



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 Mynydd Isa
Chamber's Lane
Bryn-y-Baal
Nr Mold
Flintshire
CH7 6SJ**

Date of inspection: January 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.

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:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2013: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 25/03/2013

Context

Ysgol Mynydd Isa is near Mold in Flintshire. The school opened in 2011 following the amalgamation of Mynydd Isa Junior and Wat's Dyke Infant schools. The school has a split site as it continues to use the premises of both former schools. This is the school's first inspection in its current form.

Most pupils come from the surrounding locality, which the school describes as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. About 8% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much lower than the Flintshire and all-Wales average.

The school currently has 534 pupils between the ages of three and 11. This figure includes 55 pupils who attend the nursery part time. There are 23 classes, including two specialist language resource classes, which the local authority funds separately. Eighteen pupils from across Flintshire attend these classes, all of whom have statements of special educational needs for specific language and speech disorders. Around 16% of pupils have additional learning needs, which is below the national average. A very few pupils in mainstream classes also have statements. The school excluded a very few pupils in the last 12 months. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. Very few speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher has been in post since the amalgamation of the schools and was previously the head of the former junior school.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Mynydd Isa in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,134 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Flintshire is £13,748 and the minimum is £2,758. Ysgol Mynydd Isa is 44th out of the 73 primary schools in Flintshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- most pupils make the progress expected of them by the time they leave school;
- nearly all pupils make good progress in learning Welsh in both key stages;
- pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very positive;
- attendance is good and compares well with that in other schools in Wales;
- relationships between staff and pupils are good;
- the majority of teaching is good; and
- most pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress in line with their abilities, particularly in literacy.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- all staff share a common vision and have successfully established a positive ethos in this newly-amalgamated school;
- the headteacher is supported well by a committed team of teaching and support staff;
- there is a good range of partnerships that benefit pupils; and
- the governing body fulfils its role as a critical friend diligently.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise the standards achieved across the curriculum by more able pupils
- R2 Narrow the gap between the attainment of boys and girls in literacy
- R3 Improve provision in the key stage 2 learning resource base by extending opportunities for pupils to work independently in writing and problem-solving
- R4 Improve the consistency and effectiveness of individual pupil target setting, marking and the contribution of pupils to assessment
- R5 Refine self-evaluation procedures to focus more robustly on improving standards of teaching and learning

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils start school with skills in literacy and numeracy that are about the same as those of pupils of a similar age. By the time they leave, most make the progress expected of them.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils have very good listening skills. Pupils pay close attention to what their teachers say and, when working in pairs and small groups, listen well to each other. In the Foundation Phase, pupils make good progress in developing and extending their oracy skills, particularly in their confidence to speak. As they progress through the school, most pupils make good progress in oracy. Most speak clearly and confidently, using a wide vocabulary.

The more able pupils in the Foundation Phase read well, and use phonics strategies purposefully. However, the majority of pupils in the Foundation Phase do not use phonics confidently to help them read unfamiliar words, relying instead on pictures to help them understand. Most respond well to stories and can describe many of the characters vividly. In key stage 2, many pupils read fluently and pay good attention to punctuation. They use phonic and other strategies effectively to derive meaning from text. Many pupils are developing well the ability to skim through a passage to gain an overall impression of a piece of text and to scan to locate specific items and respond to evocative descriptions such as metaphors and similes.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils, especially girls, write well in a variety of different forms and for different purposes. They write carefully, forming letters correctly and spacing words neatly. By Year 6, the standards of writing for many pupils are good. They write well in a range of genres and use different styles appropriately. Many apply their writing skills well in many areas of the curriculum. The majority of older pupils write neatly, organising their work into paragraphs. The majority adapt their writing styles according to purpose and intended audience.

Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in line with their abilities, particularly in literacy. All pupils in the two learning support classes make good progress in developing oracy skills, and many speak with increasing confidence. Pupils in the Foundation Phase support class, for example, join in enthusiastically with the retelling of the story of 'The Rainbow Fish'. However, pupils' ability to write independently in the key stage 2 language resource class is limited.

Nearly all pupils make significant progress in learning Welsh in both key stages. Through key stage 2, most pupils communicate simple information with increasing clarity and begin to read independently. The majority write about their ideas in linked sentences and spell familiar words accurately. Nearly all pupils display a positive attitude towards learning Welsh and have a growing awareness of the culture and heritage of Wales.

Generally, most pupils use numeracy skills well across the curriculum. By Year 6, many pupils are able to use skills in information and communication technology (ICT) appropriately for a range of purposes. Overall, pupils' ability to solve problems and to work independently is limited.

In 2012, most pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase achieved the expected outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. This is in line with the performance of other schools in the same family. However, outcomes at the higher than expected outcome 6 were below family averages. When compared to performance levels of schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, performance is in the lower 50% at both the expected and higher outcomes.

In key stage 2, over the last four years, the school's performance in English, mathematics and science has been slightly better than the family average. When compared with similar schools over the same period, the school has been in the lower 50% for all three subjects.

Wellbeing: Good

Foundation Phase pupils undertake routine responsibilities, such as 'Helpwr Heddiw', diligently and are beginning to take responsibility for their own actions. Through the school council, the eco-committee and other activities, key stage 2 pupils play an active part in the school and the community and are confident that their voice is heard.

Attitudes to learning are very positive. Nearly all pupils are well motivated, confident learners who have developed positive learning habits. Almost all pupils behave well and most show a high degree of care and respect towards others. Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school. They show a clear appreciation of the importance of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Very little bullying occurs and staff deal with occasional incidences promptly.

In key stage 2, many pupils become increasingly aware that they should set themselves high standards and respond positively to teachers' comments to improve their work.

All pupils are enthusiastic, courteous and friendly and show care, respect and concern for others. Many pupils take on additional responsibilities, such as helping to run the tuck shop and acting as monitors on the playground and in classes.

The overall attendance rate has remained good at 95% over the past four years and is consistently above local authority and all-Wales averages. When compared to that of similar schools, attendance has been consistently in the top 50%. Nearly all pupils attend school punctually.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

Staff collaborate effectively and plan imaginative activities that meet the needs of most pupils successfully. Stimulating learning experiences enable Foundation Phase pupils to make good progress in all seven areas of learning. Detailed planning in key stage 2 ensures that the curriculum builds systematically and there is continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school. Pupils benefit greatly from opportunities to learn in the outdoor areas and from a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities.

Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop literacy and communication skills well. However, in key stage 2 arrangements for the development of ICT skills as well as thinking and problem-solving are inconsistent. The learning experiences for pupils in the learning resource classes are good. Opportunities for them to integrate into mainstream lessons and activities are particularly well developed.

Provision for Welsh language development is thorough and effective. Specific themes and collective worship provide good opportunities for developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of Wales. The school succeeds in promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship. For example, pupils monitor water usage in school and explore the contrast with conditions in Bangladesh.

Teaching: Adequate

Overall, teachers employ a wide range of approaches and ensure that lessons have a good pace. They have good up-to-date subject knowledge. In a majority of lessons where teaching is good, teachers plan effectively and have clear objectives for the learning experiences. They use skilful questioning to promote pupils' understanding, intervene at appropriate times and provide effective support to all groups of pupils. However, in many lessons, tasks lack challenge for more able pupils, and work does not precisely match the different needs of all pupils.

Classroom assistants give good support to groups of learners. Staff use incidental Welsh effectively in all lessons, promoting pupils' bilingual competence well.

All teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and regularly. However, their comments do not always show clearly what pupils have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Individual target setting and assessment for learning strategies are in place but are not always effective in helping pupils to improve the quality of their work. Teachers use assessment well to identify pupils who would benefit from additional support. This has had a positive impact on the standards achieved by these pupils in basic skills. There are good cluster arrangements in place to ensure the accuracy of teacher assessment at the end of key stage 2. Reports to parents are informative and meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Arrangements to promote pupils' health and wellbeing are good. The school promotes healthy eating and provides many opportunities during and after school for pupils to be active. The school makes good use of support from specialist agencies, such as the police and fire service, in teaching pupils about drugs and substance misuse.

All pupils with additional learning needs, including those in the two language resource classes, have full access to the curriculum. The school has recently introduced good arrangements to ensure the early identification of pupils with additional needs and to provide appropriate additional support. Effective data analysis for mainstream pupils identifies underperformance and pinpoints needs. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading and spelling in withdrawal sessions. However, in many lessons, tasks do not match pupils' learning needs well enough. Improved whole-school arrangements ensure that parents are fully involved in reviewing their child's progress. However, most pupils are not aware of the targets for improvement in their individual education plans. Classroom assistants provide good support for identified pupils both in whole-class and withdrawal sessions.

In the language resource classes there are good arrangements in place to review all pupils' progress on a regular basis against appropriate targets. There is good partnership working with the local authority's speech and language service to meet pupils' needs and to carry out thorough annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community that provides equal access for all pupils to the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities. It promotes positive attitudes to equality and diversity successfully through the curriculum's international aspects and support for a range of charities.

Pupils in the two learning resource classes have very good opportunities to join their peers in a wide range of lessons and activities in the main school.

There is an appropriate supply of resources of good quality for pupils' ages and abilities. Good use is made of the wide-ranging resources in the school. Accommodation is of a high quality and provides a calm atmosphere to promote successful learning. There are extensive playing fields on both sites with facilities for outside classwork. The school uses these facilities well.

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

Leadership: Good

The school has developed a shared vision and set of core values that adults and pupils understand well. Overall, senior leaders provide effective leadership and

encourage all staff and pupils to do their best. The school has managed the amalgamation process well and established a strong staff structure, based on the clear delegation of roles and responsibilities. Leaders communicate effectively and provide sound support and guidance for colleagues, for example in creating a comprehensive planning system to deliver skills across the whole school.

Governors support the school well. They know how the school is performing compared with schools in the same family and with other similar schools. They are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and understand the need to challenge the school to improve further. They have carefully monitored the amalgamation process of the two previous schools.

School leaders have focused well on implementing national and local priorities. For example, the Foundation Phase is now well established and the school has responded to well to the School Effectiveness Framework by initiating arrangements to improve writing.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school has well-established systems for self-evaluation. Senior leaders gather a wide range of first-hand evidence, including findings from data analysis, book scrutiny and lesson observations. The school is refining its system for gathering information from direct lesson observations. This is beginning to have a positive impact, for example on standards of Welsh in the Foundation Phase. However, despite recent changes, self-evaluation and school improvement processes are not yet robust enough to impact significantly on improving teaching and learning across the school.

Procedures to find out how well the school is performing take good account of the views of pupils and parents.

There is a clear link between self-evaluation, school improvement planning and the school's performance management arrangements for all staff. However, this work is not effective enough in identifying the most important areas for improvement accurately. For example, it does not give enough attention to improving standards achieved by boys and by more able pupils. The school identifies its priorities and sets targets for improvement accordingly. The development plan contains a manageable number of suitable targets for improvement and identifies actions to secure desired improvements.

The school is developing as a professional learning community. There is valuable collaboration between staff, for example, to improve writing and teachers' planning. Whole-school initiatives have been successful in amalgamating the two previous schools.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a very positive partnership with parents. They are well informed through regular newsletters and information about many aspects of school life. Parents speak enthusiastically about 'hobbies day', when they and other members of

the community give demonstrations of their hobbies and talents to pupils. They also speak appreciatively about the Welsh classes that the school provided for parents and grandparents. This effective partnership contributes to high attendance rates by pupils and their extremely positive attitudes to school.

Many partnerships impact strongly on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, there is a close link with local veterans from the Second World War, who attend Remembrance Day services held at the school. Recently, Year 6 pupils took part in a moving visit to the battle sites of Normandy, funded through a partnership with a local businessman.

Members of the local community support the school through a popular gardening club, which encourages pupils to eat healthily and enjoy the outdoors.

There are good arrangements to ensure smooth induction to the school from local playgroups and from the Foundation Phase to key stage 2. Joint standardisation and moderation of pupils' work with the local cluster of schools is very good.

Partnerships with local secondary schools are very effective and ensure smooth transition to secondary education.

Resource management: Good

The school makes good use of its accommodation and learning resources. Staff are deployed effectively. Teaching and support staff understand their roles well and have a good range of appropriate skills that contribute positively to the school's ethos.

The performance management system is thorough and meets statutory requirements. Appropriate targets are set for staff development to improve individual performance. There are effective arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers. These have a positive impact on the quality and consistency of teachers' planning, particularly for skills.

Teachers from other schools within the local and neighbouring education authorities have visited the school to observe good practice within the Foundation Phase. The school has established several professional networks that have had a positive impact on its work. For example, standards in both literacy and Welsh are benefitting from working with teachers from other schools.

There are good arrangements for financial management and the school monitors its spending decisions thoroughly. Due to its efficient use of funds and the good outcomes pupils achieve, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Most pupils enter the nursery with skills that are around the average for the local authority. Many make good progress by the time they leave the school.

In the Foundation Phase in 2012, most pupils achieved outcome 5 (the expected level) in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. Outcomes were around the average for other schools in the same family. In all three areas of learning, performance at the higher than expected outcome, was below the family average. At both outcome 5 and at the higher level, girls do better than boys in language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. However, boys do better than girls in mathematical development at the higher level.

When compared with performance levels in similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), performance is in the lower 50% for each of the three areas of learning at the expected and higher outcomes.

In key stage 2, the school's performance in English, mathematics and science at the expected level 4 has been around the family average for the last five years. Girls' performance is better than that of boys in English. At the higher than expected level 5, performance in English, mathematics and science has fluctuated over the last five years but was slightly above the family average in 2012.

When compared with that of similar schools, performance over the last three years at the expected and higher levels has regularly been in the lower 50% for English, mathematics and science. Attainment in all three subjects has fluctuated close to the average for similar schools. The most recent data shows an improvement over the previous year.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Response to parent/carer questionnaires

Eighty-six parents/carers responded to the questionnaire. Nearly all have a high level of satisfaction with the school.

All, or nearly all, say that:

- their child likes school, feels safe, and was helped to settle in when they started;
- their children are making good progress;
- teaching is good and teachers have high expectations;
- pupils behave well in school;
- their children receive appropriate support related to their individual needs;
- staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect;
- the school provides a good range of activities and visits; and
- the school is well run.

Most parents feel that homework helps to build on what pupils do at school, and think that they are well informed about their children's progress.

The views of parents are typical of those in most schools in Wales.

Response to pupil questionnaires

Seventy-two pupils completed the learner questionnaires. The responses are broadly in line with those of pupils in other schools throughout Wales. Overall, pupils in Ysgol Mynydd Isa expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school.

All think that:

- they feel safe in school, that the school deals well with any bullying and that they know whom to talk to if they feel worried or upset.

Nearly all say that:

- the school teaches them how to keep healthy and they have many opportunities to be physically active;
- teachers and support staff help them to make progress;
- other children behave well and allow them to work without distraction; and
- nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Most believe that:

- they are doing well at school and know what to do if they have difficulties; and
- homework helps to improve their work and that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Chris Dolby	Reporting Inspector
Rhona Edwards	Team Inspector
Wil Williams	Team Inspector
Fiona Arnison	Team Inspector
Peter Haworth	Lay Inspector
Richard Lloyd	Peer Inspector
Richard Collett	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.