



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 Sarn Bach
Sarn Bach
Pwllheli
Gwynedd
LL53 7LF**

Date of inspection: March 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 the 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 Sarn Bach is located in the village of Sarn Bach in the Lleyn peninsula and is maintained by Gwynedd local authority. There are currently 57 pupils aged 3-11 years on the school register, including seven children of nursery age who were received part-time in the September following their third birthday. Pupils are also received from Ysgol Abersoch when they are eight years of age. The number of pupils has increased since the previous inspection.

Welsh is the first language of the home for 53% of pupils, 5% are from ethnic minority backgrounds and the remainder come from homes in which English is the main language of communication. However, Welsh is the main language of communication in the school. A variety of social backgrounds are represented and the initial assessments indicate that the ability of most pupils when they begin in the school is good. Eleven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This figure is below the county and national averages. Nineteen per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, one of whom has a statement.

In 2010-2011, the individual school budget for Ysgol Sarn Bach is £4,011 per pupil, which compares with a maximum of £8,442 and a minimum of £2,717 for primary schools in Gwynedd. The school has the 31st highest budget per pupil of the 103 primary schools in Gwynedd.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2010.

The school was previously inspected during the summer term 2005 and two assistants and the headteacher have been appointed since then.

Summary

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

Current performance

This school is good because:

- the school demonstrates success in developing bilingualism from an early age;
- most of the pupils make good progress in learning and achieve good standards in key skills across the curriculum;
- the school provides a wide range of experiences that reinforce and stimulate learning;
- very effective use is made of the specialisms of the classroom assistants to enrich the learning experiences;
- the teaching is good throughout the school; and
- there is a caring ethos which ensures that almost every pupil enjoys school and feels safe.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher has shared her clear vision with the staff, governors and parents;
- the headteacher and members of staff have been successful in creating very effective procedures for moving the school forward and raising standards within a short space of time;
- the staff and governors have demonstrated eagerness to work in partnership with the headteacher in order to realise her vision; and
- the school has identified specific aspects for future development which are already being implemented.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise the standards of the most able pupils in the school by providing more challenging and extended work for them;
- R2 create opportunities for pupils to work more independently within key stage 2;
- R3 further develop pupils' awareness of issues related to keeping healthy and sustainability; and
- R4 further develop the strategic leadership procedures that have been implemented recently and the role of the governing body in the self-evaluation process and setting priorities.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The results of the initial assessments when a child begins in the school show that most children have a good level of ability in basic skills. Almost all the pupils are making good progress throughout the Foundation Phase in all the areas.

The results at the end of key stage 1 for 2010 are higher than the average for the authority, the family of schools and Wales in every area with 100% having succeeded in attaining the expected level over the past three years. This places the school in the highest quarter of similar schools for every subject in terms of the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The pupils' level of performance in oracy and writing in Welsh over the past three years is better than the average for the authority, the family of schools and Wales and this has been the case for the past two years in reading.

The percentage of pupils that attain beyond the expected level is higher than the average for the authority, the family of schools and Wales this year in Welsh and mathematics but lower in science.

The percentage of pupils that reach the expected level at the end of key stage 2 for 2010, in Welsh and English this year, is slightly higher than the authority and Wales averages. The average results for science are as good as those for Wales but below those of the authority, and below those for the authority and Wales in mathematics. The school performs as well as the family of schools in English but average results are below those of the family of schools in the other subjects.

The percentage of pupils that reach the expected level in oracy in English and reading in Welsh are above family of schools, local authority and Wales averages, but average achievement levels are below these for writing in English. The level of English reading is as good as the average level within the authority and better than the average results for the family of schools and Wales.

The school does not compare favourably with similar schools when benchmarked against schools that have a similar percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The school is amongst the lower 50% in Welsh and English but amongst the lowest 25% in mathematics and science. The percentage that attains above the expected level this year is below the authority, family of schools and Wales averages in every subject. The influx of pupils who were late entering key stage 2 that had additional educational needs has influenced these percentages.

Pupils who are entitled to free school meals and who have special educational needs are making expected progress in line with their age and ability.

There is no significant pattern that refers to any differences between the results for boys and girls over a four-year period.

Almost all pupils throughout the school complete their work effectively and keep to tasks, showing interest and perseverance. Almost all of them produce an acceptable amount of work within the sessions and the progress that pupils make is obvious within the learning sessions and over a period of time.

Most pupils listen intently to instructions, teachers' presentations and their peers' contributions.

The standard of oracy is very good with almost every one communicating confidently from an early age.

The pupils' level of reading in both languages is in line with their age and ability. Most pupils throughout the school read fluently. The development of writing across the activities and learning experiences in the Foundation Phase in Welsh and across the curricular areas in key stage 2 in both languages is good.

Written work by the most able pupils within the school is not always sufficiently ambitious or extended.

Welsh second language pupils use the language confidently in a short time after beginning at the school and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is core to the work and ethos of the school.

Wellbeing: Good

Almost every child has an increasing awareness of the need to eat healthy food and to keep fit. Every pupil that responded to the questionnaire stated that they are treated with respect, that they are happy in the school and that they feel safe there. They are not aware of any bullying taking place. The behaviour of almost every pupil is excellent and they show respect to their peers and to adults in the school.

Attendance for the school year 2009-2010 and for some years previously was about 93.3%. This is similar to the average figure for the whole of Wales but marginally below the average figure for the local authority.

Almost all pupils in the Foundation Phase develop appropriately to becoming independent learners. The ability of key stage 2 pupils to work independently and to assess their own work has not been developed sufficiently. They are over-dependent on guidance from teachers. However, they keep to tasks well for extended periods and make good use of their time.

The influence of the voice of the learners on the life of the school through the School Council is developing increasingly. Key decisions have been taken, such as ensuring that the condition of the boys' toilets was improved. The Council has met the school governors to discuss their ideas.

Pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural development is developing effectively. They work together well with each other, offering support to one another.

Pupils are aware of their locality and their history and take pride in them and they have the necessary skills for taking their place in the society to which they belong.

Pupils' general awareness of sustainability has only begun to be developed.

Key Question 2: How good is the provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school plans stimulating learning experiences that engender the interest of pupils throughout the school. Extensive use is made of various educational visits to enrich the curriculum. The planning is detailed and structured and ensures progression and development in communication, numeracy and information technology skills throughout the curriculum. The curricular provision is broad and balanced.

A variety of opportunities are provided to develop pupils' reading and writing skills throughout the school. There are particular opportunities to develop numeracy skills through the school's enterprise and business work. By making films and presentations, the school is developing multi-media skills in information and communication technology very effectively

All members of staff provide language models that promote the development of literacy in Welsh very effectively. They give a prominent place to local culture and to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, which reflects positively on the ethos of the school, such as in studying the work of Ogwen Davies.

The school ensures significant progress in the area of global citizenship by studying various charities and forging links with a school in South Africa. A commercial plan was used effectively to develop pupils' awareness of the business world.

The school has begun to implement acceptable work on health and fitness and in raising pupils' awareness of sustainability.

Teaching: Good

Teaching throughout the school is good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the learning areas and the subjects that they teach. Detailed and purposeful plans are provided and are implemented throughout the school.

Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and present lessons in a lively and enthusiastic manner. Objectives and success criteria are shared with the pupils. Effective and purposeful use is made of teaching resources. Teachers ask purposeful and penetrating questions in order to move the learning along. In general, teachers provide suitable differentiated work but the provision is not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. The classroom assistants are extremely effective in their support of pupils throughout the school.

The provision within the Foundation Phase promotes the development of independence but this does not occur to the same extent in key stage 2.

The good assessment for learning strategies have been integrated into the lessons and are developing as part of the ethos of the school. Teachers provide clear and supportive verbal feedback. Pupils' written work is marked regularly and constructive comments are made on them. All pupils have their own personal targets to work towards. However, the opportunities for pupils to assess their own work are inconsistent. Parents are given good information about individual targets and the developmental achievements of their children.

Care, support and guidance: Good

This is a very caring school that promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The 'faithful friends' and 'playground buddies' schemes and the 'Bullying Agreement' all reinforce the ethos of respect, responsibility and care which is a strong element of the life of the school.

Pupil protection procedures are in place and the staff receive specific training annually. The school's caring ethos ensures that pupils understand their right to be safe. They know how to respond in cases of bullying and abuse.

The school identifies the needs of different pupils through regular observation, joint discussions with parents and conducting formal and informal assessments. Teachers track pupils' progress and plan relevant work to respond to pupils' needs in general.

Pupils with additional learning needs receive appropriate support and the individual education plans are evaluated and updated regularly. Parents and carers are included effectively. The school complies fully with the Code of Practice.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a homely and friendly ethos. Pupils are naturally polite and respectful with each other. The school is an inclusive community and ensures equal opportunities for every pupil. The curriculum is wholly flexible, irrespective of pupils' gender, race or religion and the school fulfils its statutory duties.

The school's physical resources are good. The school is in a pleasant building with ample space for every class. There are plans in the pipeline to develop part of the land which surrounds the building for outdoor activities. Pupils' work is given pride of place in stimulating and colourful displays on the walls of the building.

The building is maintained in a good condition.

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

The headteacher, who began in her post in September, gives clear leadership to the life and work of the school. In a short time, she has succeeded in sharing her vision effectively with members of staff, governors and parents. Specific strategies have been created to develop elements of teaching and to raise standards.

All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and work closely together to create an effective team. Their continuous professional development is supported by providing regular opportunities of appropriate training, holding staff meetings and managing annual performance. The school has a wide range of appropriate procedures and policies that are already in place and which have a positive effect on pupils' achievements. The manner in which the headteacher and members of staff worked together to create strategies and procedures that have been very effective in raising standards is an obvious achievement.

The governing body receives regular reports from the headteacher and has a good knowledge of the school. Governors are very supportive of the efforts of the headteacher and staff to move the school forward. Although they are aware of the strengths and the areas to be developed, they acknowledge that they need to expand their role and take a more prominent role in the school's self-evaluation process and when setting priorities.

The school meets national and local priorities well. The principles of the Foundation Phase have been established and members of staff are seeking to improve the quality of self-evaluation, to develop assessment for learning and also to forge links for sharing good practice.

Improving quality: Good

The school has thorough self-evaluation processes that have identified effectively those aspects of the life of the school that need to be developed. The self-evaluation report is comprehensive and provides a clear and evaluative picture of the school's current situation. The written report, however, does not make sufficient reference to the aspects that need to be developed further.

Effective use is made of performance data, tracking information and direct evidence to plan for improvement. There are specific opportunities for members of staff to influence self-evaluation and the comments of parents and pupils are gathered through annual questionnaires. Governors receive the report for checking and discussion. There are clear links between the findings of the self-evaluation process and the priorities noted in the School Development Plan.

Wide-ranging opportunities are provided for the professional development of the whole staff. There is a close correlation between staff training and responsibilities and the priorities of the School Development Plan. The school has an appropriate system of performance management which provides opportunities for continuous professional development. Recently, the school has significantly developed the element of internal networking and this has succeeded in creating a very effective team. The system of lesson observation and sharing good practice has also begun.

The school works well with other schools in the catchment area in terms of sharing resources and arranging training that includes visits. Together, they place a particular focus on developing the Foundation Phase. The majority of the recommendations in the previous report have been implemented promisingly.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established effective partnerships with parents and carers. The school communicates regularly with them and they appreciate the information that they receive from the school about children's progress.

There are good transition arrangements in place with a local nursery and the local infants' school, and there are opportunities for children to visit the school beforehand. Good links and effective transition arrangements exist between the school and the secondary school. There are many suitable transition and moderating activities on a secondary school catchment area basis. Constructive collaboration exists with other primary schools in the catchment area including opportunities to share best practice, particularly through purposeful electronic procedures.

The school is continuing to develop links with the community, and a few local businesses support the work of the school. Members from the community come to the school to share experiences with the pupils and local visits are arranged for them. This enriches the curriculum very effectively. The school makes very effective use of local authority services for staff development and raising standards.

Resource management: Good

The school has a sufficient number of suitably-qualified staff to undertake their work effectively. They work conscientiously as a team to create a stimulating environment for the pupils and they use good-quality resources effectively. Teachers make effective use of their time for planning and preparing lessons

The condition of the building is generally good and creates a positive learning atmosphere for the pupils.

The governing body keeps a watchful eye on the budget and reserves are allocated suitably in order to respond to the priorities of the development plan. The school has invested substantially recently in new information technology equipment which has had a positive effect on pupils' achievements in this area. Pupils' standards and the quality of the teaching are such that the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fourteen questionnaires were returned and in each one all the parents stated that their children enjoyed school, and that they were happy there and felt safe. They also believed that pupils were respected and had a good variety of activities, and that the school was well run.

Parents are all satisfied with the school in general, and feel that they could come to the school to discuss or express any concern without any difficulty.

Almost every one understands the school's complaints procedure and many of the parents state that they receive regular information about their children's progress.

Responses to learner questionnaires

The questionnaire was completed by 35 key stage 2 learners and members of the team spoke to pupils during the inspection. All of the pupils are of the opinion that they are happy and feel secure in the school, and that the school deals well with any bullying. They know to whom they can turn, if they are worried. They are of the opinion that the teachers give them good support and help them to understand how well they are doing and how to keep healthy.

Almost all of the pupils state that they are doing well in school, that they know to whom to turn should they have a problem and that they have sufficient equipment to do their work.

Many of the pupils are of the opinion that behaviour in the school is good and that misbehaviour does not affect their ability to work. They also state that they have regular opportunities to have physical exercise, and that the homework helps them to understand and improve their work.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Glyn Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Ray Owen	Team Inspector
Jeremy Turner	Lay Inspector
Michael Carruthers	Peer Inspector
Bethan Jones	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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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