



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

**Ynysowen Community Primary School
Aberfan Road
Aberfan
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 4QQ**

Date of inspection: July 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:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2013: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 04/09/13

Context

Ynysowen Community school is in Aberfan, south of Merthyr Tydfil. The majority of pupils live in the local area. The school describes the area it serves as a community with significant social deprivation. The school's catchment area has a mixture of private and rented housing.

The school has 234 full-time pupils aged four to 11 years, including 45 pupils who attend the nursery full-time and 28 who attend the three learning resource bases provided by the local authority. There are 13 mainstream classes, including two mixed-age classes. The learning resource base classes cater for pupils with speech and communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and complex needs, including hearing impairment.

Forty-two per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above local and national averages. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds. No pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language. English is the predominant language spoken and the school teaches Welsh as a second language.

Around 39% of pupils have additional learning needs. The proportion, excluding those attending the three learning resource base classes, is around 29%. Very few pupils have statements of special educational need.

The school's previous inspection was in June 2007. The current headteacher was appointed in 2010.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ynysowen Community Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,414 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil is £4,007 and the minimum is £3,165. Ynysowen Community Primary school is 11th out of the 23 primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil 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:

- nearly all pupils make sound progress in their learning during their time at the school;
- many pupils have a positive attitude to their learning;
- teaching overall is good or better;
- the curriculum is broad and engages pupils' interest well;
- there is a strong caring and inclusive ethos;
- pupils with additional learning needs receive very good support and make significant progress; and
- the accommodation is of high quality and promotes and enhances pupils' learning very well.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher provides strong and effective leadership;
- staff work closely together as a dedicated professional community;
- the staff act as a very strong learning community;
- the self-evaluation process is well established within the life of the school;
- pupils contribute effectively to the school's self-evaluation, and
- the school works successfully with a range of partners to enrich pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve further the performance of boys' writing in upper key stage 2 and improve all pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their written work
- R2 Extend opportunities for all pupils to work more independently in all areas of learning
- R3 Improve education for global citizenship across the school
- R4 Develop further the strategic role of the senior management team in raising standards
- R5 Improving pupils' speaking and listening skills in Welsh second language in key stage 2

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The majority of pupils enter school with skills that are lower than normally expected for pupils of a similar age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those with additional needs and pupils of higher ability, make sound progress and achieve well. Nearly all pupils work well together in pairs or in groups.

Throughout the school, pupils listen well to one another and to adults. Most pupils speak confidently in a wide range of situations to staff, visitors and each other. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils are able to talk effectively about their work. Many pupils in key stage 2 express their opinions confidently and focus well in teacher-led and independent learning tasks.

Standards of reading are good. Throughout the Foundation Phase, many pupils read at a level that is above the expected level for their age. Many read with expression using a range of strategies, including phonic skills, to help them decode new and unfamiliar words. In key stage 2, most pupils are confident readers and read a wide range of texts with confidence. Many read with fluency and with good expression. They also discuss books they have read and their favourite authors well. Many older pupils can locate and use reference books effectively.

Many pupils write with increasing confidence and independence for a range of purposes and audiences across the curriculum. Their writing is often interesting, and more able pupils in particular use a wide range of vocabulary to enrich their written work. Many pupils in the Foundation Phase produce short pieces of writing in full sentences with correct punctuation. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils produce extended pieces of writing of good quality across the curriculum, for example when producing an interesting diary during the Victorian era and a story of a soldier during Roman times. However, boys' performance in writing does not develop sufficiently by the end of key stage 2. The quality of presentation and the handwriting skills of many pupils vary too much and this often detracts from the good quality of what they have actually written.

Most pupils apply their numeracy skills confidently and effectively in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Most pupils can solve mathematical problems confidently and have good information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the school. The majority of pupils are beginning to make choices about what they want to learn. However, pupils do not develop their independent learning skills enough in all learning areas across the school.

Nearly all pupils who have additional learning needs make sound progress often due to the wide and effective range of intervention programmes for literacy and numeracy. More able pupils make appropriate progress in all subjects and areas of learning.

Many pupils make a good start in Welsh in the Foundation Phase. From a low baseline, most are enthusiastic and speak confidently in short phrases. However, progress is limited throughout key stage 2. Although many pupils in key stage 2 show a developing understanding of a range of sentence patterns and vocabulary, many older pupils lack confidence in using Welsh orally during formal Welsh lessons. Throughout the school, pupils' reading and writing skills in Welsh are developing appropriately.

In 2012, the performance of pupils in achieving the expected outcome 5 at the end of the Foundation Phase was well above the average for schools in the same family in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. When compared with that of similar schools (schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals), performance was in the top 25% for language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development, but in the lower 50% for personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. At the higher than expected outcome 6, performance was also well above the average for other schools in the same family and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools for the three areas of learning.

In key stage 2, over the last four years, there has been an overall upward trend in the school's performance in English, mathematics and science at the expected level 4. When compared with schools in the same family, performance in mathematics and science at the expected level 4 has been above family averages for the last two years, but below the average for Wales. Performance in English has also been above family and the Wales average. In comparison with similar schools, performance in all three subjects placed the school in the top 50%. Performance at the higher than expected level 5 has also varied considerably over a four-year period, but results in all subjects have been consistently above the average for other schools in the family except in 2012.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have a strong awareness of the importance of healthy eating and lifestyles. They have ample opportunities to participate in physical activity within lessons and during after school clubs, such as the 'walking club' where parents and younger pupils walk in order to keep fit. This contributes well towards their wellbeing and increases their confidence.

All pupils feel safe and secure within the school environment and know that they can turn to friends and teachers for any support required. Behaviour is good in classes and around the school and pupils have contributed to the development and the implementation of the school's anti-bullying programme.

Many pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning. They engage in tasks well, and show courtesy, care and concern for each other, and respect for staff and visitors. Older pupils undertake additional responsibilities well, for example when they act as playground buddies.

Pupils have suitable opportunities to be part of decision-making in school through the school council and eco committee. They have contributed to the development of the school's values and visions and to the lesson plans of teachers. They have also had opportunities to explain their roles to the school's governing body. Many pupils raise funds to support charities and work well with local groups to improve their environment.

Over the last two years, attendance rates have placed the school in the top 50% when compared with similar schools. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually for school.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
---	-------------

Learning experiences: Good

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum. It provides a wide range of learning experiences that challenge and engage pupils' interest well and that meet the needs of different groups of learners effectively.

Teachers provide Foundation Phase pupils with a good range of creative and stimulating learning experiences in most areas of learning. However, outdoor provision for older Foundation Phase pupils is not wholly effective. Learning experiences in key stage 2 build successfully on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding. An extensive range of extra-curricular clubs enriches and extends pupils' learning.

Teachers plan systematically for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Teachers' planning ensures regular opportunities for pupils to use and to extend their reading and writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils engage in evaluating teachers' weekly lesson plans. Teachers consider feedback from pupils on their planning and alter their short term planning accordingly. This is a very effective feature.

Provision and planning for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension are appropriate. All pupils gain a broad understanding of life in Wales and Welsh culture through the provision of a wide range of interesting and relevant activities. However, key stage 2 pupils do not have enough opportunities to use Welsh in areas of the curriculum outside specific lessons.

Pupils are very aware of the importance of sustainability and work well as part of the school's eco committee. Pupils enjoy their involvement in monitoring the school's energy consumption and show a good understanding of the consequences of wastage. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is at an early stage of development. However, a few pupils have an appropriate understanding and appreciation of their roles in caring for others within their school.

Teaching: Good

In all classes, teachers establish very good working relationships with pupils, and organise classroom routines that encourage effective learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning and wellbeing of those individuals and

groups of pupils that they support. Teachers have a good understanding of the curriculum and, in most lessons, teachers plan and prepare activities well to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. They build purposefully on previous lessons and share clear learning objectives with the pupils successfully.

Purposeful intervention and skilful questioning by teachers and support staff challenge most pupils' thinking. This increases their knowledge and understanding and most lessons move along at a good pace. Teaching in the earlier part of the Foundation Phase and the learning resource base is a particular strength, with excellent team working that ensures pupils experience a highly stimulating environment that promotes very effective learning.

Teachers use assessment for learning strategies well and these have a positive effect on standards. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly. Through teachers' comments, pupils have a good understanding of what they do well and how they can improve specific aspects of their work. Teachers mark pupils' work against success criteria that they have shared with pupils. Teachers encourage all pupils to evaluate their own work and the work of others in order to set their own targets. Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to reflect on feedback and to respond appropriately. Pupils evaluate the teachers' planning on a weekly basis and comment on what they have enjoyed and would like to develop further. This is then fed back to the headteacher and into teachers' subsequent planning. This is a major strength of the assessment and evaluation process within the school.

Robust tracking systems for assessment are in place, including careful analysis of performance data. All staff use this information well to target pupils who need additional support in literacy and numeracy. Reports to parents are of good quality and meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school acts as a caring community where pupils feel safe and happy. There is a comprehensive range of appropriate policies in place for promoting pupils' healthy living and their wellbeing. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school encourages most pupils to participate in the development of their school and they enjoy the variety of experiences that they encounter through the wide range of after school clubs, such as gardening, writing and athletics. These enhance their life skills well.

The school makes appropriate use of specialist support services to provide advice for pupils with a range of learning needs, especially those with speech and language difficulties. The school has strong links with the education welfare officer, the educational psychologist and a range of other advisors and specialists. Induction arrangements for new pupils are good and children who have just arrived in school settle quickly and happily. Mainstream pupils with additional learning needs have access to a range of carefully constructed interventions which are regularly reviewed and evaluated.

Nearly all pupils in the learning resource base receive very effective support and they enter fully into the life and work of the school. Specialist teaching and support staff in

the learning resource bases work productively with mainstream colleagues, and the school also benefits from close working relationships with a range of colleagues from outside school.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school has a strong caring and inclusive ethos which recognises the value of each individual. It has involved parents, governors and staff in establishing the school's vision and values and pupils take an active part in the sharing of those values throughout school life.

The school's physical environment promotes and enhances learning well. Display boards are colourful, bright and stimulating in all areas. They provide valuable information on the school's activities, and display a range of examples of pupils' work as well as pupils' roles and achievements within school. A strong feature across the school for further research and investigation are 'wonder walls', which motivate and stimulate pupils' learning, especially their research and investigation skills, and these have a positive impact on standards.

The grounds are spacious, well maintained and secure. Although younger Foundation Phase pupils enjoy a stimulating outdoor environment, the provision for older Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is more limited. All areas of the school are very clean and well maintained.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. She has a clear vision for the future of the school and succeeds in establishing high expectations among staff and pupils. By effectively securing the engagement of all pupils, parents and governors, the headteacher has led a thorough and inclusive process of change, focusing successfully on improving provision and raising standards.

The headteacher and senior management team set clear objectives and targets for improvement. They have a thorough understanding of the school's performance and analyse data effectively in order to set priorities. All staff are aware of the school's priorities and values. The school is constantly challenging its performance.

The headteacher ensures that all staff work closely together as a professional community. Subject co-ordinators provide a good degree of leadership and focus well in their work on raising standards. The senior management team contribute positively to whole-school developments. However, their strategic role in performance management of teachers and in monitoring teaching and learning is limited.

Governors support and challenge the school rigorously about the standards and quality it achieves. They know the school and the challenges it faces well. They visit the school frequently. They are well informed about the school's performance data and how it compares with family and national benchmarks. Governors contribute effectively to the self-evaluation report and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The school is making good progress in addressing many local and national priorities, such as raising standards in literacy and numeracy, and improving pupils' wellbeing and attendance.

Improving quality: Excellent

There is an effective strategy for self-evaluation that draws on a wide range of first-hand evidence. Leaders have established a culture of honest and systematic self-evaluation throughout the school. This includes very detailed and robust analysis of pupil performance and progress by staff and governors, scrutiny of work and subject evaluations of high quality. This approach has brought about significant improvement in standards and pupils' wellbeing.

Pupils contribute effectively to self-evaluation and development planning through the completion of questionnaires and through the work of the school council. Pupils evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers' short term planning regularly and scrutinise schemes of work on a termly basis. This is having a very positive effect on securing an effective curriculum that links well with pupils' aspirations and interests. Teachers use pupil evaluations to modify their teaching and to improve standards.

The school uses information from self-evaluation processes well to identify clear priorities that focus on improving pupil outcomes. Teachers monitor their areas of responsibility rigorously to assure high standards, and to identify and to share good practice. The school development plan is concise and identifies priorities clearly. It sets out quantifiable targets within an appropriate time frame. It includes an appropriate allocation of resources and measurable success criteria.

Throughout the school, all staff benefit from a comprehensive programme of training opportunities that supports their continuous professional development and enhances the school's capacity for making improvements.

The school is a very strong learning community. It has initiated and led many networks of professional practice that have brought about measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy in the school.

Partnership working: Good

The school works successfully with a range of partners to enrich pupils' learning and wellbeing, and it has strong links with the local community. The school operates an open door policy and parents are able to visit the headteacher and staff to discuss any concerns. The headteacher has been active in organising various initiatives designed to bring parents into the school, for example 'Men behaving Daddly' and

parent Welsh lessons. The parent teacher association plays an appropriate role in raising funds for the school.

There are good links with the local playgroup and effective arrangements in place for pupils' transition to the local comprehensive school. This ensures that pupils settle quickly at their new school. The school also undertakes a number of valuable activities with the local family of schools, which include standardising and moderating teacher assessments.

Resource management: Good

The school prioritises spending effectively according to needs identified in the school development plan. It reviews the impact of spending, such as the development of the outdoor areas, to ensure that it has a strong impact on enriching pupils' experiences.

There are appropriate and well-managed arrangements for the provision of planning, preparation and assessment time for all teachers. Teachers use this time effectively to plan carefully and to reflect in detail on their teaching.

Performance management arrangements are effective in identifying and meeting the professional development needs of staff. There are regular opportunities for staff to take part in school improvement projects linked to, for example, reading, provision for pupils with additional learning needs and self-evaluation.

All classes are very well resourced and the effective deployment of teaching assistants in many of classes provides very good support for pupils. Teachers and support staff work well together to ensure good outcomes for pupils.

In view of the good standards and progress that most pupils achieve, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Data appendix

In 2012, the performance of pupils in achieving the expected outcome 5 (the expected level for seven-year-olds) at the end of the Foundation Phase was well above the average for other schools in the same family in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. The school's performance in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development placed it in the top 25% of similar schools (schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals). Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity placed the school in the lower 50%. In addition, outcomes were well above the average for Wales in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development. In language, literacy and communication skills, girls achieve better than boys, but in mathematical development boys achieve better than girls by more than the family average. However, in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, there is no significant difference in performance between boys and girls.

At the higher than expected outcome 6, performance was also well above that of other schools in the same family and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools for the three areas of learning. Girls achieve significantly better than boys at this level in language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. However, boys achieve significantly better than girls at this level in mathematical development.

In key stage 2, over the last four years, there has been an overall upward trend in the school's performance. When compared with that of schools in the same family, performance in mathematics and science at the expected level 4 has been above family averages for the last two years, but below the average for Wales. Performance in English has also been above family averages for the last two years and above the Wales average. Performance in all three subjects placed the school in the top 50% of similar schools.

Performance at the higher than expected level 5 has also varied over the last four years, with results in all subjects consistently above the average for other schools in the family, except in 2012, when they were below the family average for all subjects. When compared with those in similar schools, results in English, mathematics and science have varied between the top 25% and lower 50%.

Girls perform considerably better than boys, compared with family averages, at the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science. There is no significant difference in performance at the higher than expected level in English, but boys perform considerably better than girls at this level in mathematics and science.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Pupil questionnaires (123 pupils completed the questionnaire)

Nearly all pupils think that:

- the school teaches them how to keep healthy;
- they are doing well at school and staff help them to learn and make progress;
- they know what to do if they find their work hard; and
- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they feel safe in school and the school deals well with any bullying;
- they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- homework helps them to improve their work; and
- there are lots of opportunities for regular exercise.

The pupils' responses in relation to bullying and homework are more positive on average than the responses of pupils in other schools across Wales.

Many pupils feel that other pupils behave well in class and that nearly all pupils behave well at break and lunchtimes. These responses are also more positive on average than the responses of pupils across Wales.

Parent questionnaires (30 parents completed the questionnaire)

All parents say that:

- they are satisfied with the school, and their child likes school and settled in quickly when they joined the school;
- pupils behave well, teaching is good and staff expect pupils to do their best;
- their child is safe in school and they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints;
- there is appropriate support for pupils with additional needs;
- their child is making good progress;
- the school helps pupils to mature and to take on responsibility; and
- the school is well run.

Nearly all parents feel that they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems.

These responses are generally more positive than responses from parents across Wales.

Nearly all parents think that:

- homework helps pupils to improve;
- children are encouraged to be healthy, exercise regularly and are safe;
- staff treat pupils with respect;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress; and
- their child is well prepared for their next school.

These responses compare favourably with the views of other parents in schools across Wales.

Most parents agree that there is a good range of activities, including trips and visits.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Meinir Howells	Reporting Inspector
Dyfrig Ellis	Team Inspector
Glenda Jones	Lay Inspector
Helen Jennings	Peer Inspector
Simone Roden	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.