



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

**Ton Pentre Junior School
Bailey Street
Ton Pentre
CF41 7EL**

Date of inspection: February 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.

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Context

Ton Pentre Junior School is in Ton Pentre in the Rhondda valley just south of Treorchy and about seven miles north west of Pontypridd.

The school has 126 pupils aged between seven and 11 years of age. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is about 32%, which is slightly above the local authority average and well above the all-Wales average.

There are five classroom teachers who, in broad terms, teach pupils literacy and numeracy in ability groups in the morning and undertake more topic-based work in the afternoon.

The school has identified about 40% of pupils (50 pupils) as having additional learning needs including a very few with a statement of special educational need. The overall proportion of pupils with additional learning needs is well above the all-Wales average (22%).

Pupils' ethnicity is almost entirely white British (98%). There are a very few pupils who have English as an additional language. No pupil speaks Welsh as a first language.

The last core inspection was in January 2007. As a result of the inspection the school was judged to require significant improvement. Follow-up inspection visits occurred in January 2008 and July 2008. After the last inspection visit, the Chief Inspector judged the school to have made good progress and removed it from the category of requiring significant improvement.

The current headteacher was appointed in January 2012.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ton Pentre Junior School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,542 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,197 and the minimum is £2,561. Ton Pentre Junior School is 52nd out of the 113 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf 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 current performance of the school is good because:

- pupils achieve well compared with their starting points;
- many pupils display good skills in literacy and numeracy;
- pupils achieve well in teacher assessments at the end of key stage 2 compared with those in similar schools, particularly at the higher than expected level (level 5);
- the proportion of pupils with reading ages significantly above their chronological age is high;
- pupils' overall attendance rate places it in the top 50% when compared with similar schools;
- the curriculum is generally well planned with plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum;
- the teaching is generally effective and engages pupils' interest well; and.
- pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher has established a clear vision and purposeful direction;
- there is a good track record of improvement over a relatively short period;
- there is effective teamwork at all levels;
- management processes are systematic and effective;
- priorities for development are generally appropriate and link well to the outcomes of the school's self-evaluation;
- there is effective communication with parents and the local community;
- the school benefits greatly from strong relationships with its cluster of local primary schools and the local secondary school; and
- the school manages its finances well.

Recommendations

R1 Improve standards in science

R2 Ensure at least good quality of teaching in all classes, for example by sharing good practice and identifying shortcomings more effectively

R3 Use assessment for learning techniques more effectively in classes

R4 Improve the level of challenge provided by the governing body

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

Overall, most pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Many who arrive with relatively weak skills on entry to the school reach an appropriate level for their age by the end of key stage 2. Many pupils with weak literacy skills often make good progress as a result of effective support in mainstream classes and in withdrawal groups.

Pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally good. Many pupils can talk confidently in front of the class, for example when offering their ideas and responses or when assessing the work of other pupils. Pupils can explain carefully what they are doing and can talk purposefully about their previous work. In group work, many older pupils can listen constructively to opposing views and achieve agreement through effective discussion.

Pupils' reading skills are good. Many pupils have reading ages that are above their chronological age. Pupils at the start of key stage 2 have a reasonable grasp of the relationship between letters and sounds and they can use this knowledge to break down and tackle unfamiliar words. Many pupils enjoy reading and read fluently and with expression. Their comprehension skills are good and many older pupils can infer meaning in texts well. However, older, more able pupils' knowledge and appreciation of a range of children's authors is limited.

In their written work, most pupils use a suitable range of sentence patterns and vocabulary. Most organise their writing well according to its purpose, for example when recounting an event, writing a biography or setting out a drama script. They write effectively across the curriculum. Most pupils use a suitable range of punctuation correctly. Most develop a neat, cursive style of handwriting and, in most cases, present their work well. The writing of a few older, more able pupils is excellent. They can write very effectively and with an individual and expressive style.

Pupils are making good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Many pupils have an effective accent when speaking and reading Welsh. They can use a suitable range of simple sentence patterns in oral and written work in Welsh lessons. A few pupils use mutations naturally and confidently in Welsh lessons, though pupils are less confident when using Welsh to talk about everyday matters outside of Welsh lessons. Pupils write effectively in Welsh across the curriculum, for example to describe Henry VIII. Pupils' reading in Welsh is broadly accurate and their understanding of basic Welsh texts is good, for example when reading the Urdd's 'Bore Da' magazine.

Overall, the school achieves well when compared with similar schools. For the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level at the end of key stage 2 (level 4) has been at or above the average for the family in English and mathematics. In science over the same period, the school's performance is close to

the average for the family. In relation to the achievement of the core subject indicator (level 4 or above in each of the core subjects), the school is above the family average.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the pupils' achievement of level 4 in English places it in the top 50% of schools and in mathematics in the top 25%. In relation to the core subject indicator, the performance of pupils places it in the top 50%. However, in relation to science, the school is in the bottom 50% and has been for the last three years.

In terms of pupils' attainment of the higher-than-expected level (level 5), the pupils' performance places the school in the top 25% for mathematics and science and in the top 50% for English.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils are keen to learn and they respond enthusiastically when provided with stimulating and engaging activities. They co-operate well with staff and each other. Pupils try hard and complete tasks conscientiously in nearly all cases. In group work, they share equipment, take turns and support each other appropriately. Pupils follow classroom routines well and move smoothly to their different groups during the morning sessions. The quality of behaviour is good around the school.

Pupils feel safe in school and they show a high level of care and respect for adults, each other and the school environment. They display good social, moral and life skills and have a suitable awareness of honesty and respect for others. Pupils know a lot about healthy lifestyles and the benefits of exercise and develop their knowledge and understanding further in related work in classes, for example in science.

The school council and the eco committee undertake their roles conscientiously and effectively. They have been closely involved in the development of new initiatives, such as the design of the toilets, the school rules and the raised flower beds.

The school's overall attendance rate is good at 94%. Pupils respond well to the school's rewards for high levels of attendance. The school's overall attendance rate last year placed it in the top 50% when compared with similar schools. Pupils attend school punctually.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The planning of individual lessons is secure and learning objectives are appropriate. Learning experiences engage pupils well in most cases. Teachers plan systematically and there is suitable coverage of the National Curriculum and statutory requirements. Teachers work well as a team in designing the curriculum with common approaches and themes across all classes.

The teachers manage the planning of lessons with different groups of pupils at different levels of ability well in most classes. More able pupils benefit very well from the setting arrangements for English and mathematics in the morning. The arrangements for nurture and intervention groups in the afternoon are effective in terms of pupils' progress. However, alongside the setting arrangements in the morning, they limit the interactions between lower ability and higher ability pupils in a few instances. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including rugby, football, dance, choir and a Rhondda Leader's reporters' club.

There is good planning for the development of skills, including pupils' thinking skills. Planning for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriately detailed and there are very good opportunities to use Welsh for a range of different purposes. The school gives good attention to the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of Wales.

The provision for the development of pupils' understanding of sustainability and global citizenship are developing well. The pupils have designed a poster on dog fouling for the local council who now display it throughout the authority. There are strong links with a school in Uganda that foster pupils' understanding of global issues well.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers use a wide range of strategies and approaches to engage pupils' interest and to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers generally share the learning objectives effectively with pupils at the start of lessons and there is often careful planning of learning activities to match the needs and abilities of the pupils in the class.

On most occasions, teachers use suitable questioning techniques to draw out pupils' responses and to develop their thinking skills. Teachers move pupils' learning forward at an appropriate pace in most lessons. In a few topic-based lessons, the work set is creative and stimulating and pupils respond very enthusiastically to these opportunities and learn well as a result. Teachers deploy support staff effectively in lessons and they make an effective contribution to pupils' learning, especially the less able pupils.

On a few occasions, the pace of the lesson is too slow, pupils are unsure of the learning objectives and a few lose interest, especially when the task does not challenge them enough or there is too much repetition and consolidation of work for little effect.

The school uses standardised tests and regular teacher assessments to monitor and evaluate the progress that pupils are making effectively. Staff use assessment data well to judge the effectiveness of intervention strategies and the progress pupils make from their starting points on entry to the school.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and supportively. The marking of written work focuses well on the pupils' achievement of learning objectives but does not identify specific and helpful targets for future improvement enough. Teachers use

assessment for learning strategies regularly. These techniques are often effective, but, on occasions, these are not used selectively enough and sometimes interrupt the flow of pupils' learning. Pupils often assess their own work and the work of others in classes, but less so in written work. For the most part, this works well, but the pupils who receive the comments often do not use them to improve their work further.

Parents and carers receive appropriate information about their child's progress, achievement and wellbeing through regular parents' meetings and annual reports.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has focused very well on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of children's rights. This has a very positive effect on pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards others. The provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. The school assesses pupils' social skills well and the activities within the nurture group benefit pupils in many positive ways. Pupils have visited places of worship in Cardiff, such as Llandaff Cathedral, the mosque and the synagogue, and local ministers visit the school frequently.

The school's liaison arrangements with a range of external agencies and support services are strong. They provide useful guidance and support for staff, pupils and parents.

The provision for pupils with additional needs is very good. Effective systems are in place to identify at an early stage any pupils with additional needs or support requirements. There are clear, detailed, child-friendly targets in pupils' individual education plans. Staff review and update the targets regularly. The school uses withdrawal groups and intervention programmes very successfully to ensure the good progress of pupils with additional needs.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has a warm and welcoming ethos which celebrates the work and achievements of the pupils well. All pupils have equal access to the various aspects of the school's life and work. Pupils know whom to approach if they need support and there are clear policies and procedures in place to deal with any poor behaviour.

The school is in an old building and there are issues with water penetration and damp, but the internal decoration and the provision of facilities are good overall. They have improved significantly since the appointment of the new headteacher. The outdoor areas provide a suitable environment for learning. Pupils have access to a good range and quality of learning resources. However, pupils are often not able to access their work on computers due to the unreliability of the ICT network.

The displays in classrooms and in communal areas are often very good. They are bright and stimulating, and they celebrate pupils' work and achievements well. Teachers and pupils use the wall displays regularly in the course of lessons.

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

Leadership: Good

All staff and the school community have established a clear vision and sense of purpose for the school. The headteacher has created good systems that help the school to achieve its aims well. These systems have enabled the school to raise standards, for example in pupil attendance. The school has a developing culture of continuous improvement that the recently-established senior leadership team contributes to effectively.

The school has suitable arrangements to distribute roles and responsibilities. Staff have appropriate skills and resources to perform their duties well and job descriptions are clear. Regular senior leadership team and staff meetings provide good opportunities for all staff to collaborate well and to influence the strategic direction of the school. Leaders support colleagues well in bringing about improvements in provision, for example staff have received good support to deliver intervention programmes effectively.

Governors are supportive and ensure that the school meets statutory obligations. They receive detailed information about the school's strengths, shortcomings and future priorities. Although governors have a developing understanding of performance data, they do not always use this knowledge to challenge the school effectively.

The school has been successful in addressing local and national priorities, in particular through the effective use of grant funding to support pupils in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

Improving quality: Good

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There are effective systems in place for gathering information about standards and the progress pupils are making. These include very detailed and accurate data analysis, lesson observations and questionnaires for parents. The school generally uses the information gathered to create good improvement plans. However, in a few cases, leaders do not identify or challenge shortcomings enough in teaching and learning.

Subject co-ordinators monitor progress within their designated areas to good effect and make suitable plans for further improvement. There are good levels of collaboration amongst staff to deliver improvements.

The school generally prioritises improvements effectively. There are sensible links between school self-evaluation, improvement plans, performance management arrangements and staff training opportunities. The school has a good recent record of securing improvements.

The school benefits significantly from involvement in networks of professional practice. Recent examples include cluster work to create a skills-based approach to planning and delivering learning experiences. This is having a positive impact on the standards that many pupils are achieving in developing and applying their skills within subjects and across the curriculum.

Partnership working: Good

The school is developing very positive partnerships with parents and values this relationship greatly. Parents support the school well; for example, a group of 'Granny Readers' helps pupils to develop their reading skills. Parents receive regular information about many aspects of school life. They also have ample opportunity to give their opinions and to influence the work of the school.

The school has a very strong partnership with the local high school, which has a very positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing. There is a significant amount of collaborative work between the primary schools and the local secondary school to ensure the consistency of end of key stage assessments as well as very strong transition arrangements. The school benefits from an innovative funding arrangement involving the local authority and the local high school that enables team teaching to take place. This has resulted in a significant improvement in pupil standards in Welsh as a second language. These arrangements also help pupils to enjoy a successful start to their time at secondary school.

The school has strong links with the local authority. It also works well with other partners, such as the Rhondda Cynon Taff street care team. The 'Friends of the School' provide useful financial support that the school council has used to improve the outdoor areas.

Resource management: Good

The school has effective arrangements to manage finances and monitor expenditure. As a result, the school is able to allocate resources appropriately to its identified improvement initiatives. Overall, the school deploys teaching and support staff appropriately and meets the needs of pupils well. The use of a teacher to develop the intervention programmes in afternoon sessions has developed the capacity of staff to support less able pupils well. However, the cost effectiveness of deploying a teacher to deliver the intervention programme is limited overall. The school provides valuable training opportunities for staff that impact positively on pupil outcomes. For example, the development of support staff has made a significant difference to the progress made by pupils in need of additional support.

The school has improved the physical learning environment for pupils. Recent changes have had a significant positive impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing. The school makes best use of the available accommodation. Pupils have sufficient suitable resources to meet their needs and the requirements of the curriculum.

In view of the appropriate use the school makes of its resources and the good progress made by many pupils, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level (level 4 or above) in 2012 placed the school at or above the average for the family of broadly similar schools in English, mathematics and the core subject indicator. In science, its performance placed it slightly below the average for the family in 2012, but still above the local authority and Wales averages.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the performance of pupils at level 4 or above placed it in the top 25% for mathematics and the top 50% for English and the core subject indicator. However, in science, the performance of pupils placed the school in the bottom 50%.

In relation to the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher than expected level (level 5), the school performs well. In English, mathematics and science, the proportion of pupils who achieve level 5 is much higher than the average for the family, the local authority and Wales. Compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school is in the top 25% for mathematics and science and in the top 50% for English.

These trends in performance outcomes have been broadly consistent over the last three years. The school has maintained its relatively good performance against a backdrop of increased proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and movement from the third to the fourth free school meal band.

The relative performance of boys and girls fluctuates from year to year but generally reflects national and local patterns of achievement. Pupils entitled to free school meals generally do less well than their peers but their overall performance is close to the average for the family and the local authority against most indicators.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety-four pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire.

All, or almost all, pupils:

- feel safe in school;
- believe teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress and give them useful homework;
- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- feel that they are doing well and that the school helps them to keep healthy;
- believe that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work;
- feel that the school deals well with any bullying and they know whom to talk to if worried or upset;
- believe that the school provides lots of chances for them to get regular exercise;
- feel that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime; and
- believe that children behave well so that they can get on with their work.

Pupils' views are generally more positive overall than the views of pupils in other schools across Wales.

Responses to parent, carer questionnaires

Thirty-two parents/carers completed the questionnaire.

All, or almost all, parents or carers feel that:

- the school is well run;
- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child is safe in school and likes the school;
- the school helped their child settle well when they started at the school;
- pupils behave well;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- the school encourages their child to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems;
- their child is making good progress;
- teaching is good;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do their best;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular needs;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility;
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits;

- the homework given builds well on what their child learns in school;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress; and
- they understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

The views of parents and carers about the school are generally more positive than the views of other parents or carers across Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Barry Norris	Reporting Inspector
Richard Lloyd	Team Inspector
Julie Ann Price	Lay Inspector
Kathryn England	Peer Inspector
Ian Evans	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.