



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

**Bryntirion Comprehensive
Merlin Crescent
Cefn Glas
Bridgend
CF31 4QR**

Date of inspection: May 2011

by

Mr Gwyn Thomas

Under Contract for

**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

Bryntirion Comprehensive is an 11-18 mixed, purpose built community school maintained by Bridgend Unitary Authority. The school serves the western parts of Bridgend.

Pupils of all abilities are received by the school. The majority of pupils come from areas which are neither socially nor economically disadvantaged.

There are currently 1,068 pupils on roll including 184 students in the sixth form. During the last inspection in April 2005, there were 1,005 pupils on roll including 128 students in the sixth form.

There are 66.3 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 31 full-time equivalent support members of staff in the school.

In 2009-10, 13.60% of pupils were eligible for free school meals compared with the national average of 17.1%.

About 1% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs and a further 11.7% require additional support. The percentage of compulsory age pupils on the special educational needs register is 12.7% which is well below the national average of 20.9%. In 2010, 19.4% of 15 year old pupils were on the special educational needs register.

Three pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Very few pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language.

The headteacher was appointed permanently to the post in January 2003.

Since the last inspection the school community has experienced difficult circumstances.

The school's motto "Dysgwn sut i fyw" (we will learn how to live) and its aim is to maximise the potential of all in a happy, caring and disciplined environment. The school encourages a positive and active attitude and a concept of learning as a life-long process. It provides a culture appropriate for future citizens in a caring and inspiring learning community.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Bryntirion Comprehensive School is £4,046 which compares with a maximum of £5,399 and a minimum of £3,827 for secondary schools in Bridgend. The school has the sixth highest budget per pupil out of the 10 secondary schools in Bridgend.

Summary

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

Current performance

This is a good school because of the:

- effective support and leadership of the headteacher and senior management team;
- comprehensive range of curricular options supported by good and excellent well informed teaching;
- overall good and currently improving standards achieved by pupils;
- good and very good progress being made by pupils in lessons;
- learners' positive attitudes to work and school life which lead to all gaining a recognised qualification;
- outstanding quality care, support and guidance within a safe, secure and inclusive learning environment; and
- effective collaboration with other partners.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because of the:

- leadership and high expectations of the headteacher and the senior management team;
- positive support provided by all members of staff;
- identification of the school's strengths and areas for development;
- proven track record in the strategic management of financial resources to enhance the learning environment; and
- many effective procedures that have already begun to improve pupils' performance.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Bryntirion Comprehensive School need to:

R1 improve standards in the core subject indicator in key stage 4 by continuing to raise pupils' performance in English and mathematics;

R2 strengthen the standards of essential skills in key stage 3; and

R3 refine the process of self-evaluation and planning for improvement by focusing on rigorous targets and measurable success criteria.

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

In 2010 in key stage 3, the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum) and the core subjects were in the first benchmark quarter when compared with similar schools in terms of free school meals. This was a significant improvement on the previous two years. These results placed the school above the family (groups of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, having special educational needs and learning English as an additional language) and national averages.

In 2008-2010, pupils' achievement at level 6 and above in English and science was below the family averages while mathematics varied. Trends improved at level 5 and above in five of non-core subjects during this period. Results in all non-core subjects improved between 2009 and 2010.

Pupils made good progress based on their attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2010. This was an improvement on their prior attainment in the previous two years.

Between 2008 and 2010, results in all key indicators in key stage 4 had nearly always placed the school above the family and national averages. During 2010, results in the threshold level 2 (a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A*-C), threshold level 2 including English and mathematics and the core subject indicator placed the school in the third benchmark quarter when compared with similar schools in terms of the free school meals.

In recent years, pupils' performance has been good, and very good in the threshold level 1 (a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D-G) and was placed in the first and second benchmark quarters. The average wider points score (all externally approved qualifications at age 15) was placed in the first quarter for two of the last three years. In 2010, pupils made good progress based on their attainment at the end of key stage 3 and satisfactory progress from key stage 2.

Sixth-form students' performance has been strong over the last three years. The percentage of students gaining the level 3 threshold (a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grades A*-E) is well above the local and national averages. Performance in the average wider points' scores is significantly above the national averages. The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification makes a very strong contribution to the average wider points score and standards in the sixth-form.

Over the last three years, no pupil left school without a recognised qualification. This was better than the national averages. In 2010, many Year 11 pupils continued in education, training or employment. The percentage of pupils not in education, training or employment is 1%. At the end of Year 13, many students continued in education and training.

During 2008-2010, boys outperformed girls on a very few occasions in key stage 3 and on a few occasions in key stage 4. Boys' performance has exceeded national comparators on a few occasions and the gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed. Most able pupils perform to their potential.

At key stage 4, the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly in line with family and national averages. The percentage of key stage 3 pupils entitled to free school meals gaining the core subject indicator is below the family averages.

Nearly all learners with additional learning needs, including those who are provided with personal support, make good progress and achieve well in examinations.

In most of the lessons observed, learners are now making good and often very good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding. Effective actions have been taken to help pupils raise their standards.

The presentation and standard of pupils' work is good.

In key stages 3 and key stage 4, most pupils read well and express themselves skilfully when writing short or extended paragraphs. Good or better communication skills are evident in key stage 4 when group work is undertaken. Learners listen very well, speak clearly and many express their views confidently.

The standards of pupils' essential skills of numeracy and information and communication technology are stronger in key stage 4 where they are applied beneficially in many subjects.

Many students gain very good skills' qualifications through the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

In key stage 3, Welsh second language results have improved over the last three years and are now above the family and national averages. In key stage 4, overall standards achieved by pupils have been good. In 2010, 33% of pupils were entered for the full GCSE course and performed very well. The remainder were entered for the short course. Nearly all pupils in the cohort are entered to gain a qualification and succeed.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils feel very safe in school and receive very good personal support. The few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Nearly all pupils are considerate, courteous and behave exceptionally well. There have been no permanent exclusions over the last three years. Fixed-term exclusions are very low.

Many pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and have positive attitudes towards exercise and diet. Participation in fitness, sporting and related extra-curricular activities is good.

The attendance rates are in the first benchmark quarter for two of the last three years when compared with those of similar schools. In 2010, pupils' attendance placed the school fourth with its family of schools.

In most lessons observed, pupils are punctual to lessons, work well with each other and make good or very good progress. They concentrate well, enjoy learning and show respect for others.

Learners' involvement in community activities and events is good. They gain valuable levels of experience, confidence and demonstrate good social and life skills.

Pupils and students are involved in a wide range of learner voice activities, including decision making processes and focus well on learning and teaching. They make a valuable contribution to several aspects of school life.

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

The school provides a comprehensive curriculum for all learners within each key stage. It is broad, responsive, and meets statutory requirements. The school collaborates very effectively with partner schools, colleges, employers and other providers to ensure good continuity and progression in learning.

At key stage 4 and in the sixth form, the school offers a wide range of course options and qualifications to meet individual learner needs. It is an active member of the local 14-19 Partnership. Provision is well above the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure. All learners have equal access and are provided with high quality advice and guidance to inform their choices.

An impressive range of extra-curricular activities, work-based placements and community participation is provided which enhances learners' experiences and their quality of learning.

The delivery of key skills at each key stage is good. In key stage 3 teachers plan carefully to develop pupils' skills. Currently, these key skills are not accredited within the key stage. Literacy and numeracy are promoted and developed well across the curriculum. Targeted programmes of high quality provide effective support. Provision for information and communication technology and basic skills is good. A high proportion of learners in key stage 4 and the sixth form have the opportunity to gain key skills' qualifications as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Provision for the Welsh language and the promotion of the Welsh dimension throughout the school is good or better. In key stage 4, all learners follow a course in Welsh second language with an increasing number following the full course.

The promotion of sustainable development is developing appropriately across the curriculum.

The promotion and participation in global citizenship activities is good, particularly the link with schools in two African countries. This association, established through the Connecting Classrooms international programme, makes a notable contribution to raising pupils' awareness of differing cultures and traditions.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers apply their knowledge of effective teaching and learning to provide a range of good quality resources and activities which engage and motivate nearly all learners. Learning intentions are clearly communicated and developed through well planned and matched work. Good quality questioning reinforces learning.

Relationships are very good and make a positive contribution to learning. Members of staff provide good quality individual support. Well-structured plenary sessions confirm progress.

Where teaching is excellent, learners are challenged well above expectations, key skills are skilfully incorporated, and learning involves a high degree of collaborative problem solving and enquiry. In a few lessons, teachers do too much for pupils; there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their skills, and the pace of learning is slow.

Most teachers assess and mark learners' work accurately and regularly. In the best cases, learners are provided with clear guidance on how to improve, but there is variation in the quality of marking within a few departments. Most learners have a good understanding of their progress against expectations. They are increasingly involved in good quality self and peer-assessment and the setting of targets for improvement.

Pupils' performance data is systematically recorded and analysed well. This information is used very effectively to monitor progress towards targets and address underachievement promptly.

Parents are well informed of their children's progress. Annual reports provide useful information on attainment and effort. Most provide good quality advice and targets for improvement. Pupils produce a valuable self-evaluation of their progress and parents are invited to comment on the report.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

There are highly effective arrangements to promote learners' healthy development and wellbeing.

The school has an extensive network of information and support for all learners, and there is good provision for the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of the school's relationship with a wide range of agencies has contributed greatly towards reducing the risk of harm to learners. It has been instrumental in enabling learners to seek help and guidance on aspects of personal and social issues. A number of outstanding initiatives effectively promote social inclusion and the support provided for vulnerable learners is excellent. These are sector leading features.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

The provision for learners with additional learning needs is outstanding, and learners are very well supported through a wide range of strategies. Members of staff take

good account of individual education plans. Targets are clear and measurable and there are opportunities for learners and parents to participate and plan further action. Learning support assistants provide very effective support throughout the school.

The school identifies those learners who are more able and talented. The full impact of this provision is yet to be felt.

Learning environment: Good

The school exhibits a caring and inclusive ethos where staff and pupils demonstrate mutual respect and concern for all. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity and equality.

School accommodation on this large campus is good, most notably in the new teaching block, information and communication technology suites and recreational facilities. Community use of school facilities is a strong feature. The buildings and grounds are well-maintained.

Resources are matched well to learning needs with information and communication technology provision being a very good feature. Good displays in corridors and classrooms support learning and celebrate learners' work and achievements.

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

The headteacher, and senior management team have clear aims and strategic objectives regarding the direction in which they want the school to progress. They focus well on improving standards across all areas.

The effective leadership and high expectations of the headteacher and the full support of the senior management team ensure that both continuity and change, as detailed in the school development plan, are being managed well within the school.

Leaders at senior and middle management level fulfil their roles well in relation to their responsibilities and continually support and encourage all members of staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The senior management team and the majority of middle managers are confident in their use of data. However, not all indicators are used by departments in their self-evaluations. Target setting is an effective tool which has led to increased accountability across the school.

The school has good arrangements for the performance management of all staff.

Effective and efficient use is made of monies available for staff training by utilising in-house expertise, whole-school training days and use of carefully selected external courses. Training is linked wherever possible to the school's strategic aims and policies. These are good features.

Governors are enthusiastic and supportive of the school. They understand how well the school is performing and the areas for development. They challenge managers

critically and are developing close links with departments. The committee system works effectively. The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations well. The role of the pupil associate governor is developing.

The school takes good account of Welsh Assembly Government's priorities. Very good progress has been made in relation to the 14-19 Learning Pathways. Good progress has been made regarding the transition programme, Iaith Pawb, the Skills Agenda, the Welsh Bacalaureate Qualification and the School Effectiveness Framework. The accreditation of key skills is developing in key stage 3.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation systems are well embedded and draw on regular quality assurance procedures. The school's self-evaluation report analyses in depth the strengths and areas for development.

There are good features in the self-evaluation process. Performance is used to monitor progress and plan for improvement. Lessons are observed by members of the senior management team. Peer observations, whilst not formalised, occur in many subject areas. Books are scrutinised by senior management team and by subject leaders. There is beneficial regular dialogue between middle managers and members of senior management team who act as their critical friend.

The departmental subject reviews are the main instrument used by departments to evaluate performance. A majority identify strengths, areas for development and provide strategies to secure improvement. A minority lacks sufficient detail and the evaluation is not wide-ranging enough.

The school takes good account of the views of pupils, parents and the local community, and the school council has been involved with improvements to the physical environment of the school.

The school draws successfully upon reviews by external agencies on all aspects of school life in order to improve teaching and learning.

The school development plan is linked to the School Effectiveness Framework and contains clear priorities. Whilst it identifies strategies for action, review dates, resources required and success criteria, in a very few instances there is a lack of rigour in the targets set and the time scales noted. This also applies to departmental development plans.

The school has responded well to the recommendations in the last inspection, and measurable standards of improvement have occurred at all key stages.

An excellent feature of the school is the strong learning communities and culture of collaboration within and across schools. There is a strong professional learning community which is contributing positively to initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Continuous professional development is very well supported and good practice is shared effectively amongst all staff.

Partnership working: Good

The school has a clear vision for collaborative working and has developed effective strategic partnerships with many relevant organisations and multi-disciplinary agencies.

Transition links with primary partner schools are good. A well planned programme of activities supports the smooth movement of pupils between key stage 2 and key stage 3. Learners are supported through the process with shared activities and comprehensive data exchange assisting efficient transition.

Learners and parents provide positive feedback on the high quality of support, and pupils have been consulted in the implementation of anti-bullying and behaviour policies.

Pupils benefit greatly from a wide range of multi-disciplinary agency collaboration to help meet their needs, with careful and responsive co-ordination of external and internal programmes of support.

Joint planning with other schools, the local college and workplace providers within the unitary authority is very good. Opportunities and resources are well matched to the needs of learners, and are supported with a robust quality assurance framework.

External agencies are used to meet the needs of pupils effectively, and provide broad experiences and pathways to relevant qualification.

The school benefits from well-established links with teacher training providers.

Resource management: Good

All teaching and support staff are deployed effectively which ensures positive learning experiences for all learners. Managers have responded appropriately to the conditions in the National Agreement on "Raising Standards and Tackling Workload".

Financial resources are managed strategically. Expenditure is monitored regularly and all spending decisions relate well to priorities for improvement and for the benefit of pupils. The school makes good use of the funding it receives through collaboration with a range of other providers.

The quality of teaching provides good value for money. In general, outcomes for the pupils are good and current progress is good or better.

The sixth form provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 19 responses to the parent questionnaire representing a very small proportion of the total number of parents. Of those that responded, many gave positive responses to most questions.

All parents believe that the school is well run and that members of staff have high expectations. They feel that their children become more mature and are prepared to take on greater responsibility. Parents say that their children were helped to settle in to the new school.

Most parents are satisfied with the school which is liked by their children. There is a good range of activities and children are encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise.

Many agree that teaching is good, homework is beneficial and their children are making good progress through good support. The school is a safe environment in which members of staff treat children fairly and with respect.

Many are able to approach the school on any issues. Good advice is given to their children in readiness to move to their next school, college or work.

A minority of parents believe that they are not kept well informed about their child's progress and that there are issues regarding pupil behaviour.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 176 pupils. Nearly all pupils state that they feel safe in school. Most are doing well and receive good support when required. There are enough books and equipment available. Most are encouraged to do things for themselves and be responsible for their own actions. Pupils are respected and treated fairly and are prepared well for their next school, college or employment.

Many pupils believe that the school deals well with bullying, has someone available to deal with worries and helps them to understand and respect others. Many pupils believe that homework helps learners to improve their work.

Many pupils state that there are plenty of opportunities for them to exercise and that the school teaches them how to keep healthy. Boys were more supportive of this view than the girls.

Many sixth-form students and pupils from key stage 4 stated that they were given good advice when choosing courses for the next phase of their education.

A majority of pupils feel behaviour in class is sufficient to allow them to get on with their work.

Overall, about half the pupils were of the opinion that the school did not listen to their views. However, the majority of pupils in key stage 3 believed the school did listen to their views.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mr Gwyn Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Mr Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Mrs Bethan Whittall	Team Inspector
Mr Andrew Herdman	Team Inspector
Mr Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Mr Geraint Meic-Smith	Peer Inspector
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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