do not routinely challenge untidy and poorly presented work and, as a result, pupils do not always achieve high-quality standards in this area of their work.

Reports to parents and carers are detailed and provide a clear insight into pupils' progress and their holistic development.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Learning experiences help pupils to reflect maturely on their own and other people's lives, beliefs and the environment.

The school fosters the values of fairness, honesty and respect in its pupils and these are promoted effectively in the day-to-day activities of the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and reinforce this in their positive interaction with pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Staff know their pupils very well and this contributes effectively to the pupils' personal development.

The school helps pupils with additional learning needs to integrate well into school life and make good progress in their learning. For example, over time, pupils joining the school that are at risk of not remaining in education make significant improvements in their attitudes, behaviour, confidence and achievements. Staff conduct regular reviews of the progress of pupils with additional learning needs and keep parents well-informed of their child's progress. However, the school does not work closely enough with specialist services and other external agencies to support pupils with specific disabilities and medical needs.

The school has appropriate policies and procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and all staff have received training in child protection. However, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not fully meet requirements and give some cause for concern. This is because at all times there is not at least one qualified first-aider, who has attended a training course within the last three years, on every site occupied by the school and accidents are not always recorded in the accident book and, where appropriate, parents informed.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a highly-inclusive, caring community where pupils and staff have a powerful sense of mutual respect. The school's effective partnership with parents makes a valuable contribution to its strong family ethos. This ethos is central in helping to ensure that all pupils receive equal access to all areas of the school's provision. From the outset, the school community encourages pupils to value and celebrate one another's differences. As a result, pupils develop tolerant attitudes and a mature understanding of diversity that ensures that pupils and staff are free from harassment.

Learning resources are fairly limited although those that are available are relevant to the needs of the pupils and staff use them creatively. Teachers enhance the curriculum effectively for pupils by using local resources, such as farms and sports facilities. The kindergarten building and main school classrooms are bright, pleasant places in which to learn. The varied outdoor environment, including a playing field, gardens and wooded area supports teaching and learning very well. This provides a

wide range of opportunities, particularly for younger pupils, to develop their outdoor learning effectively across all areas of the curriculum.

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

The staff, trustees, and parents and carers show great commitment to the school. They work together effectively to promote a common vision, values and purpose for the school, and communicate these aspects well to pupils. As a result, the school is a cohesive community with shared expectations and values.

The school's collegiate of teachers develop the spiritual life of the school well and the teaching team exercises responsibility for the school's day-to-day educational activities and management appropriately. However, this structure does not provide staff with enough opportunities to take lead roles. This includes important areas of the school's work such as improvement planning or ensuring that policies and procedures are consistently implemented.

The school's trustees and parent support groups take a very active part in promoting and supporting the school. Each trustee has a lead responsibility for an important area of the school's work such as curriculum and pedagogy, and the five parent support groups oversee finance, administration, publicity, fundraising and premises. The trustees work closely and communicate well with the five parent support groups to help plan to meet the school's future needs. They also work well with the school management team, consisting of representatives from the parent support groups and teaching team, to oversee the functional management of the school's work.

The different groups in the school's shared management model work well together. However, lines of accountability are too blurred. As a result, the groups do not have enough impact on holding the school to account for the standards and quality it achieves.

The school systematically manages the performance of staff to support them to improve their practice through its whole-school mentoring scheme. This creates a responsive learning culture, which is supported well by the Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship and also helps to address any underperformance appropriately.

The school complies with almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. A very few health and safety issues were reported to the school.

Improving quality: Adequate

Staff and trustees are developing a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Staff regularly review their own individual practice and the impact this has on pupils' performance and outcomes. Self-reflection is an important element of the day-to-day work of teachers. However, self-evaluation does not draw on a wide enough range of first-hand evidence. Arrangements for reviewing all aspects of school life are not systematic enough. For example, although trustees

are aware of the self-evaluation report submitted for the inspection their input to it has been limited.

The school has started to conduct pupil surveys and take account of these in planning for future improvements. Although a few actions have been taken in response to pupils' suggestions, it is too early to assess the impact of this approach.

Across the school's management structures, there are several plans relating to many areas of the school's work. Most of these plans identify clear actions to undertake, timescales, responsibilities and resources. However, success criteria do not always provide a clear indication of how actions will improve outcomes for pupils.

The school has developed strong internal collegiate and teaching teams. These teams meet weekly and involve all staff. An effective peer mentoring system enables colleagues to support one another well to reflect upon and improve their own practice. This is a strength of the school. The Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship provides appropriate additional guidance on developing these internal networks of professional practice.

The school has made satisfactory progress towards meeting the recommendations from the previous inspection report. However, improvements in a few areas have not been sustained over time largely because of changes in the school management and teaching teams. This has limited the progress that the school has made in strengthening its improvement planning arrangements.

Partnership working: Good

The school has extremely strong relationships with parents, many of whom work very hard to support the work of the school. In addition to extensive parental involvement in the five parent support groups of the school, monthly workdays encourage all parents to contribute their time and expertise to maintain and improve the school buildings, grounds and resources. These opportunities help to create a close-knit school community of parents, staff and pupils. The school communicates regularly and effectively with parents through informative newsletters, school noticeboards and social media. These positive links have a significant impact on pupil outcomes, as they enable parents to develop a fuller understanding of the aims and philosophy of the school and support their child's education.

Effective links exist with the Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship, other Steiner schools and Steiner teacher-training providers. These enable staff to discuss and promote good practice and to benefit from training and development in specific areas. A school representative attends termly meetings at the Fellowship, ensuring that staff and other stakeholders receive recent and relevant information on teaching and curriculum matters. Termly visits from the school's Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship mentor help the school to quality assure its teaching and learning.

The school has widened its partnerships with other local schools, particularly in relation to pupils' education when they leave the school at 14 years of age. These arrangements ease the transition of pupils from Nant-y-Cwm school to the next stage in their education and help to ensure their continued wellbeing and achievement.

Resource management: Adequate

The school manages and deploys its staff and financial resources appropriately. There are enough suitably qualified staff to deliver the school's curriculum effectively. The school's collegiate of teachers identify staff professional development needs appropriately through its mentoring arrangements. This provides staff with useful opportunities to access relevant class or curriculum training offered by the Steiner Waldorf Schools' Fellowship.

The school's finance administrator, finance support group and trustees work together well to manage resources, human and capital, and the school's budget carefully. They monitor expenditure closely in order to plan for improved resources and accommodation.

The school makes effective use of its resources and provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

There is no commentary on the learner questionnaires due to the small number of responses received.

Responses to discussions with learners

During the inspection discussions took place with two groups of pupils from the main school.

Overall, the pupils gave a positive response to nearly all questions asked.

All pupils agree that they feel safe in school. They believe that incidents of bullying or aggression are very rare and that, if any such incidents occur, they are usually resolved very effectively.

All pupils feel that they are doing well and agree that staff help them to learn and make good progress. They believe that staff respect them and their backgrounds and they know who to ask for help when they need it.

All pupils agree that other pupils behave well, the school encourages them to be healthy and they have adequate resources for their work.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 30 responses to the parent questionnaire, which represents almost 45% of the total number of parents.

Almost all of the parents that responded gave a positive or very positive response to many questions.

All parents consider that the school helps their children to become more mature and responsible. They state that their children were helped to settle in well when they started at the school and that staff expect them to work hard and do their best.

All parents are satisfied with the school. They believe that their children like school, that they feel safe in school and that pupils behave well. Almost all parents consider that their children make good progress.

All parents feel that the school is well run and that teaching is good. They say that homework reinforces learning and staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Almost all parents feel that they are well informed about their child's progress.

Nearly all parents consider that their children are well prepared for moving on to the next school or college or work. They believe that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular need.

All parents feel comfortable about approaching the school to discuss matters about their child's education and wellbeing and they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

All parents agree that their children are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise. They consider that there is a good range of activities, including trips or visits.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Denise Whiting-Wade	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Morgan	Team Inspector
Rhian Ferriman	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5

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, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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

Core subject indicator (CSI)	This relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
Level 1	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.
Level 1 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G.
Level 2	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.
Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics
Level 2 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.
Level 3	This represents the equivalent of an A level at grade A*-E.
Level 3 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.
Average wider points score	This includes all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age, for example at aged 16 or at aged 18.
Capped wider points score	This includes the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at aged 16.
Proprietor	The term 'proprietor', as defined in the Education Act 1996, means the person or people responsible for managing an independent school and can include a sole proprietor, governing bodies, trustees or directors. The ways that independent schools are governed and owned varies a great deal. A proprietor or trust may own a school or the school may have a governing body that appoints a headteacher. Some schools have a combination of these.