



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

**Portfield Special School
Off Portfield
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA61 1BS**

Date of inspection: March 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 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Portfield School is situated in the town of Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire and provides education for pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) aged between three and 19 years.

The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs, including: severe learning difficulty (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as various genetic disorders and sensory difficulties.

A new upper school building was opened in September 2009, with a Welsh medium satellite centre 'Y Porth' opening in October 2010 in Ysgol Preseli and a further satellite opening in 2012 in Tasker Milward Comprehensive School.

Since September 2009, pupils have been educated in two buildings – a primary/middle school in the lower school building and a secondary school/sixth form department in the new secondary school building adjacent to Tasker Milward campus.

In September 2012, the number on roll was 140.

The school population has increased considerably since the last inspection, due mainly to the increased number of pupils requesting admission at key stage 3 secondary transfer, pupils moving to Pembrokeshire from other parts of the UK and a growing number of pupils with ASD requesting admission.

Pupils come from a large catchment area, within the rural county of Pembrokeshire. There are three 'out of county' pupils in the school, 32% of all pupils are in receipt of free school meals and nearly all pupils have English as their home language. A few pupils are 'looked after' by the local authority.

There is no national benchmark data at present for special schools to enable them to compare attainment in relation to National Curriculum assessments or external examinations with that of pupils with similar needs in similar schools.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is excellent because:

- nearly all pupils make consistent and very good progress from their starting point;
- most pupils apply a range of skills effectively within practical situations;
- nearly all pupils are enthusiastic, motivated and eager to learn;
- the high quality and range of teaching and other activities offer very good learning opportunities to the pupils;
- the care and support for pupils and arrangements for pupils' wellbeing are good;
- exceptionally rigorous assessment procedures are detailed and thorough and clearly linked to effective teaching strategies that address the needs of all pupils;
- excellent strategic links with a range of partners ensure a wide range of experiences and learning activities that contribute greatly towards achieving high standards in pupil outcomes; and
- the school works effectively as a team to ensure high standards of pupil outcomes.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- the headteacher and governors have a clear strategic vision that is shared by all staff, parents and pupils;
- the headteacher has established a very supportive senior management team that continuously strives to maintain high standards throughout the school;
- the governing body understands its role well and is prepared to challenge and support the school effectively;
- there is a thorough process for self-evaluation that is continually updated and clearly identifies areas of strengths as well as those for improvement; and
- the school uses data on pupil outcomes consistently well to inform improvement planning and resource allocation.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that the accommodation is appropriate to meet the increasing number of pupils with complex needs
- R2 Enhance and extend pupils' learning opportunities through a wider range of activities relating to global citizenship

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

Nearly all pupils make very good progress in relation to their needs, abilities and meeting their specific individual targets. All pupils, including those entitled to free school meals and those who are looked after by a local authority, make very good progress compared with their previous attainments. Girls achieve as well as boys.

Most pupils with more complex and severe learning difficulties make specific measurable progress within their levels of ability. They show good application of new skills in a range of situations. They show increasing confidence such as when using information and communication technology (ICT) to communicate or to change the appearance of a computer screen.

Nearly all pupils make very good progress in lessons, achieving targets and improving learning. Many of the more able pupils understand what they need to do to improve. They use this information to decide how well they have done in their lessons. They have positive attitudes and show enthusiasm towards their learning. Most recall previous learning well, especially when given appropriate cues and prompts. They apply new knowledge well to a range of activities.

Most pupils make very good progress in their communication skills. Many understand the basic skills of signing as a means of communicating and use these appropriately. Nearly all listen attentively and those pupils with more complex and severe learning difficulties maintain eye contact with speakers and respond appropriately when listening to them. Those pupils with severe communication disorders make very effective use of picture exchange cards to relate to others. The development of pupils' communication skills is a notable strength.

Most pupils show a significant improvement in their achievements over time. Those pupils who attend classes at a mainstream school make good progress. Those pupils who attend a Welsh medium centre show well developed bilingual skills and are able to change confidently from Welsh to English when listening and communicating.

Pupils make good progress in applying reading skills to research specific basic information such as investigating the way people lived during World War 2. Many older pupils use their literacy skills well in practical activities such as reading health and safety notices or recognising hazardous areas in the workplace.

Pupils make effective use of ICT to enhance their learning skills, present their work and improve their communication skills. Pupils with more complex needs show an increasing confidence in using specific information technology resources, especially through using various communication aids to express themselves or to initiate cause and effect actions.

Most pupils apply their developing number skills in a range of activities such as measuring quantities of ingredients required when preparing food, and when shopping in the community. They apply these skills consistently, equipping themselves very well for their next stage of their education, the world of work or further training. Pupils show well developed thinking skills that contribute effectively towards independent learning in a range of activities.

Most pupils respond appropriately to Welsh greetings and requests. Those pupils who communicate verbally achieve well in responding to and using short phrases in the Welsh language. Most pupils show a good basic understanding of aspects of Welsh culture such as St. David's Day and the cultural history of Pembrokeshire.

Older pupils achieve very well in appropriate external examinations and courses and achieve recognised qualifications. They all move on to courses of an appropriate level within colleges of further education, enter employment or attend day service provision on leaving school. These achievements are an outstanding feature of pupil outcomes.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have a good awareness of how to follow a healthy lifestyle and take part enthusiastically in a range of sporting and fitness related activities.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and understand the need for safety belts when travelling on the school bus. Most have a good knowledge of the benefits of healthy eating and can distinguish between different types of food.

Pupils' behaviour is very good. Nearly all pupils relate well to others. Attendance has improved continuously over the last three years and is currently just above the national average for special schools.

Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and where possible are involved in planning and assessing elements of their own learning.

Most pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular experiences such as working with a local church to develop a garden area.

All key stage 4 and 5 pupils show a good understanding of the world of work through participation in a range of supported work experience within school or in the local community. Most pupils show well-developed social and life skills such as working together to make food for lunch. Older pupils show a good awareness of the skills needed for life and work outside school.

Members of the school council play an active part in decision-making, both within the school and in the wider community. This has included influencing the local community to install a safer crossing for pupils with mobility problems and persuading a local supermarket to include appropriate pictorial symbols as a means of communication within their store. The effective involvement of the school council in planning changes in the environment within school and in the local community is a strong feature.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Excellent

Learning experiences: Excellent

The school plans very effectively to meet the varying complex educational, health and physical needs of pupils and provides a broad and balanced curriculum. The well-planned programme of personal and social education is of high priority and contributes greatly towards improving pupils' social and life skills. This includes a successful community based programme such as visits to local places of worship and work experience placements.

Older pupils of all abilities have access to an extensive range of externally accredited academic and vocational courses. The excellent partnership working between the school and local mainstream schools and colleges greatly increases opportunities for pupils to select courses that best match their skills and help them overcome barriers to learning.

The majority of pupils extend their learning experiences by inclusion in mainstream schools. Pupils with special interests and skills, for example in art or outdoor pursuits, are encouraged to extend their learning in the most appropriate specialist setting. A number of mainstream pupils also receive good specialised support from the school. This is an outstanding development.

The school provides very effective support for pupils as they move on to college or future employment. Older pupils follow well-planned work experience in local settings such as a hairdressing salon, a garage and a post office. These contribute greatly towards raising pupils' independence levels and preparing them well for life beyond the school.

The quality and frequency of educational visits and residential courses are very good. These greatly enrich pupils' learning and social experiences. They impact very positively on pupil outcomes, in particular through building confidence and applying skills in activities based in the community.

The school's highly effective links with community groups enable the pupils to learn about the work of others, such as understanding the work of the police and fire service. The strong link with the church enables the school to enhance its celebration of specific Christian festivals throughout the year.

The school plans very effectively for all pupils to develop key skills, including thinking skills and problem solving skills. There are clear opportunities identified in planning to develop wider literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Staff monitor pupil progress regularly to identify pupils who would benefit from additional literacy or numeracy support. This is very good practice.

There are consistently well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop and use Welsh. A wide range of activities successfully enables pupils to learn about and understand Welsh culture and heritage.

The school provides a good range of activities for pupils to develop their understanding of sustainable development. Pupils are beginning to have good opportunities to learn about the global citizenship through links with schools in Nepal and Uganda. However, this work is at an early stage.

Teaching: Excellent

The quality and consistency of teaching is a significant strength of the school. All teaching during the inspection was judged to be good or excellent.

Staff work very effectively together to provide learning activities that motivate and inspire pupils to achieve high standards. Teaching assistants provide exceptionally skilled support. This has a very positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and progress in learning.

Lessons have clear objectives and activities. Lesson plans are securely based on continuous assessment of pupils' prior achievements, on careful observation and recording of responses to learning activities and on pupils' personal care needs.

Teachers provide extensive opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and Welsh. Planning for the development of thinking and independent learning skills is consistently very good and leads to a high standard of achievement.

Teachers use a wide range of approaches and learning resources very well to enable all pupils to develop their knowledge and skills. Teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled in the use of a wide range of communication strategies and ICT to enable pupils to develop good communication and social skills. Behaviour management is very good.

Assessment for learning is a major strength of the school. The school's procedures for the assessment, recording, tracking and evaluation of pupils' achievements are very rigorous. Teachers and teaching assistants keep highly detailed records, often with photographic evidence, of the small steps that pupils make towards achieving their targets. Pupil progress data is used to set clear targets for improvement. These provide valuable evidence of the effectiveness of assessment, teaching and learning on individuals and different groups of pupils and to promote higher standards. Staff provide pupils with regular and specific feedback to enable them to recognise their progress in lessons. As a result, pupils almost always know what they need to do to improve further. The school's assessment strategies are of a high quality and are an excellent feature that very effectively meet the specific needs of all pupils.

The school has developed very good procedures for the moderation of teacher assessment, and has shared this practice with other schools.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school actively promotes healthy living and wellbeing. A wide range of extra-curricular and after school physical activities has a positive impact on pupils' healthy lifestyles.

The school employs a range of therapists and a school nurse who liaise well with classroom staff to review and plan individual support programmes.

Staff work effectively with specialist services to provide a wide range of support and information to pupils and their families. Pupils have ready access to a wide range of specialist provision, such as the support of a school counsellor to enable pupils to discuss and manage their feelings.

The provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There are very effective arrangements for supporting the wide range of pupils' additional and complex learning needs. Regular specific therapy programmes effectively strengthen the care and support available for a significant number of pupils. All staff work effectively with external agencies to ensure high quality support for pupils with additional needs.

Procedures for the annual reviewing of statements of special educational need are good.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an all-inclusive community where all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. There is a very caring ethos where the diversity of pupils' backgrounds is valued and respected.

The accommodation is attractive, secure and well maintained. However, the lower school building has limited capacity to meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils with complex needs requiring their specialist support.

Resources are generally very good and all classrooms are equipped with well-utilised interactive white boards.

The corridor and classroom displays are of an excellent standard and celebrate the successes and achievements of the pupils.

The school has suitable outside play areas that are used well by the pupils.

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

The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team have established a very clear vision which provides a firm and strategic direction for the work of the school.

The impact of strong leadership ensures that all staff are highly motivated and involved in their commitment to improving standards and providing pupils with

exceptional opportunities for learning. The evident teamwork and sense of achievement amongst staff are underpinned by the very skilful management and support provided by the senior leadership team. Together they provide outstanding leadership for the school.

The school has successfully encouraged staff to take a collective responsibility for leadership through its management structure. The senior leadership team have created a very strong inclusive team ethos where all staff feel valued. All staff contribute effectively towards the school improvement process, which is rigorous and effective.

Extensive policies and plans focus extremely well on meeting the complex learning difficulties of the pupils.

Governors play a very active role and are fully involved in the setting of aims for the school and agreeing the policies which support these objectives. They attend relevant courses, are effective in monitoring performance and provision and meet their regulatory requirements.

Staff performance is regularly monitored and evaluated, through a thorough performance management structure for all staff. Training and development programmes arise from formal identification of staff development needs through the performance review processes, and from developments aimed at achieving national or local priorities. Subject leaders work very well across the school to support and challenge colleagues.

The school has developed excellent procedures for tracking and recording the achievements of the pupils. This information is used effectively to enhance further the learning experiences available to all pupils and ensure that high standards of achievement are maintained. This is a notable strength of the school.

Improving quality: Excellent

The processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning are a regular and routine part of the school's working life.

The school's self-evaluation report is a comprehensive document which clearly identifies strengths and areas for development. The report sets out clear priorities and realistic timescales for their delivery.

The self-evaluation process is embedded in strategic planning and takes full account of the views of pupils, staff, governors, parents or carers and other stakeholders.

All staff play their part in implementing the school's strategies, are well informed about good practice, and are fully committed to improvement. For example, the school has very good systems to evaluate the quality of individual education planning and regular moderation of this process enables staff to plan for further improvement in pupil outcomes.

There is a clear link between the self-evaluation report and the school development plan that clearly prioritises areas for development. It includes appropriate timescales and allocates responsibility for the delivery of actions. The plan is very carefully monitored and actions are clearly recorded to indicate progress and areas that still need further attention.

The school has rigorous and robust systems to gather, analyse and evaluate pupil outcome data and tracks progress rigorously in relation to individual pupil attainment. The school uses this information very effectively to set targets, to manage the performance of staff and to inform all stakeholders of the strengths and areas for further development. Consequently, there is a very good and continuous trend of improvement by nearly all pupils in all key stages, targeted through a highly personalised programme of learning. This is a notable strength of the school.

Teachers work together well to share and develop professional expertise that positively impacts upon pupil outcomes. Staff are motivated, confident and valued, and share a culture of accountability. This contributes effectively towards improving teaching strategies and addressing individual pupils' needs. Good practice is shared well with other teachers and adults within and beyond the school.

The school is developing as a very strong learning community and achieving a culture of collaboration with other schools and networks of professional practice. This is a notable strength of the school.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has very effective links with a wide range of partners in the local community. Partnership working is very carefully planned, managed, monitored and evaluated to ensure that it improves pupils' achievements, wellbeing and learning opportunities. Partnerships with parents and carers, with the Health Service and with mainstream schools and colleges have a very positive impact on outcomes for pupils. This is a major strength of the school.

The school regards parents and carers as equal partners in the education of their children, and involves them fully in planning and reviewing learning activities, care routines and behaviour management strategies. This effective joint working ensures that pupils make very good progress in skills and behaviour at school and at home.

The school has established service level agreements with the Health Service in order to secure school-based provision for specialist support such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and school nursing. As a result, the quality and impact of joint working between the school and these services have improved, leading to increased standards in pupils' communication, mobility, behaviour and self-confidence.

The very well-managed partnership working with two mainstream secondary schools and a local college of further education enables a majority of pupils in key stages 3, 4 and 5 to learn with their mainstream peers. These pupils access courses leading to accredited qualifications that prepare them well for transition to college courses. This is sector-leading practice.

Resource management: Excellent

The school makes very good use of resources to enable improvement in learning outcomes for pupils. The senior management team plans very carefully to ensure that all resources, including staffing, equipment and investment in accommodation, are used effectively to raise standards.

The school manages its budget well. Budget allocation decisions are linked very precisely to the priorities in the school improvement plan, which are in turn based on detailed analysis of pupils' standards and progress in all areas of learning. The use and impact of planned expenditure are closely monitored.

Teaching and support staff are very well trained, and deployed effectively across the school. The school invests continuously in good quality learning resources and in improvements to accommodation.

The recent investment in additional specialist health support, resources for literacy and numeracy, inclusion projects and staff training have all helped to raise standards.

The school provides excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Of the 81 pupils who responded to the questionnaire, all state that teachers help them to learn and that they know whom to talk to if they find things difficult. Nearly all state that they know whom to talk to if they are worried, and that the school teaches them to be healthy. Nearly all feel that they exercise regularly at school, that they are doing well and have the right equipment.

Most state that they feel safe in school, and that the school will stop any form of bullying. Most also state that pupils behave well and that the teachers help them to learn and make progress.

Many pupils feel that homework helps them improve their work at school.

Responses to parent questionnaires

All of the 47 questionnaires returned are positive.

All parents state that they are satisfied with the school, and feel that their child is safe and was helped to settle in well when starting at the school. They all feel that their children are making good progress and that they like the school.

All of the parents feel that that teaching is good, that staff expect their child to work hard and do the best they can and that staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect. They all state that that there is a good range of activities including trips or visits offered to the pupils.

They all feel that their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise and understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints. They all feel that the school helps their child to take on responsibility and state that the school is well run.

Most state that homework builds well on what has been learnt at the school. They all feel that pupils receive appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs and that they are kept well informed of their child's progress.

Nearly all feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem and that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Most state that their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school, college or work

Nearly all state that they are kept well informed about their children's progress, that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with any problem, and that children behave well in school.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

William Glyn Griffiths	Reporting Inspector
Michael Ridout	Team Inspector
Pauline Preston	Team Inspector
Sue Willan	Team Inspector
Bernard Harrington	Lay Inspector
Ange Anderson	Peer Inspector
Ladan Harper	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

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 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