



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 Y Grango
Allt Ty Gwyn
Rhosllanerchrugog
Wrexham
LL14 1EL**

Date of inspection: November 2010

by

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



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

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 y Grango is an English-medium 11 to 16 comprehensive school situated in Rhosllanerchrugog and maintained by Wrexham local authority. Pupil numbers have increased significantly over the last four years to the current 429 pupils on roll, although this is still below the 458 at the time of the previous inspection in November 2004. At 16, pupils usually transfer to Yale College in Wrexham or to Ysgol Rhiwabon.

Although pupils are drawn from the full range of socio-economic and social backgrounds, 22.5% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the Welsh average of about 17.1% for secondary schools. There are very few pupils from Welsh-speaking homes, and none who speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard.

Pupils at the school represent the full range of ability. Around 4% of pupils have statements of special educational needs compared with 2.7% for Wales as a whole. The school also has a resourced provision for a small number of pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties.

Recently, some significant changes have been made to the leadership of the school. The headteacher took up his post in September 2010 and a new deputy headteacher will start in January 2011.

Over the last few years, there have been a number of improvements to the information and technology provision at the school and there is a new all-weather sports pitch. The school introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate in September 2009 and has a thinking skills programme called 'learning to learn' for all pupils in key stage 3.

The school's aims are to achieve 'excellence for all, excellence from all' by focusing on the three principles of 'achievement', 'respect'; and 'community'.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol-Y-Grango is £4,846, which compares with a maximum of £4,846 and a minimum of £3,909 for secondary schools in Wrexham. The school has the highest budget per pupil of the nine secondary schools in Wrexham.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance is good because:

- pupils achieve good standards, make good or better progress from previous key stages and behave very well;
- teaching is well-organised, purposeful and promotes high expectations of pupils;
- the curriculum is well-matched to pupils' needs and interests, particularly in the provision for vocational options in key stage 4 and the development of skills in key stage 3 and key stage 4; and
- pupils receive a high standard of care, support and guidance.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because of:

- the quality of leadership of the school;
- the clear identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the key priorities for improvement;
- the track record of making significant improvements in standards and the provision of learning experiences over the last five years; and
- the detailed analysis and use of performance information to track pupil progress and set targets.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the staff and governors of Ysgol Y Grango need to:

- R1 increase the performance in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics;
- R2 strengthen the co-ordination and development of the additional learning needs (ALN) provision to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met more effectively;
- R3 expand the role of subject leaders in monitoring teaching and learning; and
- R4 enhance the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning on partnership courses in key stage 4.

What happens next?

The school 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

At key stage 3, the core subject indicator (CSI - the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) in 2010 is similar to the national averages and has stayed at about the same level over the last three years. When compared with similar schools, the CSI is below the average of the family of schools and just about average in terms of the free-school-meal benchmarks. In English, performance is below the family average and just above the lowest quarter of performance of similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmarks. Mathematics and science have steadily improved over the last three years and in 2010 both are in the top quarter of performance of similar schools. At level 6 and above, English and mathematics are below the family average, while science is similar to it. Pupils' progress from the previous key stage is generally good.

In key stage 4, the school performs very well in the level 2 threshold and in the average wider points score (comprising all externally approved qualifications at age 16). Over the last three years, it has consistently been in the top quarter of similar schools and above the Wales averages for these indicators. Performance in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics and the CSI has improved steadily over the last three years. The performance in these two indicators is still below the family averages, but the school is now in the top half of similar schools in terms of free-school-meals benchmarks. In mathematics, level 2 performance is below that of the family and is in the bottom quarter of performance of similar schools. Performance in the level 1 threshold is strong and over the last three years no pupil has left school without a qualification. When compared with their performance in previous key stages, pupils make very good progress in the level 2 threshold and average wider points score and good progress in other indicators.

At key stage 3, girls perform better than boys in English and the difference is greater than the Wales and family averages. In mathematics, boys do better than girls, which is different from the family and Wales pattern where girls do slightly better. At key stage 4, boys do better than girls in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics and in the CSI. However, for the level 2 threshold, girls do much better than boys and the gap is greater than the family and Wales averages. In English, girls perform better than boys, but the gap is not as wide as the Wales and family average. In contrast, in mathematics, boys do much better than girls and the gap is much greater than the Wales and family averages. Pupils entitled to free school meals achieve better than expected on level 1 qualifications and points score, and achieve as expected for level 2 qualifications. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve better than expected.

At 16, 70% of leavers went on to further education and training, which is below the local authority average and well below the Wales average. The proportion of leavers

who are not engaged in education, employment or training is around the averages for the local authority and Wales.

Most pupils make good progress in lessons and gain new knowledge, understanding and skills effectively. Where required, they apply their understanding appropriately to new and unfamiliar situations. In most lessons, pupils respond well to high expectations, use subject vocabulary accurately and work well in groups. In the few excellent lessons, pupils have very quick recall of previous work, and provide detailed and thoughtful explanations. In a few lessons, a minority of pupils did not work hard enough and did not make enough progress. Also in a few lessons, boys contribute much more than girls to classroom discussions.

Pupils use well their communication, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills to support their learning in subjects across the curriculum. Most read well to gain information. They write with accuracy and a clear purpose in the tasks they are given. ICT skills are very good. Increasing numbers of pupils are entering and achieving essential skills qualifications. Nearly all pupils in Year 9 in 2010 achieved level 1 in application of number and level 2 in ICT. However, only a few pupils gained essential skills qualifications in communication.

Pupils make very good progress in Welsh in Welsh lessons. Key stage 3 results in Welsh second language have improved over the last three years and are now similar to the national averages. In key stage 4, almost all pupils study the full-course GCSE and the percentage gaining the level 2 qualification in Welsh is high. Pupils have well-developed Welsh language skills, but they do not apply them enough in subjects other than Welsh.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel safe and very well supported in the school. They feel that the school deals well with all incidents including those related to bullying. Most understand what it is to be healthy and take part in the regular opportunities for exercise. The school offers a good range of physical activities during lunchtime and after school which are well attended.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is very good and pupils arrive punctually to lessons. Pupils are engaged and motivated, and display pride and confidence in their work. Attendance is improving and the school has been in the second quarter of similar schools for the last three years. Pupils are allowed to say what they want to learn in key stage 4 and are starting to have a say in how they learn in both key stages, but this is underdeveloped.

Pupils take part in a wide range of community activities, including having School Council representation on the local community youth council. The School Council is effective and its members have a place on the governing body. They have contributed to the appointments process and to decisions about a number of improvements to the school environment, but have yet to play a full role in developing key school policies and plans.

Pupils have well-developed social and life skills. They show respect, care and concern and take on responsibility for their actions and work, and most have the skills to move on to the next stage of learning.

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

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that enables pupils of all abilities to receive a range of learning experiences and obtain relevant qualifications. The key stage 3 curriculum meets the National Curriculum requirements and builds well on pupils' experiences at key stage 2. At key stage 4, the curriculum meets the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure for 2012 and provides a wide range of vocational opportunities, some being offered in partnership with local schools and Yale College. This provision has been successful in enabling pupils of all abilities to take vocational options.

The range of extra-curricular activities contributes well to pupils' learning and progress. The activities include a balance of leisure and academic activities, with a small number of them providing opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications.

Provision for the delivery of key skills is well-organised and a good feature is that all pupils are entered for the essential skills qualification. Teachers plan well to improve pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils' thinking skills are being developed well across most subjects.

Welsh language provision is strong and pupils have positive attitudes towards the Welsh language. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their use of Welsh outside Welsh lessons. The Welsh dimension is developed appropriately across a range of subjects.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

Teachers have suitable subject knowledge and plan their lessons well to ensure that all pupils make the expected progress. They use well a wide range of learning resources, including interactive white boards, to maintain pupils' interest and engagement. Lessons are well-structured and teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching styles.

The relationship between teachers and pupils is very good in most lessons, and this contributes towards effective progress in learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and most teaching is well-matched to pupils' needs and abilities. They use the time at the end of lessons productively to review learning objectives and to establish the extent of pupils' learning.

In a few lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in the learning tasks. Also, activities at the beginning of lessons can occasionally be too long, resulting in a slow start to the lesson.

Teachers give pupils helpful oral feedback on the standard of their work and what they need to do to improve. A majority of teachers' written feedback informs pupils of their level of achievement and what they need to do to improve. The quality of a minority of teachers' written feedback is inconsistent and does not do enough to help pupils to progress.

The school's very effective system for tracking pupil progress helps teachers to analyse performance thoroughly and use the information to set challenging targets.

Parents receive a detailed report on the progress of pupils. Most reports identify strengths and weaknesses clearly and parents are well-informed about their children's achievements and progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a very high level of care. Provision for personal and social education, and for developing and supporting pupils' health and wellbeing, is good. The school has well-established and innovative initiatives for promoting health and wellbeing, including the Student Assistant Programme¹ and particularly the 'Friends in Need Scheme' in which older pupils provide support and mentoring to younger pupils. The school promotes effectively the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The transition arrangements with partner primary schools ensure that pupils in Year 7 settle in well.

Targeted support for groups of pupils across the school has resulted in significant improvement in attendance, attitudes, behaviour and confidence. The school successfully engages a wide range of appropriate outside agencies to advise and support pupils. Parents and pupils receive detailed advice and know how to access support and guidance. There is good provision for learning coach support for key stage 4 pupils.

The school has developed a successful behaviour policy along with effective procedures which include a wide range of rewards and sanctions. They impact very positively on promoting good behaviour throughout the school.

The school has appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding.

Most pupils with additional learning needs receive appropriate support and make good progress. Assessment procedures are in place for identifying pupils with additional learning needs, but they do not always identify the full range of needs.

¹ The Student Assistance Programme (SAP) is a comprehensive prevention and early intervention programme that supports students with problems and behaviours which interfere with their education and development.

The school works well with specialist services to ensure that the needs of most pupils are met. However, a few pupils with additional learning needs do not get the specific support they require to prepare them for, and help them progress, in their mainstream lessons. For a small number of pupils there are not enough links between the work done in the resource base and that done in mainstream classes.

The annual review process for pupils with additional learning needs satisfies statutory requirements. However, the progress of pupils with additional learning needs is not monitored consistently enough across the school. In general, teaching assistants support individual pupils well.

Learning environment: Good

The school promotes equality and diversity effectively. The school is an inclusive community, where pupils have equal access to all aspects of the school's provision. There are relevant policies and procedures in place and the school fully meets its legal obligations.

Learning resources are sufficient and fully support pupils' learning. ICT provision is particularly good. Accommodation is of high quality, and the school buildings and grounds are well-maintained.

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

At the time of the appointment of the previous headteacher in 2004, the school was underperforming in many key areas. In particular, standards were low and the numbers of pupils were declining. In order to make the necessary improvements, the senior team appropriately adopted a strongly directional approach. With standards and numbers rising, the recently-appointed headteacher has a clear vision to move towards a more collaborative approach to leadership and currently the school is in a transitional phase towards this.

The school has clear aims and a strong sense of direction. All staff share a common vision, values and purpose. The school's management structure is coherent, and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in securing high standards. Senior leaders have had a significant impact in improving standards and behaviour over the recent years. To maintain the rate of improvement, the school is developing further the role of middle managers in this process. Middle managers are appropriately leading the development of key whole-school priority areas, for example the implementation of a virtual learning environment.

A sophisticated data management system has contributed to the school's ability and approach to setting high expectations for all learners. The school uses the system to set challenging targets, analyse the performance of groups of pupils and closely monitor individual pupils' progress and achievement.

The performance of staff is well-managed and the school takes appropriate action to challenge underperformance to reasonably good effect.

The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and provides strategic direction for the work of the school. Governors are well-informed about the performance of the school and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. They fulfil their role as 'critical friends' and hold the school to account for the standards and quality they achieve. The governor link role promotes a greater awareness of the work of departments and the issues they face.

The school takes good account of local and national priorities. The school has made very good progress in implementing Learning Pathways 14-19 and the School Effectiveness Framework.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation report is thorough, contains a detailed analysis of performance data, and accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement.

The rigorous improvement process reviews most aspects of school life. The systems and structures are clearly understood and implemented well by all staff. Leaders and managers use data effectively to evaluate the school's performance in comparison with similar schools and prior attainment.

The leadership team has a secure view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They use a range of internal and external evidence to accurately review standards and teaching. A review of the 'learning to learn' programme in key stage 3 carried out by an external consultant has assisted the school in securing improvement in pupils' thinking skills. Despite some good practice in a few areas of the curriculum, middle managers do not have enough opportunities to collect first-hand evidence on teaching and learning from lesson observations.

The established self-evaluation process is directly linked to whole-school and departmental improvement planning. Improvement plans set out the main priority areas, objectives, monitoring arrangements and how impact will be measured. Most departmental development plans are detailed, include challenging targets and set out appropriate actions to secure continued improvement. However, a few plans lack focus and do not include specific targets or quantifiable success criteria. Most departments are making good progress in implementing their plans.

The school is very responsive to the views of pupils and parents, but does not have a systematic approach to collecting their views as part of the school's self-evaluation process.

The school has a very good track record of improving pupil outcomes and provision, and has made very good progress in addressing the recommendations from the last inspection.

The school is developing well as a learning community. Nearly all staff display a commitment to continuous professional development and engage in a range of activities to improve their effectiveness. Although there are informal arrangements for peer observation, there is no whole-school approach to ensure that all staff have an opportunity to observe the best practice.

The school values the involvement of staff in networks of professional practice. As part of School Effectiveness Framework, the school is involved in professional learning communities with other providers that focus on sharing good practice related to the Student Assistance Programme and developing the provision for the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well with a range of partners. Partnership with parents is a particularly strong feature of the school's work and parents speak highly of the support the school provides. Parents regularly receive appropriate information and matters of concern are dealt with effectively and promptly.

Transition arrangements with partner primary schools are well-established and include regular meetings and a range of cluster-based activities. These links contribute effectively to continuity and progression in pupils' learning experiences. The school uses the information from partner schools well to ensure that the individual needs of pupils are addressed.

The school has established curriculum links with Yale College and some local high schools. There are also some strong links with the local special school. However, links with the 14-19 network are underdeveloped in terms of monitoring of provision.

The school works well with a range of community organisations and groups including the local community council. Good links with local industry and commerce are also established through a range of activities such as the 'Challenge of Industry' event.

The school also benefits from well-established links with three initial teacher training institutions.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources well and there are good levels of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Collaboration with other local providers ensures that courses with relatively few pupils are financially viable. Expenditure is consistently monitored ensuring that available funding is well-matched to school priorities. The school is currently operating a small budget deficit but has a clear recovery plan that is approved by the local authority. Staff are deployed effectively to support learning.

The school provides good value for money with improving standards and provision.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty-five parent questionnaires were completed. Parents expressed positive views about the school.

All parents are satisfied with the school, and nearly all state that the school is well run and that their child likes the school. All say that the teaching is good and that staff expect their child to work hard and do his or her best. Most parents are of the opinion that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs. All state that their child was helped to settle in when they started school and nearly all feel that their child is making good progress. Nearly all parents agree that the school's homework builds well on school work and that staff treat their child fairly and with respect. Nearly all also feel that their child is safe in school and encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise. A similar proportion says that there is a good range of activities, and that their children are helped to become more mature and take on responsibility, and are prepared well for the next stage of learning or employment. Most parents are kept well-informed about their child's progress and nearly all are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem. Most parents are of the opinion that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by 25% of pupils selected at random from across the age range. Overall, the views expressed by pupils are positive. There is no marked difference between the views of boys and girls.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school, that the school deals well with any bullying and that there is someone to talk to if they are worried. Most pupils say that the school teaches them to be healthy and that there are plenty of opportunities for regular exercise. Nearly all pupils think that they are doing well at school, and that teachers help them to learn and make progress and help them when they have problems. Nearly all say that they have enough books and equipment. However, a minority do not think that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. Although many pupils say that pupils behave well and they can get their work done, a few do not. Nearly all pupils are encouraged to do things for themselves and take on responsibility. Also nearly all pupils agree that the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds and most agree that staff respect them and their background. Many pupils feel that the school listens to their views and make the changes suggested, but a few do not. Nearly all pupils state that the school helps them to be ready for their next school, college or to start their working life. However, a minority of key stage 4 pupils, especially boys, do not feel that they were given good advice for choosing courses in key stage 4.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Nigel Vaughan HMI	Reporting Inspector
Susan Roberts HMI	Team Inspector
Meinir Rees HMI	Team Inspector
Ray Owen HMI	Team Inspector
Claire Morgan	Team Inspector
Duncan Haworth	Lay Inspector
Stephen Waldron	Peer Inspector
Beryl Price	School Nominee

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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