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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Abermule Primary School
Abermule
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6ND**

Date of inspection: December 2012

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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Context

The school is in the village of Abermule, about three miles north of Newtown in Powys. It is on an extensive site, which it shares with the local community centre. The area it serves is relatively advantaged. Around 8% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average.

Pupils aged from four to 11 years attend the school from Abermule and surrounding villages. There are 83 pupils on roll, including 13 children under five, in three mixed-age classes. A temporary teacher was in charge of the Year 3/4 class at the time of the inspection.

Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. Very few speak Welsh at home. No pupil comes from an ethnic minority background or speaks English as an additional language. The school has identified around 14% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is below the national average. No pupil has a statement of special educational need.

The school was last inspected in October 2006. The headteacher was appointed in 1992.

The individual school budget per pupil for Abermule Community Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,803 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Powys is £8,253 and the minimum is £3,087. Abermule Community Primary School is 40th out of the 99 primary schools in Powys in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points;
- pupils are happy and keen to learn;
- the overall quality of teaching is good;
- the headteacher and staff share a clear vision and sense of purpose; and
- there is a very strong partnership with parents and the local community.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- all members of the school community contribute well to the self-evaluation process;
- the findings of the school's self-evaluation are accurate;
- school development planning focuses sharply on the most significant priorities for improvement;
- the governing body supports and challenges the school well; and
- action on previous priorities for improvement has raised standards in important areas.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in pupils' writing across the curriculum in key stage 2.
- R2 Improve consistency in the presentation of pupils' work in all subjects in key stage 2.
- R3 Increase the levels of expectation and challenge provided for more able pupils.
- R4 Ensure consistency in the effectiveness of teaching assistants in supporting pupils' learning.
- R5 Develop a clear system for tracking and recording the progress of individual pupils within each year group as they move through the school.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The majority of pupils enter the Foundation Phase with skills that are above average for their age. Most pupils make good progress in developing their skills as they move through the school. They achieve levels expected of them at the end of key stage 2 relative to their individual starting points. Most pupils show good recall of previous learning and generally apply their skills well to new situations.

Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. Most pupils in the Foundation Phase listen and respond enthusiastically to one another's ideas and to suggestions from an adult. They speak at increasing length, with a widening vocabulary, both in adult-led and independent activities. In key stage 2, most pupils are keen to contribute to discussions. They share and explore ideas well in pairs and small groups. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils show maturity and confidence in discussing their work with adults. Throughout the school, most pupils' good listening skills help them to learn.

Most pupils make good progress in their reading skills. In the Foundation Phase, they enjoy books and many are enthusiastic readers. Throughout the school, most pupils apply their knowledge of letters and sounds well and use a range of other reading strategies effectively to help them read unfamiliar words. The majority of pupils in key stage 2 make more than expected progress in their reading, although levels of enthusiasm for reading vary among younger pupils in this key stage. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils competently use non-fiction books and information and communication technology to locate specific pieces of information.

Throughout the school, most pupils make good progress in developing their spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills. They apply these skills well in their story writing. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils use a simple plan successfully to help them structure an interesting story. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils draft, edit and improve their work, sometimes using their word processing skills, to present a good final version of their story. More able writers have a distinctive personal voice, particularly when they write reports for the school newspaper. However, pupils do not write for a wide enough range of audiences and purposes in subjects across the curriculum. In lower key stage 2, the standard of writing and presentation of pupils' work in subjects other than English is too uneven.

Most pupils make good progress in speaking Welsh and use a varied working vocabulary. Older pupils read simple Welsh texts accurately and with good expression. They write well, using increasingly complex sentences, in both present and past tenses.

There is often a small number of pupils in each year group who may include a minority with additional learning needs. This means that statistical comparisons of trends in the performance of pupils in this school with the performance of pupils in

other schools need to be treated with caution. Inspection findings show that pupils currently in the school are making good progress and standards are better than the data on their performance in previous years indicates.

At the end of Year 2 in 2012, the proportion of pupils attaining the Foundation Phase indicator (the expected outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development combined) was above the all-Wales average and the average for the family of similar schools. In all three areas of learning, pupils' performance at the higher outcome 6 was below the all-Wales average and the average for the family of schools. Girls performed significantly better than boys at this level in language, literacy and communication skills and personal and social development.

Over the last four years, trends in the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 have fluctuated. The percentage of pupils attaining the core subject indicator (the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science combined) has been below the all-Wales average and the family of similar schools average in three out of the last four years. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 5 has also fluctuated, but was below the average for the family of similar schools and all-Wales average in the last two years. Girls have consistently performed better than boys in English at both the expected level 4 and the higher level 5, particularly in writing.

When benchmarked against schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' performance places it mainly in the lower 50% of similar schools.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils feel happy and safe in school. They understand the reasons for eating healthily and have a positive attitude towards physical activity and exercise. Nearly all are well motivated and show interest in their learning.

The current attendance rate is just above 96%. This is higher than local and national averages. Trends in attendance over the last four years show that the school's attendance rates are generally above average when compared with those in similar schools. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually at school.

Behaviour is good in class, at break times and when pupils are moving around the school. Nearly all pupils are polite and courteous and most have well-developed social skills.

The school council and eco committee contribute well to many aspects of school life. Most pupils are confident that staff listen to their ideas and value them. They have helped to improve the school in a number of ways, including the provision for play during lunch hours. The majority of pupils are developing a good understanding of ways in which they can improve their own learning.

All pupils take part in a wide variety of local and community events, which increase their knowledge and understanding of their community roles and responsibilities effectively. They engage enthusiastically in a good range of activities to raise funds for local, national and international charities.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The school's broad and balanced curriculum meets statutory requirements. Many pupils participate in a wide range of sporting, creative and additional extra-curricular activities that enrich their knowledge and understanding.

Learning experiences in the Foundation Phase provide a well-planned mix of adult-led and independent activities that successfully ignites pupils' curiosity and engages their interest across all areas of learning.

A wide range of intervention strategies support different groups of learners effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants plan collaboratively to ensure that tasks are usually appropriate for pupils' stage of development. However, there are not always enough challenging opportunities for more able pupils.

In the Foundation Phase, there are many stimulating and relevant opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in all areas of learning. In key stage 2, however, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length across the curriculum.

Planning for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is good. All adults use Welsh phrases regularly and encourage pupils to respond and use Welsh themselves throughout the day. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about the locality and Welsh history, culture and heritage.

The eco committee is influential in ensuring that the school acts in a sustainable way. The link with a school in Swaziland raises pupils' awareness of the lives of people in other countries successfully.

Teaching: Good

Teachers conduct lessons at a lively pace and successfully engage pupils' interest. There is a good working atmosphere in nearly all lessons. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which enables them to give clear explanations and ask questions that promote pupils' understanding. Most lessons have clear learning objectives.

Teachers use a wide range of approaches and resources, including information and communication technology, to maintain pupils' interest and to help develop their understanding. In a few lessons, however, the use of workbooks or worksheets restricts pupils' capacity to write independently at greater length.

Most teaching assistants support pupils skilfully and play a valuable role in their learning. A very few, however, have inappropriate expectations and tend to lead rather than support pupils' learning.

Teachers mark pupils' work promptly and give helpful oral and written feedback on strengths and aspects to improve. They provide regular, worthwhile opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work. Teachers ensure that pupils' individual targets in literacy and numeracy are clear so that learners understand their own progress and what they need to do next.

A range of assessment data informs teachers' planning effectively and identifies where pupils need further support. However, systems for tracking and recording the progress of individual pupils within each year group as they move through the school are not clear enough. Reports to parents are comprehensive and informative, and clearly identify the next steps in their children's learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school's inclusive and caring ethos promotes pupils' health and wellbeing successfully. Well-established induction procedures smooth the transition from home or pre-school into the reception class and from primary to secondary school. The learning experiences provided, and acts of collective worship, support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

The school works well with a range of external agencies, such as the educational psychologist and speech and language service, to access specialist help and to provide additional support for pupils when needed.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The school deals effectively with the very few incidents of bullying and bad behaviour that occur.

There is well-planned provision for pupils with additional learning needs. Teachers and teaching assistants review and monitor pupils' progress regularly and provide appropriate intervention strategies. Teaching assistants generally provide good support to pupils and ensure that they have access to all aspects of the curriculum.

The school keeps a good record of the additional support pupils receive. Reviews clearly identify the progress pupils make and highlight any further support pupils may need, but they do not always identify clearly enough the specific individual targets against which to measure each pupil's future progress.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a welcoming family ethos and it values all pupils. They enjoy equal access to the learning experiences and other opportunities the school provides.

Resources are well matched to pupils' needs and are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are up-to-date. The school provides a clean, well-organised and stimulating learning environment. Interactive displays are bright and attractive and they support teaching and learning well.

The building is secure and well maintained, and pupils benefit from access to the community centre and extensive outdoor areas. Recent refurbishment of pupil toilets and cloakrooms has significantly improved the building, but old metal windows continue to cause significant heat loss. The accommodation is sufficient for the number of pupils on roll. The school makes good use of additional rooms and community areas to support intervention programmes.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, provides good leadership for the school. Its mission statement, developed jointly by staff and governors, informs all strategic planning. As a result, all members of staff share a clear vision and sense of purpose. Subject leaders play an important and effective role in helping the school to improve in key areas. Regular planning meetings focus well on the school's priorities for improvement.

The school manages the performance of teachers effectively through a programme of regular lesson observations. It identifies and addresses individual and whole-school training needs successfully. However, leaders and managers do not currently appraise the effectiveness of support staff.

The governing body supports and challenges the school well. Governors understand their responsibilities and fulfil their statutory duties conscientiously. They receive detailed information about the school's performance and are increasingly proficient at analysing pupils' attainment data. They use the information gleaned from data effectively to help the school to set challenging targets for improvement.

The school responds well to national priorities, such as raising standards of literacy and promoting the Welsh language. The principles and practice of the Foundation Phase are also very well established.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation process is thorough and takes good account of the views of pupils, parents, staff and governors. It draws effectively on a range of first-hand evidence, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work.

The school conducts a detailed analysis of data on pupils' progress and attainment and compares its performance effectively with that of all pupils in Wales and those in similar schools. It uses this analysis well to identify whole-school areas for improvement and those pupils who could achieve more with additional support.

The school's self-evaluation report is an honest reflection on its strengths and areas for development. There are clear links between weaknesses identified in its self-evaluation report and the targets for improvement in the school development plan. These targets focus on the most important priorities and are well understood by members of staff and governors.

Collaboration between teaching and support staff within the school and with colleagues in other schools enhances their professional knowledge and expertise and has a positive impact on improving standards. Joint training in areas such as new approaches to teaching literacy has been particularly successful in this respect.

Partnership working: Good

The school's partnership with parents is particularly strong. They play an important part in the life of the school. Parents appreciate the good communication that exists

between school and home. The active friends' association raises valuable funds that are used well to enhance the school's provision.

The school's positive partnership with many individuals and groups in the community enriches pupils' learning experiences significantly. For example, pupils' work on Dolforwyn castle included many people in the community and resulted in the school receiving a heritage award.

There are good transition arrangements with the secondary schools to which pupils transfer at the end of key stage 2. There are constructive links with local primary schools for standardising the assessment of pupils' work. Close liaison with the pre-school playgroup that shares the same site prepares children well for entry to school.

Links with the local authority, external agencies and teacher training institutions make a good contribution to the quality of the school's provision.

Resource management: Good

Overall, the school deploys its staff effectively. There are enough teachers and teaching assistants to cover all subjects and areas of learning. Arrangements for covering teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time are effective.

Teachers use a range of resources of good quality to support teaching and learning. The library is well organised and the visiting mobile library supplements the choice of books available to pupils. There is enough information and communication technology equipment for pupils to do their work. All areas of the building are used well for small group work.

The headteacher and governing body manage the budget carefully. Spending decisions link closely to improvement priorities. The headteacher secures efficiency savings by sharing the training costs associated with the continuing professional development of staff with other schools.

In view of the good progress made by most pupils, and its success in making improvements in important areas, the school gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

There is often a small number of pupils in each year group which may include a minority with additional learning needs. This means that statistical comparisons of trends in the performance of pupils in this school with the performance of pupils in other schools need to be treated with caution.

At the end of Year 2 in 2012, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level (Foundation Phase outcome 5 or above) in the combined skills of language, literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development (the Foundation Phase outcome indicator) was above the average for the family of similar schools and all-Wales average. All pupils achieved the expected outcome in mathematical development, which was well above the average for the family of schools and all-Wales average. Pupils' performance in language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development was above the average for the family of schools and the all-Wales average.

Pupils' performance at the higher Foundation Phase outcome 6 in the three specific areas of learning was well below the average for the family of similar schools and the all-Wales average. Girls performed significantly better than boys in language and literacy and personal and social development at this level. Boys performed better than girls in mathematical development.

When benchmarked against schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' performance at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012 placed it in the lower 50% of similar schools but not in the bottom 25%.

There were only six pupils in Year 6 in 2012. This is too small a number to make reliable statistical comparisons of the attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2 with the performance of all pupils in Wales.

Trends in the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 have fluctuated in recent years. The percentage of pupils attaining the core subject indicator (the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science combined) has been below all-Wales averages and the average for the family of similar schools in three out of the last four years. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in each subject has also fluctuated, but was below the average for the family of similar schools in the last two years.

Over the last four years, girls have consistently performed better than boys in English at both the expected level 4 and the higher level 5, particularly in writing. The performance of girls in comparison with boys in mathematics and science at both levels has fluctuated from year to year.

When benchmarked against schools with a similar proportion of pupils with free school meals, trends in this group of pupils' performance at the end of key stage 2 over the last four years place it mainly in the lower 50% of similar schools. However, very small year groups, and the number of pupils with additional learning needs, have a disproportionately negative impact on these figures in some years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

There were 13 responses to the parent/carer questionnaire.

All parents/carers agree that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child likes school;
- their child was helped to settle in well when s/he started at the school;
- their child makes good progress;
- pupils are well behaved;
- teaching is good;
- their child is expected to work hard and do his or her best;
- homework builds well on what their child learns at school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- their child is safe at school;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school;
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits; and
- the school is well run.

Most parents agree that:

- they are kept well informed about their child's progress; and
- understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Parent/carer responses to all questions are slightly more positive than the average for primary schools inspected in Wales.

Responses to learner questionnaires

There were 55 responses to the questionnaire from pupils in key stage 2.

All pupils agree that:

- they feel safe in school;
- the school teaches them how to keep healthy;
- teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress; and
- they know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard.

Nearly all pupils agree that:

- there are lots of opportunities to get regular exercise; and
- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Most pupils agree that:

- they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- they are doing well at school;
- homework helps them understand and improve their work; and
- nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunch time.

Many pupils agree that:

- the school deals well with any bullying.

The majority of pupils agree that:

- other children behave well and they can get their work done.

Pupils' responses to the majority of questions are slightly more positive than the average for primary schools inspected in Wales. The only question where pupils' response is significantly less positive than the national average relates to the last one mentioned above about behaviour.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Stephanie James	Reporting Inspector
Chris Dolby	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Jane Parry	Peer Inspector
Terry Wain	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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	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