



*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**

**Abernant Primary School  
Richmond Terrace  
Abernant  
Aberdare  
CF44 0SF**

**Date of inspection: November 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:

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

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

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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.uk)

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## Context

Abernant Primary School is situated in the village of Abernant near Aberdare, which is situated in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. The school describes most of the area it serves as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged.

There are 137 pupils aged three to eleven years in the school. Pupils are organised into five mixed age classes. Almost all pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Approximately 14% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the local authority and the all-Wales average. The school has identified 17% of pupils with additional learning needs with none receiving a statement of special educational needs. There have been no exclusions in the last 12 months.

The school has achieved a number of external awards including Investors in People and the Healthy Schools awards.

Since the last inspection in 2006, there have been changes to the senior management team. The current headteacher joined the school four years ago and the school does not have an appointed deputy headteacher. However, a senior teacher has a post of responsibility.

The individual school budget per pupil for Abernant Primary School in 2011-2012 is £3,330 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,499 and the minimum is £2,591. Abernant Primary School is 63rd out of 114 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of Abernant Primary School is adequate because:

- many pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points;
- more able pupils in both key stages make good progress;
- most pupils work well together and are motivated to learn; and
- most pupils behave well in classes and around the school.

However:

- pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science has often not compared well with pupils in other similar schools; and
- the curriculum is not sufficiently coherent and challenging.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement in Abernant Primary School are judged as adequate because, although there is a supportive ethos for learning and there is a sound process for self-evaluation:

- there is not always enough focus on key priorities for school development;
- priorities do not always relate enough to improvements in the quality of pupils' learning and the quality of teaching;
- a number of developments have not been fully implemented or embedded consistently across the school; and
- the school has made only adequate progress in relation to many of the recommendations of the last inspection.

## **Recommendations**

The school needs to:

- R1 improve standards in reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT);
- R2 improve the consistency of teaching and assessment across the school;
- R3 improve the clarity of planning and the organisation of the curriculum;
- R4 focus more clearly on a few key priorities for school development;
- R5 make sure that all relevant pupils attend daily acts of collective worship; and
- R6 refine the policy and procedures for safeguarding.

### **What happens next?**

Abernant Primary School will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

#### Standards: Adequate

In lessons and over time, many pupils make at least appropriate and often good progress in their learning.

Most pupils speak clearly and confidently with other pupils and with adults. Pupils in the Foundation Phase, for instance, share ideas about their number work enthusiastically, while older pupils in key stage 2 use talk effectively to clarify their thinking in science.

More able pupils in both key stages read well in a variety of contexts and attain levels of fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age and ability. However, while average and less able pupils generally read accurately, many find it difficult to discuss what they have read.

Pupils' early writing skills develop slowly in the first few years of the Foundation Phase. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils write short narrative accounts independently and generally use accurate punctuation and sensible spelling. However, their handwriting is generally overlarge and letters are often incorrectly formed. Towards the end of key stage 2, many pupils write confidently in a variety of different genres. For instance, pupils in the Year 4 and Year 5 class produce informative posters about keeping Abernant litter free. In the Year 5 and Year 6 class, pupils write interesting letters to 'Posh and Becks'. Most pupils' ability to write at length for a range of purposes and in different subject areas is adequate. However, throughout the school, pupils' spelling is generally weak.

In limited contexts, many pupils, particularly in key stage 2, have acceptable, numeracy and ICT skills. However, they do not always apply these skills well across the curriculum.

Most pupils' thinking skills are developing well throughout the school. Very young pupils in the Foundation Phase, for instance, identify what they want to learn about mini-beasts. Pupils in the Year 4 and Year 5 class successfully plan how to present information about the Egyptians through making an Egyptian museum.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about learning Welsh and their language skills are developing appropriately. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils speak confidently and use a reasonable range of sentence patterns and vocabulary. However, pupils' reading and writing skills are generally less well developed.

Pupils with additional learning needs and pupils entitled to free school meals generally make progress in line with their ability. Nearly all the more able pupils make appropriate progress.

In key stages 1 and 2, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science has been variable over the last four years and has often not compared well with that of pupils in other similar schools. However, more pupils attain the higher levels in both key stages than in other similar schools.

In key stage 1 in 2011, the overall performance of pupils improved but is still just below the average for the family of schools. In key stage 2, the performance of pupils decreased significantly and generally does not compare well with that of pupils in other similar schools.

Overall, boys do not achieve as well as girls and, in key stage 2 in 2011, half as many boys than girls achieved the expected level in English.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

The school is a happy and caring environment where pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils relate well to each other and to adults.

All pupils have a good understanding of the need to take exercise and to eat healthily and many take part in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are well prepared for life and work outside school. Many older pupils act responsibly, manage their time effectively and know what they need to do to improve their work.

The school council and eco council provide pupils with positions of responsibility and are a valued part of school life. Council members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and feel their ideas and suggestions are listened to and valued. They make relevant decisions about school life. These include making suggestions for improvements in the physical environment such as painting a rainbow in the Foundation Phase outdoor area.

Pupils' understanding of their role in the school and wider community is developing well. Playground leaders, for instance, take their responsibilities very seriously and work hard to make sure that younger pupils feel safe and secure at playtimes. Pupils in the Year 4 and Year 5 class work closely with local park staff to improve the school playground.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good throughout the school and during lessons and most pupils state that no bullying takes place. Attendance compares favourably with that of other similar schools and most pupils arrive in school on time.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>
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<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Adequate**

The organisation of the curriculum does not fully ensure that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are acquired systematically as they move through the school. Although lesson plans generally make reference to the development of skills, the school does not ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.

Learning experiences do not always meet the needs of all pupils. For example, on occasions, work does not provide sufficient challenge for all learners or allow them to develop as independent learners. However, pupils in all classes have good opportunities to work in pairs and groups and this contributes well to the development of their collaborative skills. This is apparent in the “critical skills” learning experiences that are provided for pupils. Throughout the school, “talking partners” effectively encourage pupils’ confidence in speaking and listening.

Provision and planning for pupils’ Welsh language development are appropriate. Weekly Welsh assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils’ enjoyment and understanding of the language. The provision and planning for developing pupils’ understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales are less well developed.

There is good provision to enable pupils to learn about sustainability and global citizenship. Most pupils have a good understanding of the need to look after our planet and each other. The school is currently making progress with the Eco bronze award and uses the school’s allotment constructively to further develop pupils’ understanding of sustainability. Pupils have surveyed the school to see how much energy can be saved and how waste paper and food can be recycled and composted.

There is a varied range of extra-curricular activities and these impact positively on the health and wellbeing of pupils. On a few occasions, lengthy assemblies and the movement of the pupils around the school mean that too much teaching time is lost.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

The quality of teaching is variable. In about half the classes, teaching is good. In these classes, teachers have a clear understanding of the range of abilities of their pupils and provide suitably varied learning activities. They use appropriate subject language, ask relevant, open-ended questions, share learning intentions with pupils and demonstrate up-to-date subject knowledge. However, a minority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In addition, in many classes there is an over reliance on the use of worksheets, which limits opportunities for pupils to work independently.

Most support staff are deployed effectively and make a beneficial contribution to pupils’ learning. All staff establish positive relationships with pupils and, in most classes, behaviour management is good.

There are examples of good assessment practice across the school. In many classes, pupils assess their own work and the work of their partners in line with specific success criteria. However, new assessment procedures for tracking pupils’ progress throughout the school are not yet consistent enough.

Teachers standardise and moderate pupils work in line with National Curriculum level descriptions. This has not yet resulted in teachers using exemplars of pupils’ work at all relevant levels as benchmarks to support accurate assessment.



Reports to parents are clear and informative, and indicate targets to help pupils improve their work. The reports also provide opportunities for parents and carers to respond to their child's report.

### **Care, support and guidance: Unsatisfactory**

The school acts as a caring community and most pupils feel safe and happy. There is a wide range of appropriate policies in place for promoting healthy living and pupils' wellbeing. The school's involvement with the healthy schools initiative enhances pupils' awareness of the importance of eating healthy food and taking regular exercise. The school is generally successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The headteacher provides a high level of care and support for most pupils on a day-to-day basis. Pupils' behaviour, for instance, is rigorously monitored in the playground and, as a result, good support is provided for individual pupils. Pupils' wellbeing is also monitored appropriately and the headteacher acts quickly and sensitively in response to any general concerns. Parents are kept well informed about safeguarding issues through an informative website and older pupils have a good awareness of e-safety. However, the school does not have an appropriate policy for safeguarding. Procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues are not fully developed.

The school liaises very well with specialist agencies for the benefit of pupils. There are clear identification arrangements for pupils with additional learning needs. Child-friendly individual education plans provide pupils who need additional support with clear targets to improve their learning. These plans are regularly evaluated and updated in consultation with parents.

### **Learning environment: Adequate**

The school is a very welcoming, safe and interesting environment, which supports pupils' learning. It has a positive, caring and supportive ethos, which encourages pupils to treat others fairly and with respect. Pupils are encouraged to take on additional responsibilities and are keen to do so.

The school is inclusive and pupils generally have equal access to all areas of the school's provision. However, pupils who receive additional support do not always attend daily acts of collective worship.

There are attractive, colourful and informative displays in classrooms and around the school. Pupils' achievements are celebrated well on these displays.

Although the buildings and outdoor environment are generally well maintained, they are too small to properly accommodate the number of pupils in the school. In addition, the toilet facilities in the Foundation Phase area are inadequate for the number of pupils using them.

There is generally an appropriate range of resources that support pupils' learning.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>
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<b>Adequate</b>
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**Leadership: Adequate**

The headteacher and senior staff have created a supportive ethos for learning and this is beginning to have a positive effect on school development. However, the school is attempting to undertake too many initiatives, and priorities for school improvement are not clearly focused. As a result, a number of developments have not been fully implemented nor embedded consistently across the school.

The recently formed senior management team, the involvement of subject leaders in school development and a sound performance management structure are beginning to have a positive impact on learning and teaching.

Governors fulfil their statutory obligations and support the school conscientiously. They know about the performance of the pupils, the strengths of the school and the areas it needs to further develop. Governors are becoming more involved in monitoring and evaluating standards and quality in the school through their regular link governor visits to classes. Their role in challenging the school is not yet developed enough.

The school is in the process of introducing and developing a number of local and national priorities such as the Foundation Phase, Assessment for Learning, the 'Big Write' and a local reading initiative. In a few classes, these developments are having a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

**Improving quality: Adequate**

There is a sound process for self-evaluation that draws on a wide range of first-hand evidence. This evidence includes the performance of pupils, observations of staff, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of pupils, parents and governors.

The outcomes of the self-evaluation process are generally used to determine priorities for school improvement. The school has identified seven key priority areas for improvement in the forthcoming year and, although staff are aware that some of these are more important than others, there are too many for them to successfully address. In addition, priorities do not always relate enough to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

The school has made adequate progress in relation to many of the recommendations of the last inspection. Although significant improvements to the accommodation have been made, the school environment still has a number of shortcomings.

A good culture of teamwork is developing and, as a result, the school is growing as a learning community. However, there are few professional learning communities established. Staff collaborate well with other schools in the cluster in science, wellbeing and critical skills to improve their professional knowledge.

### **Partnership working: Adequate**

The school has partnerships with a range of external organisations such as the local council, football and cricket clubs. These links help to extend the opportunities and experiences available to pupils. The school has good contact with parents and carers and a few parents regularly contribute to the work of the school.

The school also works successfully with a range of agencies including the local authority support services, the school nurse, and the police school liaison officer. These partnerships are having a positive impact on pupils' work.

Many pupils have been directly involved with the local community through litter picking activities, erecting litter signs and improving the local park. These activities provide pupils with a better knowledge of issues that affect the local community and enhance the respect they have for the local environment.

A Play and Learn pre-school club is available for young children from the local area. Children attend this club before they join the school and this provides good transition links between the home and school. Transition plans, agreed by the local secondary school and its feeder primary schools, are sound and prepare older pupils well for the next stage of their education. The cluster of schools also has effective procedures for standardising and moderating pupils' work in the National Curriculum core subjects.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The school manages its budget appropriately. There is a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff and these are generally deployed effectively. The school has appropriate performance management procedures that involve teachers and support staff. There are also sound arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.

There is generally a good range of learning resources with book resources and ICT equipment recently given a high priority. These are used well.

The school generally identifies and allocates resources in line with its goals and targets identified in the school improvement plan. The school accommodation is generally well ordered and managed. Although the building is old and space is very limited, staff provide an attractive and safe environment for pupils' learning.

In view of the standards achieved by many of the pupils and the appropriate management of finances, the school overall provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

In key stages 1 and 2, pupils' performance in the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, has been variable over the last four years and has often not compared well with the achievement levels of pupils in other similar schools.

In key stage 1 in 2011, the performance of pupils improved with 86% of pupils achieving the expected level (level 2) in all three core subjects. However, when compared with performance levels in other similar schools, the overall performance of pupils is in the third quarter and is just below the average for the family of schools. In English, the performance of pupils is just above the average for the family of schools but, in science, pupils do not perform well. However, the proportion of pupils in 2011 who attained the higher level (level 3) in English, mathematics and science was above that of other similar schools.

In key stage 2 in 2011, just over three quarters of pupils achieved the expected level (level 4) in all three core subjects. This represents a significant downward trend and pupils' performance does not compare well with that of pupils in other similar schools.

In English, pupils' performance is almost the lowest in the family of schools, but in mathematics and science pupils' performance is just above the family average. In addition, in English, mathematics and science pupils' performance at the higher level (level 5) is significantly above the family average.

Overall, boys do not achieve as well as girls and, in key stage 2 in 2011, half as many boys than girls achieved the expected level in English.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Learner questionnaires

Seventy-two pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Inspectors also talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils across the school. Most pupils think that teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress and pupils know whom to talk to if they find their work hard. In addition, most pupils know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. As a result, most state that they are doing well at school and that they feel safe there.

Most pupils feel that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and that they have lots of opportunities to get regular exercise. Many pupils feel that they have enough books and equipment and that homework helps them to improve their work in school.

Only a few pupils feel that the school does not deal well with bullying. However, around a quarter of pupils feel that children do not behave well at break and lunchtimes and that the behaviour of others interferes with their work in class.

Overall, a majority of these views are generally in line with the views of pupils in other schools across Wales. However, more pupils in Abernant Primary express negative comments about the behaviour of other pupils and the resources and equipment they have. They are also more negative about the provision of homework and how safe they feel in school.

#### Parent questionnaires

Seven parents attended the parents' meeting and thirty-one parents completed the questionnaires. Overall, all parents feel the school is well run. All parents express a great deal of satisfaction with the school and feel that their children are well prepared to move on to their next school.

All parents state that their children were helped to settle into school when they first started and that their children like school and are happy and safe there. All parents also feel that teaching is good and that children are expected to work hard. As a result, most parents state that their children are making good progress. All parents feel that their children are becoming more mature and taking on responsibilities and are encouraged to be healthy. Many parents feel that there is a good range of activities in school and that homework given is appropriate. Nearly all also feel that their children are treated fairly and with respect. However, a very few parents state that children do not receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs.

Most parents state that school staff are approachable if they have concerns or questions and nearly all are well enough informed about their children's progress. A very few parents do not feel that children behave well in school. Most parents are clear about what to do if they need to raise issues with the school or to make a complaint.

Overall, nearly all of these views are in line with, or slightly better than, the views of parents in other schools across Wales. However, parents in Abernant Primary are not as positive about the range of activities, including trips or visits, that are available.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Mike Maguire	Reporting Inspector
Beverley Jenkins	Team Inspector
Thomas Petherick	Lay Inspector
Susan Evans	Peer Inspector
Melville Hawkins	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

## Year groups and key stages

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

The term 'Reception' (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