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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Nant Y Parc Primary School
Universal Site
Senghenydd
Caerphilly
CF83 4GY**

Date of inspection: November 2010

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

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

Nant Y Parc Primary School is a community school for boys and girls from three to eleven years of age. Most of the 184 pupils come from the village of Senghenydd, near Caerphilly. Over the past five years, the number of pupils on roll has fallen by around a fifth. Pupils are taught in seven mixed-age classes.

Around 37% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This proportion is well above local and national averages. All of the pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Seventeen per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs (SEN), none of whom have statements of SEN.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Nant Y Parc Primary School is £2,832, which compares with a maximum of £6,296 and a minimum of £2,486 for primary schools in Caerphilly. The school has the 47th highest budget per pupil out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly.

The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, stage 3 of the Healthy Schools Scheme and the Eco School Silver Award.

The last school inspection was in October 2004. The headteacher has been in post since September 2008.

Summary

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

Current performance

Children make good progress in the nursery and most pupils achieve good outcomes at the end of key stage 2 when performance is compared to similar schools and local and national averages. Despite this positive picture, over the last five years, there is a downward trend in pupils' performance in key stage 1 in English, mathematics and science and undue variation in the progress pupils make across key stage 2.

Since the appointment of the headteacher two years ago, there has been rapid progress in important areas, such as curriculum planning and the quality of the learning environment. However, these improvements have not had time to impact fully on pupils' standards of achievement across the school.

Prospects for improvement

The school has strong prospects for improvement because:

- the headteacher provides highly effective leadership and vision for improvement;
- the scale of improvement is clear and progressing rapidly; and
- self-evaluation is very accurate and planning for improvement is good.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, Nant Y Parc Primary School needs to:

- R1 raise standards in key stage 1, especially in English;
- R2 continue to improve pupils' progress in learning in key stage 2;
- R3 develop pupils' independent learning skills;
- R4 continue to seek ways of improving attendance; and
- R5 address the safety concern brought to the attention of the headteacher and governing body during the inspection.

What happens next?

Nant Y Parc Primary School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor progress in addressing the recommendations and report their findings to Estyn.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Many children enter school with skills below those normally expected for children of their age. At the end of key stage 2, most pupils achieve good standards, which have been above local and national averages for two of the last three years. However, these good standards are not evident in all parts of the school. Although there have been rapid improvements in important areas such as curriculum planning, assessment and the learning environment, these have yet to impact fully on pupils' standards of achievement across the school.

Over the last five years, there has been a decreasing trend in pupils' performance at seven years of age in end of key stage 1 teacher assessments in English, mathematics and science and the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum). Overall results are around the average for the family of schools and lower than local and national averages. The performance of pupils in English has fallen more sharply than for other subjects during this time.

In 2010, in key stage 1, when compared to schools in similar circumstances, pupils' results are in the lower 50% of schools for English, science and the core subject indicator. Results are in the upper 50% of schools for mathematics. Pupils' performance at the higher level 3 in the core subjects has varied over the last three years. In 2010, performance was slightly above that for similar schools. The performance of boys and girls has fluctuated over the past four years. Boys' performance, particularly in English, has been lower than girls' performance for the past two years.

In 2010, pupils' performance in key stage 2 in relation to similar schools is good. Results in English, mathematics and science place the school in the top 25% of schools. Pupils' performance at the higher level 5 in the core subjects compares well to similar schools but is generally lower than local and national averages. The nine percentage points' difference between boys' and girls' performance in English is just below the national average. There is little difference in their performance in mathematics and science. However, pupils' achievement and progress throughout this key stage are uneven, particularly in English.

Throughout the school, most pupils with additional learning needs and pupils in receipt of free school meals achieve well in relation to their targets.

In both key stages, a significant minority of pupils' reading and writing skills are under-developed. In key stage 1, pupils do not use a wide enough range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words and do not make enough progress in developing their independent writing skills. This affects their progress across the curriculum. In key stage 2, a minority of pupils do not read confidently, fluently and

with expression. Across the school, a majority of pupils' spelling is not accurate enough.

Most pupils make good progress in gaining skills in the Welsh language. They generally achieve good standards in oracy and reading and a minority of pupils are developing their writing skills well.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are nurtured very successfully in a positive learning environment. Most pupils are well-motivated, sustain concentration well and are keen to learn. Standards of behaviour are good. Pupils treat their peers and adults with respect. Most pupils are developing a good awareness of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle.

The school's attendance rate of 91% is below the average for Wales and similar schools. The rate has stayed around this level for the past six years. The school's concerted efforts, in partnership with the Education Welfare Officer and the use of a wide range of incentives to reward regular attendance, are slowly having a positive effect. The rate of unauthorised absence has reduced significantly over the past eighteen months. Most pupils arrive on time for school.

Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school. Many pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular activities that contribute well to the development of their skills and understanding of issues, such as taking care of the environment. Many pupils also participate fully in local community events, such as the Aber Valley Arts Festival and the Aber Horticultural Show.

The role of the school council is developing well and all pupils have a growing involvement in making decisions about school life. Older pupils are involved in a range of activities such as membership of the Eco-Committee and the playground buddy system. These activities encourage them to undertake responsibilities well and act maturely.

Pupils' understanding of how well they are doing is developing and most understand what their teachers want them to do to improve their work. While the youngest pupils are involved in choosing how and what they learn, generally, across the school, pupils' independent learning skills are at an early stage of development.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a wide range of stimulating learning experiences, which engage pupils' interest well. The two-year rolling programme, organised around interesting topics, provides for continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Teachers plan carefully on a daily basis for pupils to develop their communication, numeracy, information and communications technology and thinking skills. However, there is no school overview of planning for skill development to ensure continuity and progression in these areas of pupils' learning.

The school makes good provision for Welsh language and the development of pupils' understanding of Welsh culture and heritage. All staff use Welsh regularly in a wide range of learning contexts, which contributes very effectively to the good standards pupils achieve.

There is a clear focus on education for sustainable development and global citizenship in work across the curriculum. Pupils in the Eco club also play an active role, for example, in keeping the school tidy, saving energy and growing vegetables in association with a local gardening club.

The school provides a worthwhile range of out-of-school activities that many pupils attend and which appeal to boys and girls.

Teaching: Good

The majority of teaching observed is good overall. Most staff use a good range of teaching approaches to engage and sustain the interests of pupils. Staff use resources well, ask a range of questions and summarise effectively in order to help pupils recap on their learning. In lessons where teaching is adequate, teachers spend too long talking, do not match activities well enough to pupils' learning needs and do not give pupils opportunities to work independently.

Staff have good relationships with pupils. They manage behaviour well through clear expectations of what is appropriate and an emphasis upon rewarding good behaviour.

Pupils' progress in learning is assessed regularly and accurately. The school is developing very effective systems to track pupils' achievements, including their wellbeing. Teachers provide pupils with helpful oral feedback. In general, teachers' marking is clear and positive although teachers do not always correct errors in line with the school policy. Most pupils quickly recall their targets and know what teachers want them to do to improve their work. However, pupils' own assessment of their work and that of their peers is at an early stage of development.

Reports to parents and carers are clear and informative. The school communicates very well with parents through weekly newsletters, text messages and regular meetings.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The school is a very well-ordered community. Policies and procedures effectively promote pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Collective worship contributes very well to pupils' development, for example in the recent focus on anti-bullying issues. There are appropriate arrangements for promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles.

The school has developed effective relationships with outside agencies to provide good-quality support for pupils and their parents. The induction arrangements for pupils starting school and the arrangements for pupils' transition to secondary school are thorough, enabling pupils to settle quickly and progress well.

The provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is good. The school has developed an effective system to identify pupils' learning needs, produces clear individual support plans for pupils and provides a well-structured programme of support to meet their needs.

The school has appropriate policies for safeguarding. Inspectors brought a safety issue to the attention of the headteacher and governing body during the inspection.

Learning environment: Good

The school is very welcoming to pupils, parents and visitors. It has a strong inclusive ethos where pupils are valued and receive equal access to all areas of the school's provision.

The school has plenty of good-quality resources, which staff and pupils use well. The accommodation and grounds are very well-maintained. Displays throughout the school are highly attractive, creative and well-presented. They set high standards for the school community.

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

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has a very clear vision for school improvement and is strongly committed to providing pupils with the best opportunities for learning. With the good support of the seconded deputy, she has focused very effectively on raising pupils' achievement and improving their wellbeing. A detailed, accurate analysis of a wide range of performance data informs all their decisions about school improvement. Areas such as curriculum planning, assessment and the quality of the learning environment have rapidly developed to a high standard. These areas are contributing strongly to improvements in the standards pupils achieve.

The distributed leadership roles of middle managers are developing well and contributing positively to school improvement. Due to the recent development of their roles, they have not had enough impact on pupils' standards and progress.

There are very well-structured performance management arrangements that support the school's strategic aims for improvement.

The governing body is well-informed and carries out its duties effectively. Governors support the school well and challenge staff to improve performance. Their monitoring role and involvement in strategic planning have improved since the last inspection.

The school's response to local and national priorities is good. The implementation of the Foundation Phase and the curriculum arrangements in key stage 2 are progressing well. Provision for the Welsh language is developing positively. There is keen attention to raising standards of literacy and ensuring pupils' wellbeing.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive and draw effectively upon a wide range of sources, including performance data, observations of teaching and learning and external reports. Senior leaders have a very firm and accurate grasp of the strengths and areas for improvement across the school.

The school takes good account of the views of parents and pupils. The headteacher carefully analyses evidence regularly and reports back to governors and parents on the actions taken by the school. The introduction of the 'buddy' system to support good behaviour in the playground is a good example of action taken by staff in response to pupils' and parents' comments.

There are very clear links between the outcomes of self-evaluation and the school's plan for improvement. However, the plan contains too many priorities and does not include quantifiable success criteria in order to measure the impact of work on areas such as attendance levels and pupils' achievements.

There are appropriate opportunities for staff to share good practice with other teachers within and beyond the school. Such professional development is having a positive impact on school life. This is particularly evident in the way that staff have created an engaging learning environment.

Partnership working: Good

The school works closely with parents and other schools. It has a strong relationship with the community. The school also has effective partnerships with a range of outside agencies to meet the particular needs of individuals and groups of pupils.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has developed very good links with the local authority in bringing about school improvement. She has been innovative in establishing a range of other partnerships, such as the weekly arrangement for a secondary school teacher to work in the school to help raise standards in Welsh.

The school collaborates well with partners to plan and pool resources, particularly with its cluster of schools. There are good links and transition arrangements with secondary schools to prepare older pupils for the next stage in their education.

Resource management: Good

Staff are well deployed throughout the school. There are plentiful good-quality learning resources and, overall, a high standard of accommodation. The management of teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time is good.

There is efficient management of finances. Spending decisions match the priorities for school development very well. Over the past two years, there has been a strong focus on using the school's available financial resources to raise standards. In particular, the purchase of new reading and phonic schemes and the development of the library have helped to raise standards of literacy.

In view of the effective use the school makes of its funding and the good outcomes attained by pupils at the end of key stage 2, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Six parents attended the parents' meeting and twenty-two parents completed the questionnaires. Overall, parents express very positive views about the school and value highly the improvements brought about since the headteacher's appointment. Parents state that their children are happy and settled and making good progress. They report that their child feels safe in school and that staff are approachable if parents have concerns or questions. Parents feel well-informed about their children's achievements through termly meetings with teachers and end-of-year reports. Most parents know how to make a complaint and feel that their children receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs.

Eighty-one pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Inspectors also talked to individuals and representative groups of pupils across the school. Overall, pupils say that they are happy and enjoy school and know to whom they can talk if they are worried or upset. They feel safe and believe that staff treat them equally and with respect. Pupils think that teachers give them good support and provide plenty of opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Wendy Young HMI	Reporting Inspector
Penny Lewis HMI	Team Inspector
Russell Grigg HMI	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Michelle Bellew	Peer Inspector
Kirsty Bevan	School Nominee

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Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11