



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 Tŷ Coch
Lansdale Drive
Tonteg
Pontypridd
CF38 1PG**

Date of inspection: June 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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Ysgol Tŷ Coch, located in a residential area of Tonteg, is a residential special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, multiple and complex learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Around half of the pupils also have associated medical difficulties. The school is divided into primary and secondary departments and all pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

The school has 119 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 19 years. Pupils come from the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taff but predominantly from the Taff area, with the exception of two pupils from other authorities. The school provides residential accommodation for 38 weeks of the year for two pupils. Pupils from other special schools in the authority can access this accommodation.

There are three discrete autistic classes for pupils aged from 3 to 16 years and an assessment foundation class.

English is the predominant language of nearly all pupils. Two pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. Five pupils are from minority ethnic groups and no pupils receive support for English as an additional language. There are seven pupils with 'looked-after child' (LAC) status. Approximately 40% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is higher than the all-Wales average of just under 20%.

The school has a hydrotherapy pool, a range of sensory rooms and a well-equipped physical education department. The Foundation Phase has an outdoor learning environment and the post-16 students have a good range of facilities, which include a hair dressing salon and cafe.

The school provides a very broad curriculum and a high level of care in a safe, caring and stimulating environment.

The school was last inspected in May 2005.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol Tŷ Coch is an excellent school because:

- standards of achievements are excellent;
- the level of pupils' understanding of skills is outstanding;
- the progress of pupils in Welsh is excellent;
- learning experiences are well matched to the learning needs of the pupils;
- pupils have very good opportunities to follow a wide range of vocational options; and
- all staff have access to a wide range of professional development, which is improving standards for groups of learners.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because:

- leaders have a very clear vision for the school which is shared by all staff;
- there is an exceptional culture of rigorous self-evaluation that leads to improved outcomes for all pupils;
- there are high-quality and very effective assessment processes;
- staff performance is managed very carefully; and
- the school manages its resources well and provides excellent value for money.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Ysgol Tŷ Coch should:

- R1 increase the opportunities for pupils to work with their peers in mainstream;
- R2 widen the activities of the school council to include a greater involvement in school improvement; and
- R3 improve the quality and frequency of information provided to parents and carers.

What happens next?

Ysgol Tŷ Coch will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare written case studies, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

Across the school, pupils progress very well in relation to their needs and abilities and the targets in their individual education plans. They all have a clear understanding of their learning targets. This includes pupils from minority ethnic groups and looked after children. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls or those who receive free school meals.

Programmes are individually tailored and it is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time.

All pupils gain a range of appropriate qualifications in accredited courses well matched to their abilities. These qualifications include ASDAN Transition Challenge and Towards Independence, WJEC entry level, Agored entry level, Open College Network and National Open College Network step-up awards and the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards in bronze, silver and gold.

Less able pupils with very complex learning needs use augmentative communication well to make their needs known and express choices. They work well alongside others and use switches to join in with their peers and assess how well they complete tasks. For example, in modern foreign languages they use a switch to greet each other in French.

Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress through the phases of the Picture Exchange Communication System. They use pictures well to retell stories, plan their school day, and assess their progress.

Pupils who receive intensive support in the nurture group improve how they manage their behaviour so that they can successfully return to their class groups. They organise ordering and delivering fruit to classes, handle the money and take great care to wash their hands when handling produce.

More able pupils gain entry level awards in English, science and mathematics and physical education and art. A few pupils read for pleasure, write independently and use texts well to search for information. A few of these pupils attend a life-long learning centre to access other courses and work well within Ysgol Tŷ Coch with pupils from local schools. However, too few pupils join mainstream classes in other schools.

All pupils successfully gain the skills that they need to increase their independence and improve their work. They listen carefully, respond well to questions and work well together. During classroom activities, all groups of pupils know exactly which skills they are developing and why they need them. For example, pupils in the nurture group know that the sorting skills they use in their fruit co-operative are

improving their numeracy. Pupils with more complex needs make very good use of an innovative sensory skills wheel to identify the skills they are using. This level of pupils' understanding of skills is outstanding.

Pupils' progress in Welsh is excellent. Throughout the school, pupils develop their speaking skills exceptionally well. There is good progression from the Foundation Phase to key stage 4 as pupils build on a range of sentence patterns and extend their vocabulary. They also show a good understanding of aspects of the culture and heritage of Wales.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are very keen to learn. They are fully engaged in lessons and activities. They gain confidence and are encouraged to work independently wherever possible. Many pupils are involved in setting their own targets. They have very positive attitudes to adopting healthy lifestyles, including taking regular exercise and eating healthy foods.

All pupils benefit from detailed personal communication folders that are consistent across the school. These folders show what they like and dislike, their targets and their preferred means of communication.

All pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have great confidence in the school staff and value the care, support and guidance that they receive from them.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Where pupils have particularly challenging behaviour, staff work with them and they gain more self-control, understand why they are angry and are less anxious.

Many pupils enjoy and take an active part in community activities such as fundraising and working in the hair salon with the general public.

All pupils are well prepared for life and work outside school. Pupils gain a clear understanding of the world of work by shadowing staff within the school and working in the community.

All members of the school council make realistic and confident decisions on behalf of other pupils and their views are valued.

Pupils' attendance is good unless they have periods of illness due to their medical conditions.

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

The school provides a curriculum that is well matched to the learning needs of the pupils. All pupils receive appropriate learning experiences that are engaging, challenging, stimulating and correctly differentiated. These include sensory experiences for pupils with the most complex needs.

Older pupils have very good opportunities to follow a wide range of vocational options including courses in health and beauty, catering and horticulture. All of these courses carry accreditation at an appropriate level.

The school has made very good progress in implementing a skills based curriculum. Pupils are provided with well-planned opportunities to develop their key skills in all areas of learning. They are able to talk confidently about which skills they need to use in any learning activity.

Pupils take part in a wide range of valuable off site and extra-curricular activities, which extend and enrich pupils' learning opportunities.

Throughout the school, very beneficial learning experiences give pupils opportunities to develop their self esteem. As they progress through the school, pupils become more confident in making choices. They communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively.

Pupils have very good opportunities to develop and use their Welsh language skills and learn about Welsh culture. The school has a clear programme to promote pupils' Welsh language development. Staff and pupils use incidental Welsh accurately and naturally and the language features very prominently in the life of the school.

The school offers stimulating experiences that enable all pupils to have a good understanding about healthy living, sustainability and global citizenship. Pupils participate in a range of activities to promote sustainability including recycling, energy conservation and Forest Schools.

Teaching: Good

Teachers' planning throughout the school is very thorough and well matched to the needs of the pupils. Careful and accurate assessments of individual pupils' needs and abilities inform comprehensive and well-focused individual education plans (IEPs).

Nearly all staff have up-to-date knowledge of, and use, effective teaching approaches and are secure in their subject knowledge.

Learning support assistants and teachers work very well as a team. They plan and deliver lessons in a very purposeful environment. The staff team have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour in class and around the school. Almost all staff manage the behaviour of the pupils very well. However, on a few occasions the behaviour of a few pupils interferes with the learning of others.

Staff generally use appropriate resources very well. They use a range of communication techniques including information and communication technology and signs and symbols to develop pupils' communication skills effectively.

The school has outstanding systems for assessing, tracking and analysing information about the progress of the pupils. These high quality assessment procedures make sure that teachers and support staff can capture pupils' progress so that they can plan further learning opportunities effectively.

Clear, manageable and informative records on the progress of each pupil, including photographs of their achievements, ensure that a wide range of information is available on individual pupils. These effective recording procedures ensure that all adults working with the pupils have a wealth of helpful information to help them plan the curriculum and strategies to enhance the wellbeing and the achievement of the pupils.

The school meets all statutory requirements to review progress and keep parents and carers informed. As well as meeting these statutory requirements pupils regularly take progress books home. However, a few parents say that the information contained in these progress books is not as informative as it could be and is not updated regularly enough.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school effectively promotes pupils' health and wellbeing and the benefits of regular exercise and healthy eating. The school provides an exciting range of extra-curricular activities and there is good take up with almost half of the pupils participating in these activities.

There is appropriate provision for pupils' spiritual development through collective worship, where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to care for each other, to be honest and to treat each other fairly and with respect.

All pupils and their parents and carers were consulted about the positive behaviour policy. The school uses carefully-constructed manual handling plans to support pupils and help staff deal with challenging behaviours. These plans emphasise the use of preventative techniques.

Most pupils with complex needs benefit from comprehensive care plans and appropriate support with their mobility and sensory needs.

Learning support assistants provide pupils with good quality support in and outside the classroom. The school accesses a wide range of specialist services appropriately. The school benefits from an in-house school counsellor who gives pupils valuable support with issues that affect their lives such as bereavement.

Pupils and parents access a range of useful information through the school website.

The school makes good provision for pupils with additional learning needs and pupils who need additional support are identified effectively. Individual education plans (IEPs) identify appropriate learning targets, which are displayed clearly, reviewed regularly and used by all staff and pupils.

Staff give pupils a good understanding of bullying and what they should do if they come across it. This includes a useful anti-bullying week, interesting displays and work in Personal and Social Education (PSE).

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has a very positive and supportive ethos where pupils' achievements are celebrated and promoted by all staff. Pupils are treated with respect and dignity and their needs are very well understood and provided for.

Staff promote diversity and equal opportunities very well within the curriculum and in wider school activities. There is appropriate training for promoting equality and a clear action plan to ensure its delivery.

The accommodation has been thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. The school has attractive displays which are relevant and accessible to the pupils.

There is a good range of resources throughout the school, which are well matched to pupils' needs. The outdoor provision provides good areas for learning and for activities such as gardening, storytelling and environmental work.

There is sufficient provision of toilets and changing facilities to meet pupils' personal needs.

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

School leaders have established a clear vision for the school which is shared by all staff. There are comprehensive plans and policies, which focus well on meeting the wide range of pupils' needs.

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

The governing body shares the school's vision and is very supportive of the school. It meets regularly and has appropriate sub-committees in place. Governors have a curriculum responsibility and visit classes and the school council as part of this role. They monitor the school's performance carefully and they are beginning to focus more appropriately on school improvement.

Managers monitor and evaluate staff performance regularly. To do this, they use an inclusive and secure performance management and appraisal system well. All staff contribute to school planning and improvement. Leaders of key stages and curricular areas work well across the school to support and challenge colleagues.

Leaders use the performance management and appraisal procedures very effectively to identify whole school training and development needs. As a result, the school is able to meet the diverse and changing individual needs of the pupils. Several staff train colleagues in-house and also provide valuable outreach training and support for mainstream schools.

The school meets both local and national priorities effectively. This includes the School Effectiveness Framework agenda and the Unlocking Potential of Special Schools initiative.

Improving quality: Excellent

The process of self-evaluation is very firmly embedded in the school. All staff contribute fully and effectively to the process. The school seeks the views of parents and carers and an appropriate range of stakeholders. These views are highly valued and incorporated very well into a comprehensive self-evaluation report, which is based on first hand evidence and an extensive range of data.

As a result, leaders know the strengths and areas for improvement very well. The school has produced a very detailed and effective school improvement plan linked to the self-evaluation report.

The school has very effective systems in place for managing performance. There are well-established procedures for regular classroom observation by managers and local authority advisers. Classroom observations focus well on the main priorities in the school improvement plan. Observations provide teachers with valuable written feedback and clear actions for improvements.

Results from performance management and close scrutiny of the self-evaluation information are used very well to identify further areas for development and training for school staff. The culture of professional development is very strong. All staff have access to a wide range of appropriate courses. This is having a very positive impact on improving standards of groups of learners.

The school has established effective networks of professional practice within the school and with other schools and partners. Their commitment and involvement with a wide range of partners are having a positive impact on outcomes.

The school continuously develops its own exceptionally high-quality data to effectively monitor the progress of all individuals and all groups of pupils. This is used rigorously to inform school improvement and improve pupil outcomes. The school can accurately and quickly identify each individual pupil's progress over time in order to make sure that each individual reaches his or her potential.

The school has made very good progress in addressing 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, which impact very positively on the provision for all pupils. Partnerships with schools in Uganda and Europe also help to broaden pupils' horizons and aspirations.

Staff work effectively with a number of outside organisations to ensure that pupils benefit from an extended range of valuable learning experiences 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.

There are also very positive partnerships with further education and training agencies, which help pupils to choose the most appropriate option after leaving school. The links with Garth Olwg life-long learning centre and local retail outlets also promote well the pupils' social development and their understanding of the world of work.

The school is using Welsh Government funding for 'Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools' to lead a worthwhile initiative to support local schools in manual handling and in integrating pupils with disabilities in physical education activities.

Parents and carers value the support they receive from the school and support the school's many initiatives.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources effectively. Staff are well qualified and a number provide outreach training for other organisations.

Performance management procedures are well established and are effective in identifying staff's training and developmental needs. There are good systems in place to manage teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time.

Support staff are effectively deployed and make a very important contribution to the pupils' learning experiences and to the quality of the care and guidance.

Spending priorities and training programmes link closely with the school's improvement plan and are reviewed regularly by the governing body, who in turn work closely with the school leaders and the local authority to ensure best value.

Standards of provision and support are consistently good and the school is successful in ensuring that pupils make excellent progress both in their attainment and social development. As a consequence, the school provides excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirty-two parents responded to the questionnaire and nearly all agreed or strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the school and that it is well run. They all agreed that their child feels safe in school, likes the school and was helped to settle in at the start. All parents feel that pupils behave well and that staff expect them to work hard. Nearly all parents agree that the teaching is good, and that their child is making good progress and treated fairly and with respect, and also encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise. Most parents feel that the school encourages children to take on responsibility, prepares them well for moving on and offers a good range of activities including trips and visits. Nearly all parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem and understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints. A few parents do not feel that the school keeps them well enough informed about their child's progress.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifty-four pupils responded to the questionnaire and, overall, are very positive about their school. All pupils agree that they feel safe and are doing well in the school. Nearly all pupils feel that the school deals well with bullying and that they have someone to talk to if they are worried. Almost all pupils agree that the school teaches them to be healthy. Most pupils feel that they have enough books and equipment and that children behave well so they can get their work done.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Meinir Rees	Reporting Inspector
Mike Munting	Team Inspector
Clive Phillips	Team Inspector
Claire Yardley	Team Inspector
Bernard Harrington	Lay Inspector
Wayne Murphy	Peer Inspector
Shelagh Fisher	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