



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

**Southdown Community Primary School
Linderick Avenue
Buckley
Flintshire
CH7 2NP**

Date of inspection: September 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

Southdown Community Primary School is situated in Buckley, a town near Mold, in the county borough of Flintshire. The school is one of four primary schools that serve the town community. The school opened in 1976. The single storey premises are of an 'open plan' design and are set in spacious grounds.

There are 416 pupils on roll, including 55 children who attend part-time in the nursery. The school is organised into 16 classes for pupils of mixed ability, with parallel classes in each year group. In upper key stage 2, pupils are taught in ability sets for a few lessons in literacy. At age 11 years, almost all pupils transfer to a choice of two local comprehensive schools in the area.

Approximately 13% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the all-Wales average of just fewer than 20%.

English is the predominant language of almost all pupils. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. Fewer than 3% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Almost all pupils speak English fluently and additional language teaching is provided for a very few. The school has identified 26% of pupils as having additional learning needs. In January 2010, one pupil had a statement of special educational need but there are no pupils with a statement this term. There are no looked after children on roll. One pupil was excluded for a fixed term during the twelve months prior to the inspection.

The school has achieved Phase 5 of the Healthy Schools award, Activ Mark Cymru, the Basic Skills Quality Standard, the Investors in People Award and the Eco-Schools Green Flag award.

The school was last inspected in 2005. The headteacher joined the school in 1993 and was appointed as headteacher in 2008.

The individual school budget for Southdown C.P.School in 2010-2011 was £2,735 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Flintshire was £7,635 and the minimum was £2,660. Southdown C.P.School was 71st out of the 74 primary schools in Flintshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The overall judgement of the school's current performance is adequate. The school's strengths are that:

- pupils are polite, very well behaved and keen to learn;
- staff are enthusiastic and create a positive and orderly learning environment;
- provision for pupils in the Foundation Phase allows pupils to become confident, independent learners;
- there is good support for pupils with special educational needs;
- there are effective activities to ensure that pupils learn how to be healthy; and
- there are good opportunities for outdoor learning.

However:

- trends over the last four years show that the school generally performs less well than other similar schools at key stage 2;
- there are shortcomings in pupils' standards in reading and writing;
- staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve; and
- pupils do not know clearly what they must do to improve their work.

Prospects for improvement

The overall judgement for prospects for improvement is adequate. The school's strengths are:

- the positive ethos where staff work as a team and show commitment to the school and its pupils;
- the clear management structures and policies;
- the well-ordered community; and
- the strong, supportive partnership with parents.

However:

- leaders and managers do not monitor the school's performance with enough rigour so do not recognise the shortcomings in pupils' standards;
- self-evaluation is under-developed; and
- lesson monitoring does not identify areas for development well enough.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, Southdown Primary School needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' standards in reading and writing across the school;
- R2 ensure that pupils continue to make progress in Welsh second language, particularly in upper key stage 2;
- R3 improve teachers' planning to ensure progression in pupils' key skills across the curriculum;
- R4 ensure that teaching offers enough challenge to pupils of all abilities so as to raise standards;
- R5 improve the quality and consistency of marking to ensure that pupils know more clearly how they can improve their work; and
- R6 improve self-evaluation systems to enable effective assessment and monitoring of pupil and teacher performance.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

In the Foundation Phase, almost all pupils make good progress. Pupils in nursery and reception classes settle quickly into the class routines, and are confident in choosing activities and developing independence. Throughout the phase, pupils listen, speak and co-operate well. They begin to develop good strategies for reading. Most pupils, of all abilities, read with confidence but do not always think enough about the story to improve their understanding.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase develop good writing skills but many do not learn to hold pencils well. This limits their progress in forming letters and developing an effective handwriting style.

For the last four years, pupils' performance at the end of the key stage has been better than national and local averages and in-line with that of other similar schools.

At the end of key stage 2, pupils have generally performed less well in attaining the expected levels when compared with those in other schools. The exception was in 2009-2010, when attainment was better than all-Wales and Flintshire averages in all three core subjects and better than that of its family of similar schools in mathematics. The attainment of both boys and girls in English in 2011 was below average.

Most pupils learn and discuss new vocabulary with confidence. In reading, older pupils in key stage 2 do not always understand the text well enough and misread words. Too few pupils' standards in reading are well above their chronological ages. Throughout the key stage, pupils' writing skills are under-developed. They know how to write for different purposes but do not produce enough good quality pieces of extended work. Very few pupils use basic punctuation, such as capital letters and paragraphs, correctly. Pupils do not all present their work well enough.

Overall, most pupils, including those with special educational needs or who are more able, make adequate progress but do not set themselves high enough goals to do better. In 2011, the overall performance of pupils in the Foundation Phase taking free school meals was better than that of similar pupils in other schools. In key stage 2, those pupils performed less well than those taking free school meals in other schools.

By the end of key stage 2, most pupils make adequate progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They begin to develop oral skills well at a young age but their progress in speaking and reading loses pace as they move through the school. Older pupils in key stage 2 do not always read with accuracy or understand the text. Attainment of the expected level at the end of key stage 2 in 2011 was below national averages.

Wellbeing: Good

The standard of pupils' wellbeing is a strong feature of the school.

Most pupils are happy, co-operative, attentive and enthusiastic learners. They apply themselves well in lessons, adopt a positive approach to learning activities and generally produce what is asked for. Almost all pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and around the school. They are polite, friendly and courteous to adults and each other. They work well together in pairs and groups, share well and show respect for others' views. All pupils say they feel safe in school and are confident that the staff will give them appropriate support when needed.

All pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The whole school participates with enthusiasm in 'Wake-up, Shake-up' activities outdoors at the end of mid-day break-time. Through this activity, pupils learn to understand the importance of exercise. Most older pupils have a secure understanding of the benefits of eating a healthy diet.

Pupils' attendance is good and above the all-Wales average. In 2009-2010, pupils' attendance was in the top 25% when compared with that of other schools. Almost all pupils are punctual.

The school council plays an active part in school life. It successfully helps to support fund-raising events and plays an increasing role in contributing suggestions to improve the school. Older pupils have good opportunities to become involved in the local community, when, for example, they learn about how the local council operates.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning experiences. Teachers plan well together to ensure consistency across each year group. Learning experiences planned in the Foundation Phase encourage pupils to make choices and become independent. However, teaching time is slightly below the 21 hours recommended by the Welsh Government.

Planning in key stage 2 does not always make the most of opportunities to develop pupils' key skills, particularly in writing. Neither does planning always provide enough challenge to pupils. For example, there is too much use of worksheets. In practice, there is little evidence of work in class meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. The exception is in literacy where, this term, pupils from across the school are placed in ability groups to follow a new published scheme. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this initiative.

Although the school uses the scheme of work provided by the local authority, planning for progression in the development of Welsh language skills lacks overall consistency through the school. In the Foundation Phase, there is good use of resources to support continuity. However, in key stage 2 there is too much overlap and repetition of themes and patterns. The school promotes pupils' understanding of Welsh culture appropriately.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits enhances pupils' learning. There is good provision for education for sustainable development. The eco council is proactive and engages enthusiastically in a range of interesting projects. Provision to develop pupils' understanding of global citizenship is less well developed. Overall, there is good provision for pupils to increase their understanding of different faiths and cultures.

Teaching: Adequate

In all lessons observed, across the school, relationships between staff and pupils are good and have a positive impact on pupils' sense of wellbeing and enthusiasm for learning.

Where teaching is good, lessons have clear learning objectives that are appropriate to pupils' age and ability and are delivered with good pace. Staff make good use of a varied range of resources and support staff are deployed effectively to assist pupils. However, in many lessons activities do not offer pupils enough challenge. Where there are shortcomings, expectation is too low, introductions are too long and delivery is too slow. Lessons do not always cater well enough for pupils throughout the ability range.

The school has clear and thorough assessment, recording and pupil tracking procedures. However, although the school collects a large amount of data, it does not use it well to diagnose the next steps in pupils' learning. Most teachers' marking does not ensure that pupils know clearly how their work can be improved. Many pupils are beginning to use strategies to assess their own and others' work but this is at a very early stage of development.

Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's achievements and wellbeing.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Pupils and parents value the school's safe and caring environment. All staff have a shared understanding and responsibility for care, support and guidance, and are fully committed to the pupils' wellbeing. There are clear, well-ordered procedures to ensure that pupils maintain very good standards of behaviour. Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility, show initiative and develop an understanding of living in a community. Learning experiences promote pupils' personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school provides good individual support for pupils with special educational needs. There is effective early intervention to identify needs and plan appropriate individual support. There are good systems in place to monitor these pupils' progress and meet their changing needs. The school proactively establishes and maintains a range of support systems from specialist services. This has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing.

The school promotes the benefits of having a healthy lifestyle and diet very effectively.

There are appropriate policies and procedures for child protection. A health and safety issue was brought to the school's attention during the inspection.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a positive ethos where all pupils are encouraged to treat each other fairly and equally. All pupils have equal access to the school's provision and are encouraged to participate in a range of activities. They are confident that the school deals effectively with any issues of poor behaviour.

The premises are well maintained and displays of pupils' work improve the learning environment. There are attractive outdoor learning areas, including a wild garden and forest school area, which provide good opportunities to enhance pupils' learning, particularly in the Foundation Phase.

Staff manage the limitations of the open-plan design of the building, and resulting variations in room size, well to ensure that the accommodation does not impact negatively on pupils' learning. However, the school hall is very small and, although well managed, lunchtime arrangements are difficult.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors ensure that everyone in the school community shares a common vision and values concerning pupils' wellbeing, and educational and social experiences. This is reflected in the positive ethos throughout the school where staff work well together as a team.

The school is a well-ordered community. Its managerial structures, policies and roles are clear. However, leaders are not sufficiently aware of significant areas for improvement and so do not always have high enough expectations. They do not always effectively challenge staff to ensure consistent improvement in academic outcomes, particularly in key stage 2. The school collects relevant information about the pupils' performance that leaders analyse in detail. However, leaders do not always use the information well enough and miss opportunities to focus on specific aspects to raise academic standards effectively.

Governors are very supportive of the school and have ensured that statutory requirements are met. However, they do not monitor the school's performance in enough detail to support and challenge the school's expectations. The school gives good attention to many Welsh Government and local priorities. For example, it uses the grounds well to enhance learning in the Foundation Phase.

Improving quality: Adequate

There are detailed processes for understanding the school's strengths and areas for improvement that include seeking the views of parents. However, the school does not always use relevant evidence in evaluating its strengths and areas for development.

In its development plan, the school has identified appropriately the need to raise standards in English and has introduced a new published scheme. However, it has not considered some basic strategies to improve standards in the subject, such as improving pupils' handwriting and use of punctuation.

All members of staff are regularly involved in self-evaluation procedures and agree priorities. Each teacher takes responsibility for monitoring an area of the curriculum. Their tasks include observing lessons, monitoring pupils' work, and reporting formally on their findings. Staff are too generous in their observations so do not identify key strategies for improvement. For example, they have not identified inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and marking.

The headteacher meets regularly with groups of pupils to take account of their views, but key stage 2 pupils do not have enough opportunity to influence their own learning.

Good quality professional learning communities within the school enable staff to develop and share their professional knowledge. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive effect on the provision for pupils and transition between the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

Partnership working: Good

The school is involved in a wide range of partnerships that enhance provision and pupils' learning experiences. Links with parents are good; they are well informed regarding their children's learning. An active parents' association raises significant sums, which enhances the school's provision.

The school has a wide range of links within the locality. Links with the town council develop pupils' understanding of community and democracy. Local services such as the police and fire brigade visit the school and develop pupils' safety and wellbeing. Good links with the local church make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The school manages transition effectively. Pupils moving on to secondary schools are well prepared. Records, agreed by local schools, provide the receiving schools with key information regarding pupils' achievement.

There are well-developed links with a range of teacher and support worker training institutions and colleges.

Resource management: Adequate

Leaders manage the school's financial resources well and ensure that they are fully linked to its development plan. The budget is monitored carefully.

The school has enough qualified, experienced teachers who are suitably deployed. However, opportunities are missed to ensure that learning support staff are always used well to support pupils' learning. Staff have good opportunities to attend appropriate training courses, for example to develop their skills in delivering the Foundation Phase effectively.

Overall, the school has a good range of appropriate resources. The school gives adequate value for money because there are significant areas for improvement in standards and teaching.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Data analysis

The core subjects are English, mathematics and science. The core subject indicator (CSI) is the expected level that pupils are expected to attain in all three subjects in combination, at the end of each key stage. The 'family' is a group of schools from across Wales that face similar challenges based on their socio-economic group and the number of pupils on roll.

Key stage 1

Over the last five years, pupils' attainment in the CSI, at the end of key stage 1, has been above the all-Wales and Flintshire averages and in-line with its family. In 2011, performance at key stage 1 was better than all comparators.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics and science at key stage 1 showed a similar pattern of improvement over time. There was a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3, in both subjects, in 2011.

In English, pupils' attainment in oracy and reading has been strong but attainment in writing below average for the family. Attainment at the higher level 3 has risen sharply over the last five years and in 2011 was better than all comparators.

When compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), pupils' performance in 2010-2011 placed Southdown C.P. School in the top 25% of schools for English and the CSI. It was in the upper 50% of schools for mathematics and science.

In key stage 1, girls performed better than boys in the CSI and all core subjects.

Key stage 2

Over the last five years, pupils' attainment in the CSI, at the end of key stage 2, has generally been below, and in 2011 well below, almost all comparators. The exception was in 2010, when CSI attainment for those pupils taking free school meals was in the top 50% when compared with schools with a similar percentage of such pupils. Performance at key stage 2, in 2011, was significantly lower than at key stage 1.

In 2011, pupils' performance in English was lower than all comparators and the lowest in its family. Attainment was 10% lower than in the previous year. Attainment in oracy and writing was weak. Pupils' attainment at the higher level 5 has fallen between 2007 and 2011.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics in 2011 was below all comparators for the expected and higher levels. A similar drop in attainment was evident in science.

When compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), pupils' performance in 2010-2011 placed the school in the bottom 25% for all three core subjects and the CSI.

There has been no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys at key stage 2.

Attainment at key stage 2 improved in all subjects in 2009-2010 but the school still performed less well in English and science that year when compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to FSM. Overall, standards of attainment fell significantly in 2010-2011. The school had identified a significant proportion of pupils in the cohort as having special educational needs. This did not account for the shortcomings identified by the inspection in those pupils' work and in other data provided by the school as evidence.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Eighty-five pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Inspectors also talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils across the school. There is little variation in the responses from boys and girls. All pupils think that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress and know what to do if they find their work hard. Almost all pupils state that they are doing well at school, say that they have enough books and equipment and agree that homework helps them to understand and improve their work.

All pupils agree that school teaches them how to keep healthy and gives them lots of opportunities to take regular exercise. Almost all pupils say that they feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. Most pupils think that the school deals well with any bullying.

Many pupils feel that pupils behave well at play and lunch time but a minority think that other pupils' behaviour interferes with their work in class.

Overall, these views are a little more positive than the views of pupils in other schools across Wales.

Responses to parent questionnaires

One hundred and sixty-eight parents completed the questionnaires. Almost all parents gave positive responses to every question. Only one per cent of parents gave negative responses. Most parents strongly agree that they are satisfied with the school, that their child likes school and is making good progress.

All parents agree that the school is well run, that teaching is good and that staff expect pupils to work hard and do their best. All parents say that their child was helped to settle well into the school and that they feel comfortable in approaching the school if they have questions or concerns.

All parents are confident that their child is safe at school. They also feel that the staff treat pupils with respect and that the school encourages them to take responsibility. Most parents strongly agree that the school offers a good range of activity and encourages pupils to be healthy.

Almost all parents agree that they are kept well informed about their child's progress, that their child likes school and receives appropriate support for any particular needs, and that homework supports their learning. Almost all parents also agree that pupils behave well at school and staff treat all children fairly. Almost all parents state that they know the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Overall, parents in Southdown C.P. School are more positive in their responses about the school than parents in other schools across Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Rosemary Lait	Reporting Inspector
Gareth Wyn Roberts	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Harris	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Morien Morgan	Peer Inspector
Andrew Wilkie	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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