



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

**Ty Sign Primary School
Elm Drive
Risca
Newport
NP11 6HJ**

Date of inspection: March 2011

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Ty Sign Primary School is situated in the town of Risca, which is to the north west of the city of Newport in the Ebbw Valley. The school's locality includes areas of relative prosperity as well as areas with significant levels of social deprivation. At present, there are 397 pupils at the school between 4 and 11 years of age. The number on roll is beginning to increase after a steady decline over the last three years. The school is served by Caerphilly local authority.

The level of attainment on entry to the school represents the full ability range. However a significant minority enter the school with limited language skills. Thirty-two percent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the local authority and all-Wales average. Around 33% of pupils have additional learning needs, including six pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school has four pupils who are looked after by the local authority.

Ninety-five percent of the pupils are of white British ethnic backgrounds and 5% from other ethnic backgrounds. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. The school has the equivalent of just over 16 full-time teachers and the pupils are taught in 14 classes. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2010 and the school has an acting deputy headteacher.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ty Sign Primary School is £2,692, which compares with a maximum of £6,296 and a minimum of £2,486 for primary schools in Caerphilly. The school has the 65th highest budget per pupil out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school has strengths which outweigh areas for improvement.

The current strengths include:

- purposeful, dynamic and caring leadership by the headteacher;
- the caring ethos and strong, secure relationships that exist within the staff and between the staff, pupils and parents;
- pupils who are increasingly engaged in their learning, behave well and are courteous and polite; and
- the standards and provision for wellbeing and the way this is enhanced by the involvement of effective partnerships with outside agencies.

The current areas the school needs to improve are:

- the attainment of pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2;
- the achievement of boys compared to girls; and
- the standards of reading and writing across the school.

Prospects for improvement

There is a strong likelihood that the school will improve because:

- the headteacher and the senior management team are focused on raising standards;
- the headteacher and senior management team have developed an open and honest culture and the school has a clear vision which is shared by all staff;
- the school's self evaluation procedures are rigorous and leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development; and
- the school has made good progress recently in addressing some of these areas for development.

Recommendations

For the school to improve, it needs to:

R1 raise standards in reading and writing;

R2 continue to close the gap between the performance of boys and girls; and

R3 continue to develop the role of all senior managers in focusing on raising standards.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

A minority of pupils enter the nursery and reception classes with lower than average basic skills, particularly in language development. Despite this, most make steady progress from their starting points throughout the school. This is particularly the case with speaking and listening, and most pupils listen very well and speak confidently. However, a majority of pupils do not have a sufficient range of strategies to enable them to read unfamiliar words and text accurately. Most pupils' writing skills are developing well but the progress made by the majority of pupils in a few year groups is insufficient. Generally, most pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress.

Standards in Welsh language are appropriate in the Foundation Phase. Most pupils respond well to instructions and answer simple, familiar questions. At the lower end of key stage 2, the standards achieved by many pupils in Welsh are good, although this progress is not sustained sufficiently into upper key stage 2.

Over the past three years, the performance of seven-year-old pupils in English, mathematics and science has been in the lower half of that for schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. In 2010, when compared to that of other schools in its family, the performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science is below the family average.

Similarly, for 11-year-old pupils at the end of key stage 2 over the last three years, their performance has nearly always been in the bottom 50% or 25% of that for similar schools. In 2010, pupils' attainment in the core subject indicator at the end of key stage 2, that is at least level 4 in English, mathematics and science, is the second lowest in the family.

For most subjects for the last three years, results for seven and 11-year-olds have been below local authority and Wales averages.

At both key stages, girls usually achieve better than boys. This is particularly the case with the higher levels 3 and 5. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 at the age of seven years is similar to the family, local authority and Wales averages in English and well above for science and mathematics. However in English, the level 3 performance of boys is 20% lower than that of girls. The proportion of pupils at the age of 11 attaining the higher level 5 in English is below the local authority and Wales averages and the lowest in the family of schools. Again, the performance of boys is significantly lower than that of girls by around 20-25%.

Wellbeing: Good

The school is a very friendly and orderly place. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school

and they behave well and show a high level of respect and concern for others. They are polite, courteous, and confident when talking to strangers. They know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. Nearly all pupils have a very positive attitude towards the school and appreciate the range of activities and learning experiences provided for them.

Most pupils understand the importance of healthy living, and the school tuck shop supports pupils in making healthy eating choices. Members of the School Council and Eco committee are involved in making decisions about aspects of school life. In nearly all classes, pupils are beginning to have an input into what and how they learn.

Most pupils are developing good personal and social skills. Pupils who have been appointed as play leaders, tuck shop helpers and 'Helpers for the Week' support the staff inside and outside the classroom. These pupils are conscientious and responsible.

Pupils understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Presently, attendance is just below the local and national levels although there is an upward trend. The involvement of partnership working 'Team around the Child' has had a significant impact on raising the attendance of vulnerable pupils.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a good range of learning experiences, which engage pupils' interests well. Teachers' planning increasingly focuses on developing pupils' skills, although this is at an early stage of development. The use of a range of programmes to support pupils' specific needs is having a good impact on the standards achieved by many pupils. The school also provides good opportunities to focus on particular aspects of the curriculum during themed weeks. For example, a whole week's work recently focused on sustainability issues.

The provision in the Foundation Phase is consistently good but in key stage 2 it is less consistent. The planning and provision for the development of pupils' oracy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is good, but for pupils' reading and writing skills it is uneven. The use of the outside area to provide relevant and exciting learning opportunities is a very good feature of the school.

There is good provision for teaching the Welsh language, particularly in the Foundation Phase and in lower key stage 2. The school promotes the development of pupils' cultural and historical knowledge and understanding of Wales well and there is a strong Welsh ethos at the school.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of caring for the environment. The links with the 'Cariad Kenya' charity give pupils a particularly good understanding of issues associated with global citizenship.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities which are well

attended by many pupils.

Teaching: Good

In every class there are very good working relationships between members of staff and pupils. Successful classroom routines and behaviour management strategies create a purposeful learning environment.

There is a good range of teaching approaches across the school. In many classes, pupils benefit from a more creative teaching approach, which allows them to take ownership of their learning. This is particularly the case in the Forest School provision where pupils are supported in their learning through open-ended activities and appropriate questioning.

Where teaching is less effective, lesson introductions are often too long, pupils are not given enough opportunities to work independently, and teachers' expectations are not challenging enough for all pupils.

The use of assessment to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work is developing well. The use of 'learning walls' within each class also helps with this process. Strategies to help pupils assess their own and their peers' performance is evident but at an early stage of development. Teachers provide purposeful homework and the "Learning Logs" initiative helps pupils to apply the skills they learn in the classroom at home with parental support.

The procedures for assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress are good. Marking is generally positive but, on a few occasions, does not help pupils improve their work. The school has clear systems for tracking and maintaining information on pupils' progress. The end-of-year reports keep parents well informed about their children's achievements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

All policies which promote healthy living and wellbeing are in place and are updated regularly. The school has developed effective working relationships and communicates well with parents and outside agencies. It operates an open-door policy and holds meetings with parents when necessary. The induction arrangements for new pupils are good. The school effectively promotes pupils' personal development by providing a broad range of experiences throughout the day.

There is good provision for enhancing pupils' spiritual development through daily acts of worship. There are also plenty of opportunities in the curriculum to reflect on questions linked to different faiths and beliefs. The school encourages pupils to participate in sporting and cultural activities and the partnerships with local clubs and other community links promote these effectively.

A whole school approach to positive behaviour management provides all pupils with a good structure to support moral development. Pupils are involved in making class rules and the school golden rules are well understood. Good use is made of specialist services and the links with specialist agencies is a good feature of the

school. The headteacher has a very pro-active approach to promoting attendance and punctuality and the school's procedures are very good. As a result, the attendance of pupils is improving.

Teachers use a range of appropriate support programmes for pupils with additional learning needs and for those with statements of special educational needs. Individual education plans are also used well to ensure that many of these pupils make good progress. Staff track the progress of these pupils carefully and review progress with parents regularly. Support for vulnerable pupils and those with behaviour difficulties is a strong feature of the school.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school has an inclusive ethos where every pupil is treated fairly and has equal access to all areas of provision. Incidents of discriminatory behaviour or bullying are rare. Pupils helped to formulate the school's anti-bullying procedures and they are relevant and well understood. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and demonstrate respect for each other and their school. They also understand the need for tolerance and acceptance of different viewpoints and cultures.

The school uses its accommodation effectively and the classrooms and the outside areas are attractive and well maintained. A significant investment has been made into the development of outdoor provision which is having a good impact on the learning experiences provided for pupils. The school has a good range of quality resources and good use is made of the wall space to display and celebrate pupils' work.

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

The headteacher and the senior management team have worked well together to create an open and honest culture in the school. They have developed an appropriate vision that is shared by all staff. The strategic direction for the life and work of the school is now more focused on raising pupils' standards of achievement.

All staff feel valued and have specific responsibilities for developing a range of initiatives. This has a positive impact on the school as a learning community. All senior teachers and subject co-ordinators are now actively involved in evaluating their areas of responsibility. They have all benefited from working with experienced local authority advisers. However, there are still inconsistencies in the way that subjects are co-ordinated across the school.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations. Under the leadership of an experienced chairperson and vice chairperson, the governors share the headteacher's sense of direction for the school. They actively support the school and know about the performance of the pupils. They also know about the initiatives the school is developing and have a good understanding of the school's self-evaluation procedures.

The school meets national and local priorities effectively. For example, it has successfully introduced the Foundation Phase and Assessment for Learning strategies, and uses the school website well to encourage fathers and male role models to read with boys. Teachers and pupils are developing their understanding of using skills across the curriculum. However, there are not enough opportunities for all pupils to develop their reading and writing skills.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The headteacher makes good use of performance information to monitor progress and plan for improvement. Many senior staff now have a better understanding of how to use information on pupils' performance effectively.

The school has addressed many of the recommendations from the previous inspection report. However, the difference in performance between boys and girls is still an issue for the school.

The new headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have accurately prioritised the main areas the school needs to focus on, such as closing the gender gap. There is a clear link between the self-evaluation report and the priorities identified in school development plan. In the current plan there is a much greater focus on raising pupils' standards of achievement.

The school regularly seeks the opinions of pupils, parents and members of the local community and acts on their suggestions.

There are a number of professional learning communities within the school. Through both formal and informal systems, staff regularly discuss ideas and share their professional knowledge. This is enhanced by effective links with other schools. Senior teachers have opportunities to observe teaching in other classes in the school. However, this is not as well developed for other teaching staff.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school works very well in partnership with a range of agencies including national bodies, the local authority and statutory and non-statutory services, as well as the local community. The headteacher has built effectively on these existing partnership arrangements and they help to enrich and support all pupils' learning and wellbeing. The 'Team around the Child' pilot project is an outstanding example of partnership working, which is having a measurable impact on the welfare and engagement of vulnerable pupils.

Parents and carers are very positive about the effective arrangements made for children new to the school.

Transition planning agreements between local clusters of schools prepare older pupils well for the next stage of their education. The enhanced transition arrangements, in partnership with the local authority and Risca Comprehensive

School, are providing appropriate and innovative, targeted support for more vulnerable pupils.

Resource management: Adequate

The school now manages its budget well. It has sufficient qualified staff and a wide range of learning resources, and deploys support staff effectively. The review of its use of Higher Level Teaching Assistants and religious education provision in order to cover planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers has enhanced curriculum provision. This has contributed to the improved management of resources.

Additional funding has been secured through different strategies including accessing grant aid from many sources. The impact of this is evident in the good school environment and the plentiful supply of resources for learning.

The spacious accommodation is well maintained and of a good standard. The school is planning further appropriate improvements internally and externally. These are linked to the priorities for action in its improvement plan.

In view of the adequate standards achieved by most pupils, the school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fifty-seven parents/carers completed the questionnaire. Their responses were extremely positive. All agreed, or agreed strongly, that they are happy with the school, that their child is happy at school and that their child had settled well at the school. Also, all parents agreed that their child is making good progress, that the school provides a good range of activities, that the school encourages their child to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle, and that the school is well run. Nearly all of the parents believe that pupils behave well and that the homework given builds on what the children learn in class. Nearly all also believe that the children are treated fairly and that they are happy to approach the school with suggestions or if they have a problem. Similarly, nearly all parents are familiar with the school's complaints procedures, and believe that the teaching is good and that the school prepares their child well for the next stage in their learning. Only a very few parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress and do not feel that their child is receiving appropriate help with any particular needs they may have.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire. Nearly all were overwhelmingly positive. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They feel that bullying is dealt with effectively, and would know whom to talk to when they are worried or upset. All pupils agree that the school helps them to keep healthy and think that there are plenty of chances for them to be physically active. All pupils feel that they are doing well at school and that the teachers and support staff help them to progress in their learning. They know what to do if they need help and think that there are enough resources to enable them to learn effectively. Many pupils feel that homework helps them to improve on their work in school. A few pupils think that behaviour at playtime and lunch time is not good enough and a minority feel that pupils' behaviour prevents them from getting their work done as well as they could.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Clive Phillips	Reporting Inspector
Steve Lamb	Team Inspector
Liz Miles	Team Inspector
Julie Ann Price	Lay Inspector
Sian Lewis	Peer Inspector
Mrs A Dacey	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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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