



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

**Alltwen Primary School
Alltwen Hill
Alltwen
Pontardawe
Swansea
SA8 3AB**

Date of inspection: March 2013

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Alltwen Primary School is in a small village in the Swansea Valley close to the town of Pontardawe. The school draws widely from the area and a few pupils come by bus from Trebanos. Pupils come from varied backgrounds, overall being neither economically disadvantaged nor advantaged. Around 25% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the Welsh average of 21%. The school identifies that around 22% of pupils require support for additional educational needs. This is just above the Welsh average for primary schools (20%). A very few pupils have a statement of special educational need.

There are 260 pupils on role aged between three and 11. Fifty-one pupils attend either morning or afternoon nursery with the remainder of pupils taught in nine mixed ability classes. There are two mixed age classes, one combining Years 4 and 5 and the other combining Years 5 and 6.

Most pupils come from homes where English is the main language and no pupils are fluent Welsh speakers. There is a strong Welsh cultural tradition in the area and a few pupils come from homes where their grandparents speak Welsh. A very few pupils come from other bilingual ethnic backgrounds and 8% of families describe themselves as being other than white British.

The individual school budget per pupil for Alltwen Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,026 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Neath Port Talbot is £7,410 and the minimum is £2,806. Alltwen Primary School is 61st out of the 68 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot in terms of its school budget per pupil.

The interim headteacher took up post in February 2013, the substantive headteacher is seconded.

The school was last inspected in March 2007.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory

Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate. This is because:

- by the end of key stage 2 many pupils achieve well;
- pupils are happy, participate well in lessons and feel safe;
- in key stage 2, the quality of teaching is generally good; and
- the school provides good levels of care and support for pupils.

However:

- over the last four years pupil attainment, in end of key stage assessments, does not compare well to that of other similar schools;
- standards in the Foundation Phase are judged as adequate;
- pupils' attendance is too low; and
- assessment procedures are inconsistent.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are judged to be unsatisfactory This is because:

- the school does not have a track record of delivering sustained improvement over time;
- self-evaluation processes are not rigorous, they do not take good enough account of first hand evidence or involve staff and other stakeholders appropriately;
- the very recent strong focus on school improvement and distributed leadership has not yet had time to establish a strategic direction for the school; and
- there is no effective system in place to monitor and manage the performance of teachers.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' standards in the Foundation Phase, particularly in reading, writing and numeracy
- R2 Ensure that more able pupils achieve the higher levels in end of phase and key stage assessments
- R3 Improve pupils' attendance
- R4 Develop leadership at all levels
- R5 Engage governors more fully so that they can support and challenge the school robustly and hold it to account for the standards achieved
- R6 Improve self-evaluation procedures by involving all staff and using robust first hand evidence
- R7 Establish effective performance management procedures

What happens next?

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Overall, standards in the Foundation Phase are adequate. Most pupils develop their speaking, listening and social skills appropriately and many participate suitably when working with adults. A few pupils that are more able read well but progress in reading and writing is generally too slow and a significant minority of pupils do not reach the required standards for their age. Pupils do not have a strong enough grasp of phonic skills to help them read unfamiliar words. In their writing, a majority of pupils write only very short sentences and too few can write extended pieces using appropriate basic punctuation. Generally, pupils make sound progress in developing their numeracy skills but do not apply them well enough across all areas of learning.

Overall, standards by the end of key stage 2 are good. Many pupils make good progress as they move through key stage 2 and the current standard in their books is good. In teacher-led sessions, nearly all pupils respond intelligently, listening and thinking about their contributions. Most pupils develop well as readers and older pupils read fluently and accurately. Many pupils in upper key stage 2 respond well in discussions and collaborate effectively in pairs and groups and when working independently. More able pupils use a wide vocabulary confidently. Many pupils have good writing skills. They draft and adapt their writing well and use various forms of writing effectively, for example when conveying information or writing creatively. By the end of key stage 2, the majority have good presentation and handwriting. Many pupils develop their numeracy skills well and measure, record and calculate for different purposes using graphs or tables to present their findings.

Pupils make suitable progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and standards are good overall. Many become familiar with using a range of equipment in Foundation Phase and consolidate their skills well in key stage 2 where many use ICT purposefully in a good range of subjects.

Standards in Welsh develop well as pupils progress through the school and most pupils achieve good standards of oracy by Year 6. In the Foundation Phase, pupils listen and respond appropriately to the use of Welsh in the classroom and slowly build their vocabulary and understanding. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read and write in Welsh to an appropriate level. Many write using different and interesting sentence structures to record different types of Welsh scripts.

Pupils with additional learning needs contribute well in class and work successfully with the teaching assistants who support them. They make good progress when measured against the targets in their individual learning plans. More able pupils in upper key stage 2 make good and sometimes very good progress. Evidence from the inspection suggests that significantly more pupils are working towards the higher level (level 5) in end of key stage assessments than in previous years.

In 2012, when compared to the results of pupils in schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' results in each Foundation Phase area of learning are in the lower 50% but not in the lowest 25%. Pupils' results at above the expected level in mathematical development are in the lower 50% but not the lowest 25%. In language literacy and communication and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, pupil performance at the higher level is in the higher 50% but not the top 25%.

In key stage 2, in three of the last four years, when compared to the performance of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school was in the upper 50% but not in the top 25% in relation to the core subject indicator. Attainment at the higher than expected level (level 5) in the past four years is low in comparison with the average for similar schools in all core subjects.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and taking exercise. They are aware for example of important health messages promoted by the school's 'Healthy Heroes' activities led by key stage 2 pupils. Most pupils accept responsibility readily and they participate enthusiastically in the school council or in class to contribute their views and discuss how they should behave and work together. Behaviour around the school and at break times is good and pupils are friendly and supportive to each other and respectful to adults. Overall, conduct in lessons is good. There is a sound working atmosphere and pupils are well motivated to learn and interested in the activities presented.

Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school. In discussion, most report they are confident that the school deals effectively with any issues that occur. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually at school. Attendance, however, is below local and national averages and has placed the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools for the last two years.

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

The planned learning experiences meet requirements, identify a stimulating range of activities and meet many pupils' needs successfully. Staff identify appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy, ICT and speaking and listening skills. However, planning to promote pupils' early reading and writing skills is not consistent and, as a result, pupils in the Foundation Phase do not make enough progress. Staff generally plan well to challenge more able pupils and meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs.

The school provides appropriate structured opportunities for the development of Welsh. Staff embed these opportunities well across the curriculum and engage all pupils in the use of the language. The provision for the broader Welsh dimension is well supported, for example, through the exploration of Welsh artists and the study of local personalities. The local agreed approach for religious education is strongly in place. Educational visits to relevant locations such as St. Fagan's Museum and visits such as from local clergy or police enrich the school's provision.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is well developed. Both in class and through the active eco council pupils have regular opportunities to reflect on how their actions can affect the environment. Worthwhile international links, for example with schools in Karachi, enable pupils to gain a very good understanding about their place in the wider world.

Teaching: Adequate

Where teaching is good, teachers structure sessions effectively and manage support staff well. Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to discuss their learning and to work in pairs or groups practising their speaking and listening skills and addressing problems or tasks they are set. In key stage 2, most teachers conduct sessions at a brisk pace, have good subject knowledge and provide good learning models for pupils.

In the Foundation Phase, teachers do not direct all activities carefully enough to ensure that pupils gain maximum benefit and make progress. Too often, teachers do not deploy teaching assistants well enough to support the planned range of activities. Generally, in the Foundation Phase, teachers do not use the time and resources identified for the development of literacy skills effectively.

Overall, many teachers explain learning objectives well and help pupils to understand what they need to do to succeed. Many involve pupils appropriately in setting their own targets. Most teachers provide effective oral feedback to pupils. They mark pupils' written work regularly and many indicate clearly what pupils need to do to improve. In many instances, pupils evaluate their own work and that of their classmates, usefully identifying where they have succeeded or how they need to improve.

The school gathers a range of assessment data in order to track progress and identify underachievement. Teachers generally use this information appropriately to help them plan for individual and groups but this is not consistent. The school's systems to standardise and moderate assessments of pupils' work are underdeveloped. Recent exercises focusing on literacy and mathematics have helped staff to increase their understanding of how to assess pupils at the end of a key stage. However, this is at an early stage of development and does not yet ensure fully accurate teacher assessment.

Reports to parents give a clear picture of their child's strengths and areas to develop. They fulfil statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The school addresses pupils' social, moral and emotional education sensitively through its personal and social education curriculum. There are specific and effective programmes for pupils with emotional needs. Pupils have opportunities to learn musical instruments and there is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities including, for example, gardening and a range of sports. The school promotes pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness successfully in class and in school assemblies.

Staff effectively encourage good behaviour using positive praise and reward. Pupils show a good understanding of why it is beneficial for them to abide by the agreed school rules. Most pupils and their parents or carers feel able to approach staff for advice and guidance about any concerns.

The promotion of pupils' awareness of healthy living is strength of the school. As a result, nearly all pupils show a good understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy. Pupils enthusiastically run and support the fruit tuck shop. There is a well attended breakfast club. The school consistently reinforces the values of healthy living across the curriculum.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good and class teachers are highly aware of pupils in their classes who have individual education plans. There are strong links with a wide range of specialist services, particularly in relation to vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs. Pupils benefit from this external advice and review.

The school does not have in place effective systems for raising attendance.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive and caring community. The curriculum is fully accessible to all, regardless of ability, gender, race or background.

All pupils are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school. There is a strong focus on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. All teachers and support staff give a valuable emphasis to building pupils' self-esteem, recognising achievement and raising aspirations.

Buildings are well maintained, in good decorative order and appropriate for the number of pupils. Classrooms are well organised and have good quality displays that usefully support learning. Current pupils' work is displayed in corridors and shared areas which are effectively used for group teaching. Outdoor provision is good, with the school's own fields and garden immediately accessible. Playground spaces are beneficially large and well equipped with outdoor toys and other learning equipment.

There are sufficient resources to meet pupils' needs, and provision for ICT is good.

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

The interim headteacher places strong emphasis on improving teaching and learning. He has increased the role of senior leaders and established regular senior leadership team meetings. These are important, but very recent, developments and have not yet had time to improve the quality of provision or pupil outcomes.

Subject leaders know their roles and make good contributions to teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility. Staff meetings focus on improvement plans with a current focus on numeracy and literacy. Senior teachers and the committed staff support these initiatives well. However, the school does not distribute leadership effectively through the teaching staff or embed initiatives well enough to maximise outcomes for pupils. The school does not have a clear system for performance managing the performance of staff. Not all teachers contribute effectively to whole school pupil performance targets.

The school's response to meeting a few local and national priorities is sound. It has collaborated with the local authority and the cluster of local schools to improve assessment in numeracy and literacy and enhance provision for pupils with additional learning needs. However, standards in the Foundation Phase and pupils' attendance levels remain too low.

The governing body is committed and informed about the work of the school through headteacher reports and regular visits. However, governors' understanding of how well pupils achieve in comparison to those in other similar schools is underdeveloped. As a result, they have not rigorously challenged the school about its standards or held leaders well enough to account.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The school's self-evaluation procedures are underdeveloped and are not inclusive enough. Many staff and other stakeholders did not contribute directly to the content of the latest self-evaluation report. The school does not have well-established, secure systems for reviewing the quality of teaching.

The school has a clear overview of the areas it has identified for improvement. The school development plan has highlighted appropriate areas for development including literacy, numeracy and staff professional development. The plan indicates timescales, costs, success criteria and roles of key persons. However, the monitoring arrangements to evaluate the impact of initiatives have only been implemented recently.

Staff are involved in a range of training initiatives, including working closely with local authority advisers and other local schools. This work has led to improved standards in Welsh and also helped to improve the sharing of good practice between classes.

Since the last inspection, pupils' standards in Welsh have improved significantly. However, attendance levels have not improved and whilst the school has put in place collections of pupils' work to demonstrate end-of-year standards, inconsistencies remain in teachers' understanding of assessment and levelling pupils' work. The school does not have a good track record of securing sustained improvement.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively in partnership with a range of agencies including the local authority, the community and local businesses. There is an effective partnership with an independently run pre-school unit that is based at the school.

There are appropriate arrangements by which it uses school facilities. This promotes valuable shared understanding of pre-school learning and transition into nursery. The school has successful partnerships with parents and carers and keeps them well informed through the school newsletter, website and texts.

The school has worked in partnership with specialist advisers and other schools to devise and introduced new style individual educational plans for pupils with additional learning needs. This has enhanced the provision though it is too early yet to assess the impact for pupils.

There are strong links with the local secondary school. Well thought out transition plans effectively ensure that pupils are prepared for secondary education. There are shared moderation processes, developed in partnership, for end of key stage assessments that involve staff from the local cluster of schools, the local secondary school and the local authority.

The school has good links with local colleges and teacher training facilities.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has sufficient staff and resources to deliver the curriculum. The governors' finance committee, ably supported by the school bursar, carefully manages school finances and has managed to bring the school out of a deficit budget situation. The school's spending plans link suitably to school priorities. For example, a new school reading scheme has been purchased this school year. The school manages its buildings and resources appropriately.

Despite improvements in standards in key stage 2, overall the school has not succeeded in securing continuous improvement over the past four years. There is no effective system to manage the performance of teaching staff.

In view of the standards achieved and the good progress made by many pupils by the end of key stage 2, the school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2012, pupil performance in the Foundation Phase outcome indicator (the expected level in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity) is below the average for the family. Performance in the individual areas of learning at the expected level (outcome 5) and above the expected level (outcome 6) is more mixed. In language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity pupil performance is in line with the family at the expected levels. Mathematical development is weaker and below the average. At outcome 6, in each of these areas of learning, pupils' performance is below the family average.

In 2012, when compared to the results of pupils in schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' results in each Foundation Phase area of learning are in the lower 50% but not in the lowest 25%. Pupils' results at above the expected level in mathematical development are in the lower 50% but not the lowest 25%. However, in language literacy and communication and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, pupil performance at the higher level, is in the highest 50% but not the top 25%. Boys achieved better than girls at the expected level but performance was similar at the higher level.

In key stage 2, pupil attainment in the core subject indicator (the expected level in English mathematics and science) has risen in the last three years and in 2012 was above family, local and national averages. With the exception of 2010, when performance dipped, pupil outcomes in English, mathematics and science have overall been better than or equal to family and other averages over the last four years.

In the last four years, when compared to performance of schools in similar circumstances, with the exception of a dip in 2010, the school was in the higher 50% but not in the highest 25% for the core subject indicator at key stage 2. Performance in each of the individual subjects is more varied and in English the school is generally in the lower 50% but not the lowest 25%. Positions in mathematics and science are inconsistent from year to year and the school was in the lower 50% but not the lowest 25% in 2012.

The school's performance at the higher level (level 5) in English, mathematics and science does not generally compare well to that of other similar schools.

In the past four years, overall, girls performed better than boys. This is similar to the situation in other schools in the family. However, boys' performance fluctuates and in 2012, they achieved above family averages.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirty-two parents completed the questionnaire.

Nearly all parents feel that their children like the school, that they are safe and that they are expected to work hard and do their best and were helped to settle in well when they started at the school.

Most parents think that their children:

- are encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- are helped to become more mature and responsible; and also
- that teaching is good and the school is well run.

In a majority of questions the views of parents at Alltwen Primary School were significantly less positive than those of parents in similar schools across Wales. The most noticeable differences related to how well parents felt the school keeps them informed about their children's progress and how well they feel children are supported in relation to particular needs.

A minority of parents had concerns about:

- how good a range of activities, trips and visits is provided;
- the school's procedures for dealing with complaints;
- whether homework builds well on what is learnt in school; and
- how well their child was prepared for moving on to the next school.

A few parents had concerns about:

- approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems;
- the progress their child is making; and
- how well pupils behave.

Responses to pupil questionnaires

One hundred and twenty-eight pupils from key stage 2 completed the questionnaire.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and think that the school teaches them how to stay healthy. Most feel that they are doing well in school; know whom to ask if they find their work hard and know whom to talk to if they are worried. Most feel that teachers and other adults in their school help them to learn and make progress.

A few pupils feel that homework does not help them to understand and improve their work and disagree that they have lots of chances for regular exercise or that they have enough books, equipment and computers.

The views of pupils at Alltwen were significantly less positive than those of other pupils in schools across Wales. Pupils were particularly more negative about how well the school deals with any bullying and the behaviour of a few pupils at playtime and lunchtime.

Around a half of pupils comment that other children do not behave well and sometimes prevent them from getting their classwork done.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Gregory Owens	Reporting Inspector
Enir Morgan	Team Inspector
Ivor Petherick	Lay Inspector
Karen Olds	Peer Inspector
Sarah Harwood	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.