



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 Tir Morfa
Ffordd Derwen
Rhyl
Denbighshire
Post code**

Date of inspection: December 2011

by

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



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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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Context

Ysgol Tir Morfa is a community special school in Rhyl, maintained by Denbighshire County Council. The school has two buildings based on one site. It is a co-educational school for pupils aged 3-19. Pupils who attend the school have a wide range of special educational needs.

These include moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Nearly all pupils have a statement of SEN, with the exception of two pupils in the Foundation Phase that are undergoing period of assessment. There are currently 133 pupils on roll. Admissions are managed through a moderation panel and are subject to local authority approval.

Since the last inspection it has been necessary to widen provision at the school to reflect the increasing number of pupils with complex needs.

A significant proportion of pupils are drawn from the areas in Rhyl and neighbouring seaside towns, in which there are transient and socially economically disadvantaged populations. Forty-seven per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals.

Nearly all pupils' home language is English; however, there are two pupils whose first language at home is Welsh. Currently, nine pupils are looked after by the authority and two nursery aged pupils are dual registered.

The second phase of the building programme to improve facilities was completed in 2008. The school now awaits the final phased development. Over the past two years there has been wider access across school to the newer facilities so that more pupils benefit from the specialist resources available on site and access facilities according to their individual need.

The new headteacher has been in post since January 2011.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol Tir Morfa is a good school because:

- pupils achieve good standards in their learning and their key learning skills;
- most teaching is good and in a few cases excellent;
- the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils;
- there are very effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing; and
- leaders and managers across the school set high expectations.

Prospects for improvement

the prospects for improvement in Ysgol Tir Morfa are good because:

- the headteacher has established a clear vision, which is shared across the school;
- managers monitor staff performance well;
- all staff contribute effectively to school planning and improvement; and
- effective networks of professional practice and partnerships have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- R1 improve the quality of teaching where it is adequate;
- R2 further develop the role of the governing body so that it provides an appropriate balance between support and challenge to the school;
- R3 improve the consistency of teachers' planning to make better use of assessment to plan work for pupils; and
- R4 make more use of information and communication technology to support pupils' work across the school.

What happens next?

Ysgol Tir Morfa will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In most lessons, and over a period of time, nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve good standards in relation to their abilities and identified needs. They recall important points learnt in previous lessons and show sustained effort, concentrating well on tasks and activities.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse the performance of trends over time due the wide range of pupils' special educational needs.

There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls, those pupils who are 'looked after' by a local authority, or those who receive free school meals.

Most pupils with severe learning difficulties make good progress or maintain their level of attainment and respond very well to a range of activities.

By the end of key stage 4, all pupils attain an appropriate range of accredited qualifications. Most pupils move onwards to further education courses.

Pupils with more complex needs make good use of a range of communication strategies to make choices, express their feelings and join in all activities. They show a good understanding of how to use pictorial symbols to indicate activities planned for the day and what they will do next.

Most more able pupils make good progress in their reading skills and apply these well throughout a range of activities across all key stages. They also make good progress in basic and key skills. They listen carefully to others and are eager to respond orally to activities in their lessons. Their writing skills are developing well and they use them appropriately in various contexts. They read simple texts independently and make good use of their reading skills to read text such as menus, minutes, instructions and receipts. They learn to work well independently. They listen very well to staff and follow instructions carefully. They use and apply their numeracy skills effectively in activities such as shopping in the community and budgeting. However, although they develop their ICT skills in discrete sessions they do not practice them regularly enough across all lessons.

Many pupils interact well with each other in groups, understand how well they are doing, and discuss their progress against specific targets. Nearly all pupils show good thinking skills involving problem-solving and decision-making, such as deciding how to undertake practical activities relating to the forest school or when deciding on what they will buy from a shop.

Nearly all older pupils are well prepared for the work place or for college. They make good progress in work skills and communicate well when taking part in work

experience. Post-16 students work well independently to prepare food for the school cafe and lunch. They handle equipment safely and work well under pressure to meet deadlines. They share ideas with others using appropriate phrases and vocabulary linked to a topic.

Most pupils make good progress in Welsh in relation to their needs and linguistic background. The quality of incidental Welsh spoken by pupils in classrooms and around the school is very good.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils relate very well to staff and feel safe in school. They enjoy their lessons and attend regularly unless they are unwell or attending medical appointments. Most pupils behave well. Where there are incidents of poor behaviour, pupils are helped to think about the triggers and how to deal more positively with their feelings. As a result, they improve their behaviour over time.

Pupils take part in a wide range of therapeutic interventions all carefully designed to maintain their health and emotional wellbeing. These interventions include work on how to deal with loss, the safe use of the internet and mobile phones and help with feeding difficulties. Due to the very good care pupils with complex needs receive, they are fully involved in the life and work of the school.

Very good quality personal and social education gives pupils many opportunities to discuss and reflect on important issues that may impact on their lives. These include pregnancy and childbirth, contraception, substance abuse and sexual behaviour. They receive the information that they need to keep them safe and help them understand what behaviour is appropriate for private and public settings.

Where appropriate, pupils have good opportunities to learn about keeping fit, basic hygiene and how to prepare healthy food for themselves.

The school council gives all pupils an influence on school life and an understanding of the democratic process. Pupils discuss issues such as hygiene and nutrition in the school café and are involved in the recruitment of staff.

Pupils are enthusiastic about taking part in many activities which widen their horizons, raise their awareness of ecology issues and develop their independence. These include working with Forest schools, river cleaning, visits to the theatre and travel training. Older pupils organise and run a café for the school. They order stock, budget, and pay good attention to healthy eating. In all activities pupils pay good attention to health and safety, wear appropriate clothing and use tools safely.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum is broad and balanced and suitably adapted to meet the needs and abilities of the pupils. This includes sensory experiences for those with the most complex needs and a wide variety of off-site activities that enrich the curriculum.

The school has a clear policy regarding the provision for skills across the school. There are clear guidelines regarding the promotion of thinking skills and the school ensures that pupils acquire the necessary literacy, communication, and numeracy skills across all subject areas.

Good quality additional support is provided in the literacy programme and meets the needs of learners. A further programme to support numeracy is developing within the school.

Older pupils have good opportunities to gain qualifications which include number, communication and ICT. All pupils have good access to vocational courses and take part in work experience.

The provision for sustainable development and global citizenship is good. The school encourages pupils to play their part in sustainability and understand that they belong to a wider world community.

Welsh language provision is developing well across the school. Pupils have a range of opportunities to use their Welsh language skills and learn about Welsh culture.

Teaching: Good

There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. Learning support assistants are almost always fully involved in lessons and give very good support with behavioural issues.

Most teaching is good and in a few cases excellent. These teachers set challenging work and plan carefully for the development of skills. They give clear introductions to the lessons outlining what pupils will learn and then sum up how well they have learned at the end of the lesson. They use a range of augmented communication to make sure that everyone is included in the lesson. They plan work that is carefully matched to pupils' needs and abilities. They set high expectations for behaviour and make sure that all pupils remain on task. They start lessons promptly, make good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and use a range of interesting resources to hold pupils' interest.

Where teaching is adequate, teachers do not always manage pupils' behaviour well. They do not use a range of strategies to pre-empt problems even when these pupils have clear behaviour plans. They do not always share lesson objectives with pupils or sum up at the end of the lesson. They give pupils too much information rather than focusing on a few key learning points. They do not always make enough use of assessment to plan work that is well matched to pupils' abilities and needs.

Not all teachers make enough use of ICT to motivate and engage pupils and present their work.

Systems for tracking, analysing and recording information about pupil progress are beginning to be used more effectively as a tool for planning and evaluating pupils' progress. Teachers use a traffic light system effectively across the school to help pupils to evaluate their own learning. There are good examples of pupils being asked to evaluate each other's work. Staff consistently give good oral feedback to

pupils. However, marking of work does not always contain enough detail to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Tir Morfa has very effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. The school works well with a wide range of specialist services to provide pupils with very good quality care and help them cope with sensitive issues. They help pupils to learn to manage their behaviour, understand how they are feeling and express their emotions more appropriately.

The school provides a safe and caring environment and encourages pupils to think about each other's needs and support their peers. Staff use role-play effectively to teach pupils right and wrong and how to stay safe. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered appropriately through collective worship and times for reflection.

The school is developing a valuable specialist resource for communication aids to support pupils who are at the school or in other schools across the region.

Pupils with complex needs benefit from highly effective multi-agency planning. This ensures that the school meets all their developmental needs. These pupils receive high levels of care provided in a sensitive and discrete manner. Planning to meet primary pupils' needs is good; however, it is not as well developed in the secondary school.

As a member of the Healthy Schools Scheme, the school provides a range of healthy eating and living initiatives to support pupils learning. For example, exercise is promoted successfully through sport and team games and these help develop pupils' co-operation and tolerance. The school works closely with health partners to make very good provision for sex and relationships education.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community. Pupils have equal access to all school activities. There is a strong emphasis on respecting others regardless of ability background or culture. The accommodation in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is purpose built and of a high standard. Outdoor areas are attractive with a range of stimulating equipment and activities. Resources are generally good across the school and all areas are well maintained.

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

The recently appointed headteacher has established a clear vision, which is shared across the school. There are comprehensive plans and policies that focus well on meeting the wide range of pupils' needs.

Senior leaders and middle managers work across the school to support and challenge colleagues and communicate high expectations to those they manage. They have created a very good school ethos where staff, pupils and others who work in the school are valued.

The recently re-structured governing body shares the school's vision and is very supportive. It meets regularly and has appropriate sub-committees such as 'teaching and learning', and has had close involvement in reviewing the school development plan. The governing body is beginning to have a clearer view of curriculum issues but does not yet monitor teaching and learning or analyse school performance data carefully enough to robustly challenge leaders and managers on how the school can improve.

Managers monitor and evaluate staff performance very well using an inclusive and secure performance management and appraisal system well. All staff contribute effectively to school planning and improvement. As a result, the school is able to meet the diverse and changing individual needs of the pupils well.

The school meets both local and national priorities effectively. This includes Learning Pathways 14-19, the Foundation Phase and the School Effectiveness Framework.

Improving quality: Good

The process of self-evaluation is firmly embedded across in the school. Work on improving quality is having a positive impact on the outcomes of pupils. The school seeks the views of a range of stakeholders including parents and carers, governors and members of the wider community. These views are valued and incorporated well into a self-evaluation report, which is based on first hand evidence and an appropriate range of data. This document is not evaluative enough and does not always analyse the effectiveness of whole school strategies.

However, leaders do know the strengths of the school and the areas where improvement is required. The school has produced a detailed school improvement plan linked to the self-evaluation report.

The school has effective systems in place to manage performance. There is regular classroom observation by managers and local authority advisers. Classroom observations focus on the main priorities in the school improvement plan and provide teachers with valuable feedback and actions for improvements.

The school collects an appropriate range of useful data to effectively monitor the progress of all individuals and groups of pupils. This is generally used well to inform school improvement and improve pupil outcomes. However, this is not always used well enough to inform teachers' planning.

Results from performance management and close scrutiny of the self-evaluation information are used well to identify further areas for development and training for school staff. The whole school culture of professional development is strong. All staff have access to a wide range of appropriate courses.

There are effective networks of professional practice within the school and with other schools and partners.

The school has generally made good progress in addressing most of the recommendations of the last inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school has well-established partnerships with the community, the local authority and parents and carers. This has a positive impact on the provision for all pupils.

Staff work effectively with a number of outside organisations to provide pupils with valuable learning experiences, support and resources. The links with pre-school agencies are very effective and help parents to make informed decisions with regard to their children's placement at the school.

The Welsh Government funding for 'Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools' has been used effectively to promote good quality partnerships with a range of agencies.

Parents and carers are fully involved in their children's education and they are well informed about their progress.

An outreach service that focuses on communication aids supporting education provides valued expertise and training to other schools.

The school works closely with Careers Wales to provide good information and support to older pupils in moving on to college or other placements.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources effectively. Teaching and support staff are well deployed and make a very important contribution to the pupils' learning experiences and to the quality of the care and guidance.

The school is generally well resourced and the older premises have been improved over time to provide better accommodation enhancing learning opportunities with the aim of providing equal access to all. The headteacher and school managers have developed the very good accommodation in the newly built part of the school well.

Spending priorities and training programmes link closely with the school's improvement plan and are reviewed by the governing body, who in turn work closely with the school leaders and the local authority to ensure best value. The SLT and Finance Officer effectively manage resources, including staff, time and finances

Standards of provision and support are consistently good and the school makes sure that pupils make good progress both in their standards and wellbeing. The school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirty-five parents completed the questionnaire and overall are positive about the way the school is run. Many believe that their children feel safe in school, that staff treat them with respect, and that they receive appropriate support and are encouraged to take on responsibility, take exercise where appropriate and be healthy. They feel that they can approach the school if there is an issue worrying them and understand the complaints procedure. They feel well informed about their children's progress.

The majority feel that their children are well prepared to move on to college and that there is a good range of activities and visits.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety-seven pupils, sixty boys and thirty-seven girls, responded to the questionnaires. Most are positive about their school life. They agree that they are safe and that teachers deal with bullying. They know what to do if the work is difficult, whom to talk to if they have a problem, and how to keep healthy. They feel that the school gives them good opportunities for exercise. They all feel that they are making good progress and doing well at school. Many believe that there is enough equipment, that other pupils behave well, and that homework helps them understand their work

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Claire Yardley	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Sw Roberts	Team Inspector
Mike Munting	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Lynda Gyton	Peer Inspector
Carol Edwards	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11