



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 Rhostyllen
School Street
Rhostyllen
Wrexham, LL14 4AN**

Date of inspection: April 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

Ysgol Rhostyllen is in the centre of the village of Rhostyllen on the southern outskirts of Wrexham. The majority of pupils come from the village and the surrounding area, which the school describes as being neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Approximately 15% of pupils receive free school meals, which is below the national average.

There are currently 189 pupils in the school aged between three and 11, taught in eight single-age classes, including the nursery. Pupils are admitted part-time to the nursery and full-time to reception in the September following their third and fourth birthdays respectively. The number on roll has remained relatively stable over the last few years.

The school has identified around 20% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is below the national average. None has a statement of special educational needs. Very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background or use Welsh as a first language. No pupils receive extra support in English as an additional language or are looked after by the local authority.

The school was last inspected in May 2007, since when there have been significant changes in staffing. The headteacher was appointed in January 2009. Two newly-qualified supply teachers were on the staff during the inspection.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Rhostyllen in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,243 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Wrexham is £10,422 and the minimum is £2,923. Ysgol Rhostyllen is 43rd out of the 60 primary schools in Wrexham in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's performance is judged as adequate because:

- although pupils' performance at the expected levels overall in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 has been better than in similar schools, attainment has been relatively low at the higher levels, especially in key stage 2;
- although all pupils generally perform well in oracy and reading, many make limited progress in writing in key stage 2;
- pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are not well developed, mainly due to a lack of appropriate provision;
- most pupils make good progress in Welsh in designated Welsh lessons, but very few use the language regularly and confidently at other times; and
- although the quality of most teaching is good or better, there are areas for improvement in a few lessons.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- standards are improving, especially in mathematics, as a result of current school actions;
- senior leaders and governors manage the school effectively and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- the headteacher exercises an effective oversight of the school;
- the governing body provides strong support to the headteacher in embracing change and resolving issues;
- rigorous self-evaluation processes are in place; and
- the school has established a strong partnership with parents.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of pupils' writing in key stage 2, particular their spelling, punctuation and handwriting
- R2 Ensure rigour and consistency in assessment strategies, especially in key stage 2
- R3 Improve the provision for ICT
- R4 Develop the outside learning environment, especially for Foundation Phase pupils

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?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

All pupils generally perform well in oracy and reading, but in key stage 2 many make less progress in writing. Nearly all pupils across the school speak confidently and answer questions appropriately. They listen attentively to their teachers and other pupils.

Most pupils in the Foundation Phase develop good reading skills and have a good understanding of phonics. Nearly all use their knowledge about different sounds to help them to break down and to read unfamiliar words successfully. They also write a wide range of pieces independently for various purposes.

In key stage 2, pupils read with fluency and expression and show good understanding of what they have read. The more able read challenging texts with good understanding. Most pupils are competent writers, but many do not develop sufficient skills in spelling and punctuation or take enough care with their handwriting and presentation.

In both key stages, pupils apply their numeracy skills well, but their ICT skills are not well developed.

Spoken Welsh develops well in the Foundation Phase and by the end of key stage 2 most use a range of sentence patterns and an increasingly new vocabulary. Nearly all listen well and take care with pronunciation. They develop appropriate reading and writing skills. However, although most make good progress in designated Welsh lessons, very few use the language regularly and confidently at other times.

In 2012, at the end of the Foundation Phase, pupils' attainment at the expected level was better than the family average and among the best 25% compared with that of similar schools, except in mathematical development. However, relatively few attained a higher level in any area of learning, especially boys.

In 2012, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment at the expected level in all three core subjects was below the family average, but among the better 50% compared with levels in similar schools. However, pupils performed less well at the higher level, where results in English and science were among the lowest 25% compared with those of similar schools.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make steady progress through the school and achieve their targets. There is no discernible trend of underachievement among any specific groups and current evidence indicates that the more able are now improving in performance, especially in mathematics.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils develop a secure understanding of how to keep healthy. They have a positive attitude to taking exercise and a good knowledge of healthy eating. They feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they have any problems.

The standard of behaviour in classes and around the school is good. Pupils show respect and consideration for each other and for adults.

During lessons, nearly all pupils are well-motivated learners who concentrate well on their tasks. Most make confident contributions during discussions and co-operate well when working in groups.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase contribute to what they learn through questions they suggest at the start of each topic. They are also confident in setting their own learning targets. However, pupils in key stage 2 do not have sufficient input into what and how they learn.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their social and life skills. In the Foundation Phase, they are very independent learners. By the end of key stage 2, they are confident about moving to the high school and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Although attendance has declined a little recently, it remains higher than the average for Wales and over the last five years it has usually placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually in the morning.

All pupils take on a range of responsibilities willingly. Members of the school council participate in decision-making and represent the views of other pupils effectively, but their impact on the life and work of the school is relatively underdeveloped.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Good

The school plans a range of interesting learning experiences that successfully engage pupils and which match the needs and abilities of all individuals.

Teachers' planning covers all curriculum requirements well to enable pupils to build on their previous skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school. Teachers' short-term plans identify regular opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

The school provides a range of appropriate intervention programmes and strategies to raise standards. For example, recent implementation of a more rigorous and detailed approach to the teaching of mathematics throughout the school has improved standards, especially of the more able.

In the Foundation Phase, there is good provision to develop pupils' oral skills and their understanding in Welsh. In key stage 2, arrangements for the delivery of Welsh lessons ensure continuity and progression so that most pupils develop vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to their age and ability.

Provision for the development of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is good. Visits from local artists and musicians, and themes, such as Celtic myths and legends, enrich pupils' understanding of their Welsh heritage and culture.

The school provides a range of after-school clubs and teachers use visitors to school and visits to places of interest to enhance the curriculum successfully. Older key stage 2 pupils, in particular, benefit from an extensive range of sporting activities at the end of each week. This is a particular strength of the school.

Members of the eco committee are involved in recycling and saving energy, but the range of their activities and their understanding of the concepts of sustainable living are limited. Pupils begin to gain an appreciation of global citizenship and the wider world, for example by studying other countries.

Teaching: Adequate

Although the quality of most teaching is good or better, there are areas for improvement in a few lessons.

Excellent features in teaching include a very lively pace and very thorough preparation with a wide range of learning activities of high quality. In addition, regular monitoring of pupils' progress, constant praise and encouragement and the very effective use of targets ensure pupils are continually motivated, well behaved and suitably challenged.

Where the quality of teaching is good, teachers prepare, organise and structure lessons well and use a range of relevant teaching approaches. They give clear instructions and explanations and ask appropriate questions.

In the few lessons where there are shortcomings, teachers do not match planned activities well to pupils' ages and abilities and do not intervene frequently enough to ensure all pupils make maximum progress. They promote independent learning less effectively, particularly in key stage 2.

The majority of teachers use Welsh well, especially in specific Welsh sessions, but a minority do not use the language sufficiently through the lesson.

The school fulfils statutory requirements for assessment, recording and reporting. It uses standardised assessments appropriately and has recently introduced a commercial program to track pupils' progress in the core subjects. The school also has relevant systems for identifying and recording pupils' progress.

The school is developing target setting and assessment for learning strategies, but not all teachers apply these consistently, especially in key stage 2, to ensure pupils know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

All teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and their written comments are positive and supportive. They use a range of procedures based on the school's recently introduced marking scheme, but there is too much variation between classes. In key stage 2 teachers do not challenge pupils rigorously enough to improve the quality of their written work.

Annual reports on pupils are detailed and provide parents with useful information about their children's progress and targets to help them improve in the core subjects.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are positive relationships between staff and pupils across the school. Members of staff know pupils well and use their knowledge to provide care, support and guidance of good quality for each individual.

There are good arrangements in place to support pupils' wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. Pupils learn how to keep safe and there are effective strategies to encourage good behaviour. Learning experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The level of security is good and all necessary health and safety procedures are in place. Although a few pupils express concerns about bullying, the school deals promptly and effectively with any incidents.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. The school identifies their needs at an early stage and provides well-planned support for them through a wide range of programmes. Targets in individual education plans are specific and clearly address each pupil's needs. Effective systems are in place to monitor and assess progress.

The school liaises effectively with specialist agencies to access advice and guidance. Staff ensure that the information received from these services is used to support pupils with specific needs appropriately.

Learning environment: Adequate

The school provides equal access for pupils to all areas of provision. It ensures that parents, staff and pupils are treated with respect and are free from any harassment, negative stereotyping or discrimination. It promotes positive values, such as honesty, tolerance and fairness well.

The school is proactive in celebrating other cultures and enables pupils to develop an understanding of different lifestyles and traditions.

The school buildings are well maintained. Storage space is limited and classrooms are relatively small in size, but they are sufficient for the number of pupils on roll. Attractive displays throughout the school help to support and to enhance pupils' learning.

The grounds are spacious, but the outdoor learning environment, especially for the Foundation Phase, is underdeveloped.

Resources overall are good, but the provision for ICT is very limited with the result that pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in this area and this has a negative impact on the standards they achieve.

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

Leadership: Good

Senior leaders and governors manage the school well and share a clear vision of its strategic direction.

The headteacher exercises an effective oversight of the school and has led a number of initiatives that are helping to raise standards and the quality of provision. Members of the revised senior management team work together well and are beginning to have a major, positive influence on school improvement.

All teachers, except those who are newly qualified, have a co-ordinating role and carry out their responsibilities conscientiously. Staff meet together regularly as a whole school and in key stage teams, when they assess standards and share good practice in order to improve teaching and learning.

Governors ensure the school meets all statutory requirements. They are generally well informed about the school's performance. Many, including the chair and vice-chair, provide appropriate levels of challenge and offer strong support to the headteacher in embracing change and resolving issues.

Governors each have a subject interest and establish effective working relationships with their relevant subject co-ordinators. A few have undertaken learning walks around the school as part of their monitoring role.

The school addresses local and national priorities well. For example, it currently places particular emphasis on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of all pupils. Its work on these priorities is having a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve.

Improving quality: Good

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have developed rigorous self-evaluation processes, which they schedule appropriately during the year.

The school acquires information about its performance from a wide range of evidence, including data analysis, scrutiny of pupils' work, classroom observations, monitoring reports and parental and pupil questionnaires.

The annual school improvement plan identifies a manageable set of targets with clear, measurable success criteria linked closely to pupil outcomes. The plan names the staff responsible for each target and allocates enough funding to ensure that appropriate resources are available. There are close links to the self-evaluation report, which highlights the school's strengths and areas for development accurately.

Curriculum leaders also have targeted action plans which identify areas for development within their areas of responsibility. Although many of these systems are relatively new, there is clear evidence that school improvement planning is having a positive impact in key areas of the school's work.

Recently the school has developed an effective learning community for staff to develop and to share their professional knowledge of good practice in teaching mathematics, but links with other schools in network of professional development are limited.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established a strong partnership with parents, which has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It keeps them well informed through regular newsletters and other information. Parents in turn appreciate the school's open door policy and the ease with which they can approach the school with any concerns. They are very positive about all aspects of school life, including the provision of homework.

Senior managers and subject co-ordinators have benefited from attending regular meetings with other local schools, particularly to ensure the assessment and moderation of pupils' work at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is consistent and accurate.

Staff work closely with the local playgroup to ensure children are appropriately prepared for starting school. Year 6 pupils can choose to transfer to various secondary schools, where suitable transition arrangements are in place.

Close partnerships with the local community, for example through the church, local bowling club and voluntary organisations, such as the Women's Institute and National Trust, have a positive impact on the development of pupils' social and life skills.

The school liaises well with many external support agencies and welcomes students from secondary schools and higher education institutions on training placements. Staff seek support from the local authority positively and reflect well on any advice given.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has a full complement of staff, who have appropriate experience and expertise. Temporary newly-qualified teachers receive good support. All staff have appropriate job descriptions and fully understand their roles and responsibilities.

Support staff work well alongside teachers. They play an important role in the school and are effectively deployed to meet the needs of pupils.

Staff development is well organised through in-house training and external courses that link to priorities identified in the school improvement plan and performance management reviews. Nearly all teachers have attended training for effective learning, which is beginning to have a positive impact on classroom practice. Staff have also benefited particularly from training in the teaching of Welsh.

Performance management procedures, led by the senior management team, meet statutory requirements. All teachers are involved and have relevant targets, one of which is linked to a whole-school priority.

The school meets all requirements of the national workload agreement and teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time is appropriately covered.

The school manages its accommodation, resources and budget well and good controls are in place. The governing body has taken appropriate action to ensure the school's future financial stability.

Due to the identified shortcomings in pupils' achievement and the quality of provision, the school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2012, at the end of the Foundation Phase, pupils' attainment of the expected outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was above the family, local authority and Wales averages and placed the school among the best 25% of similar schools. However, it was below all three comparators in mathematical development and mostly in all three areas of learning at the higher outcome 6, where it placed the school among the lower 50% or lowest 25% of similar schools.

In 2012, at the end of key stage 2, pupil attainment of the expected level 4 in all three core subjects was above the local authority and Wales averages and similar to the family average in English and mathematics, but below the family in science. This placed the school among the better 50% of similar schools in all three subjects, but among the lower 50% overall. At the higher level 5 pupil attainment was consistently below the family, local authority and Wales averages and placed the school among the lower 50% of similar schools in mathematics and the lowest 25% in English and science. There is evidence of recent improvement in performance at level 4, but attainment at level 5 has continued to fluctuate.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make steady progress through the school and achieve their targets. Pupils generally perform well in oracy and reading, but less well in writing. There is no discernible trend of underachievement among any specific groups, although fewer boys attain the higher outcome 6 in the Foundation Phase. Current evidence indicates that the more able are improving in performance, especially in mathematics.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Fourteen parents completed the questionnaire. Their responses were generally higher than national norms.

All parents say that:

- their child was helped to settle in well when starting school;
- staff expect pupils to work hard and to do their best;
- staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- their child is safe in school;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with any suggestions or problems;
- they understand the procedures for dealing with complaints;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next stage of his/her education; and
- there is a good range of activities and trips provided.

Nearly all parents say that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child likes school;
- their child makes good progress;
- pupils behave well in school;
- teaching is good;
- homework builds well on what is learnt in school;
- appropriate additional support is provided, if necessary;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress;
- their child is helped to become more mature and responsible; and
- the school is well run.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Their responses were generally lower than national norms.

All pupils say they:

- learn how to keep healthy; and
- are helped to learn and to make progress.

Nearly all pupils say that they:

- feel safe in school.

Most pupils say that they:

- know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;
- are doing well at school;
- know whom to ask if they find work hard; and
- feel that homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school.

Many pupils say that:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- they have enough books, computers and equipment;
- pupils behave well in class so they can get their work done; and
- nearly all pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

David Ellis	Reporting Inspector
Buddug Bates	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Jane Williams	Peer Inspector
Mair Darlington	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 terms – Primary

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.