



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

**Betws Primary School
Betws Road
Betws
Bridgend
CF32 8YD**

Date of inspection: July 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

Betws Primary School is situated in the village of Bettws, approximately six miles from Bridgend. It provides education for pupils between three and eleven years of age. Pupils are admitted to the nursery on a part-time basis in the term following their third birthday. They begin full-time education at the start of the academic year during which they become four.

Currently there are 233 pupils at the school, including 28 full-time and 21 part-time nursery children. The current headteacher was appointed in 2002.

Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnic origin and speak English at home. Two pupils have English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Pupils are taught through the medium of English and Welsh is taught as a second language. Thirty-five per cent of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs and one pupil is looked after by the local authority.

The area is designated a Communities First area and there is a Flying Start group based at the school for children from two years of age. The area has high levels of unemployment and around half of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Fifty-four per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is nearly three times the local authority and national average.

The school has three resource classes, which serve pupils with additional learning needs from across Bridgend local authority. There is a nurture class for pupils from Year 1 to Year 4 with social and emotional difficulties, a class for key stage 2 pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and a learning base for pupils with hearing impairment.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Betws Primary School is £3,758, which compares with a maximum of £4,826 and a minimum of £2,758 for primary schools in Bridgend. The school has the 11th highest budget per pupil out of the 52 primary schools in Bridgend.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- it is an inclusive environment with a very positive and supportive ethos;
- most pupils make good progress overall and achieve good standards in relation to their starting points;
- staff work well together to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for pupils; and
- there are strong working relationships with parents and the community which contribute significantly to pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the school has a successful track record of bringing about improvements in key areas of its work;
- the headteacher has a clear understanding of what is needed to sustain and further improve school performance;
- the good self-evaluation processes clearly identify priorities for whole school improvement; and
- there are practical plans and good resources in place to meet these targets.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 improve standards for more able and talented pupils;
- R2 build on the progress made in the Foundation Phase to improve curriculum provision at key stage 2 and ensure that statutory requirements are met;
- R3 consistently plan work that is well matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils;
- R4 develop clear job descriptions that ensure that the roles and responsibilities of leaders are effectively allocated; and
- R5 clearly identify the developmental needs of all staff in order to sustain and further develop school improvement.

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?

Good

Standards: Good

Most pupils make good progress in the Foundation Phase in relation to their starting points. Teacher assessments indicate that most seven-year-olds achieve well when compared to pupils in other similar schools. Over the past four years, standards at the end of key stage 1 have improved steadily in English, mathematics and science. Results are now well above the family of schools average, although they remain slightly below local authority and national averages.

Standards at the end of key stage 2 vary more from year to year. There have been improvements, but these are not steady or consistent. However, these variations are mainly due to the significant number of pupils with additional learning needs in the learning resource classes from other areas of Bridgend. When the school and local authority analyse these pupils' results separately, outcomes in English, mathematics and science for mainstream pupils are consistently in the top half of those for similar schools.

Pupils with additional learning needs in the resource classes and in mainstream classes achieve well in relation to their ability and starting points. There is no significant pattern to the relative performance of boys and girls over time. At key stage 1, the difference between the achievement of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and of those who are not is similar to the national average. However, this gap in performance is greater by the end of key stage 2. At both key stages, when compared to the situation in similar schools, very few pupils achieve the higher levels in end of key stage assessments.

Progress and achievement in lessons in most classes are good and pupils' work shows appropriate improvement over time. Most pupils apply their previous knowledge, skills and understanding well to new situations, especially in the Foundation Phase.

Most pupils, including those in the learning resource classes, apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills securely in a range of contexts. Nearly all communicate appropriately with their friends and adults in a wide range of formal and informal situations. Many Foundation Phase pupils are enthusiastic and expressive readers. They enjoy using their early writing skills to record their findings and express their feelings across areas of learning. Key stage 2 pupils apply their reading and writing skills effectively to access the whole curriculum. However, a minority of older pupils do not always listen attentively. Many pupils have particularly good skills in information and communication technology, which they use skilfully to enhance their learning. For example, they create interesting multi-media presentations about World War Two in history.

Standards in Welsh are good in the Foundation Phase. Many pupils ask and answer simple questions correctly. They read and respond to texts appropriately and write

personal information clearly. Although pupils continue to develop their speaking and listening skills in Welsh appropriately at key stage 2, progress in reading and writing in Welsh is not maintained effectively.

Wellbeing: Good

Many pupils are well motivated and display pride and confidence in their work. They understand the importance of the school and its pupils in the community and are proud of their involvement in schemes to improve the village environment. The positive attitudes of pupils towards learning and the part they play in local decision-making reflect the mutual respect that exists between them and adults who work with them. Members of the school council are enthusiastic and work hard to raise money for charities, such as Comic Relief. However, the school council's wider role is underdeveloped.

Most pupils feel safe in school. Older pupils speak confidently about the significant improvements that have taken place over recent years, such as the way in which staff deal with poor behaviour and bullying. As a result, exclusion rates have decreased significantly. All pupils know that they are expected to take responsibility for their actions and most show respect and consideration for others. For example, they are proud of the positions of responsibility that they undertake within the school and show consideration and concern for their peers by acting as playground buddies. Many support one another in their learning and most work well in pairs and small groups.

Most pupils understand the importance of good attendance at school. The very high attendance at the breakfast club means that most arrive in time to start the school day. This and other effective intervention strategies have improved attendance rates gradually over recent years but, at 91%, rates remain below those of similar schools. Nearly all pupils are aware of the benefits of a healthy diet and an active lifestyle. Many buy fruit to eat at break time and enjoy physical activity during and after the school day.

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

In the Foundation Phase, pupils enjoy a wide range of learning experiences that engage them successfully and meet their needs well. However, provision across key stage 2 is uneven. In a few classes, learning experiences do not cover the full range of requirements of the National Curriculum. The work that pupils do in some lessons does not always match their needs and abilities well enough.

Appropriate planning and effective organisation in many classes ensures that activities link clearly to skills across all subjects and areas of learning. Many teachers use skills ladders appropriately to ensure that the curriculum builds systematically on existing knowledge, understanding and skills as pupils move from the Foundation Phase to key stage 2. Provision to develop literacy skills and information and communication technology is generally good, although planning for numeracy, problem solving and creative skills is less consistent.

Most teachers and support staff use incidental Welsh frequently around the school and in lessons. This has improved pupils' attitudes towards Welsh and their acceptance of it as a form of communication, particularly in the Foundation Phase. However, with a few exceptions, key stage 2 pupils do not use Welsh around the school confidently. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the historical, environmental and cultural characteristics of Wales.

The school successfully promotes pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. It strongly encourages their involvement in healthy eating, energy conservation and recycling. Topics in geography and religious education, as well as fundraising events, contribute well to developing a global dimension to the curriculum.

Teaching: Good

Most teaching ensures that pupils are well motivated and engaged in their learning. This secures good progress for many pupils. However, more able and talented pupils are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work. Teachers and other adults have detailed subject knowledge and use a range of approaches and activities well to interest pupils. Good use is made of resources, including technology, to enhance learning. Adult support is well focused and makes a valuable contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers and other adults manage behaviour well.

The school has good systems for the assessment of learning. Teachers use an appropriate range of standardised tests and use the outcomes of these assessments well to identify individual needs. Pupil progress is tracked effectively across the school at individual and group level. The school's involvement with other schools in standardising assessments in the core subjects helps to ensure consistency in end of key stage assessments. Pupil assessment files provide parents with useful information on their child's achievements, progress and development. End of year reports to parents are detailed and meet statutory requirements.

Implementation of assessment for learning strategies is at an early stage. Most teachers share learning objectives appropriately with pupils. Many give immediate oral feedback, which enables pupils to know how well they are doing. Children are involved in setting personal targets, although these do not always link closely enough to the development of skills. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and conscientiously. However, written comments do not provide pupils with enough advice about how to improve their work and further develop their skills.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a clear emphasis on improving pupils' health and wellbeing. All staff identify and cater for pupils' needs in a supportive, caring environment. These effective arrangements contribute well to pupils' physical and emotional development and support their learning effectively. Innovative schemes supported by the local community, such as the 'Messy Church' after-school club, support pupils' spiritual and cultural development, as does lively, yet reflective, whole-school worship. Pupils' involvement in planning topic work with staff and their participation in local community groups develop their social skills successfully.

Staff work hard with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to pupils. The school hosts a wide range of specialist agencies such as the police, health visitor and community dentist. Clearly targeted professional support and guidance from these agencies for groups of identified pupils and their families have resulted in significant improvement in attitudes, attendance, behaviour and achievement.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

The school makes good use of the expertise of a wide range of services to meet pupils' additional learning needs effectively and to promote their full inclusion and participation in learning. The additional learning needs co-ordinator, supported by all staff, identifies pupils' needs early on. The school consults parents fully from the outset and involves them appropriately in the regular review of individual education plans. Teachers and support staff use specific interventions well to target small groups of pupils and these schemes improve pupils' basic skills significantly.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a strong ethos of inclusion and works hard to ensure equal opportunities for all. Pupils and adults respect one another and everyone actively recognises and celebrates diversity. All pupils have equal access to the whole curriculum and the school develops tolerant attitudes which ensure that all pupils and staff are free from harassment.

Although the school's accommodation is difficult to maintain, staff use all areas very creatively to make a stimulating learning environment that enriches the curriculum. Attractive and diverse displays support learning and celebrate topic work and pupils' activities. There are plenty of good quality learning resources. These are used well to meet the needs of pupils. Resources for information and communication technology are used particularly effectively at key stage 2 to enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum. Staff and the community have developed the forest area well, but a few other outdoor spaces are not as welcoming for pupils.

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

The headteacher provides strong leadership and she is well supported by the chair of governors. Leaders set a clear direction for staff. They focus appropriately on a few specific school priorities, such as raising levels of literacy and supporting social inclusion in order to improve standards and wellbeing for pupils. However, the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team are not balanced well enough. This makes it difficult to ensure consistent progress in all areas of school performance.

Leaders support colleagues and pupils well and they work together efficiently. However, they do not always monitor the work of others rigorously enough to ensure that progress can be sustained or further improved. Leaders do not always identify individuals' strengths and development needs clearly enough to improve their teaching and leadership skills.

Governors support the school conscientiously and understand how well pupils are doing. However, reports to governors are not always evaluative enough to ensure that they can challenge school performance confidently.

The school pays good attention to most national and local priorities. For example, self-evaluation processes are well established and have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. The school's successful implementation of the Foundation Phase has improved standards in skills and levels of independence of its younger pupils significantly. Environmental awareness, healthy living and citizenship each have a high priority in the life of the school.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders understand the strengths and development needs of the school well. They analyse performance data effectively to monitor and evaluate pupil progress and inform planning for improvement. The school involves all stakeholders in formally assessing the school's progress every year. For example, pupils and representatives of the governing body contribute effectively to the annual self-evaluation in-service training day.

Participants help to agree new priorities and set revised targets so that the school can continue to improve. These good processes ensure that self-evaluation links clearly to school improvement planning. The school has a good track record of maintaining or improving standards and provision in specific areas of its work. Leaders develop practical plans and make sure that there are appropriate resources in place to meet these targets.

Three professional learning communities have been set up in the school to enable staff to share professional knowledge and meet the priorities of the school improvement plan. These groups focus on creativity, assessment and transition from Foundation Phase to key stage 2. The work of the transition group has helped to improve attendance, punctuality and the management of challenging behaviour. However, it is too early to measure the direct impact of the other groups on pupil standards. There is an effective network of professional practice within the local cluster of schools, which has helped to improve literacy.

Partnership working: Excellent

Partnership working with a wide range of agencies including national bodies, the local authority and statutory and non-statutory services is a very strong feature of the school.

Partnerships with parents and carers are excellent. Exceptionally high numbers of parents attend family learning sessions, which are provided in partnership with Bridgend College. These opportunities for parents to improve their basic skills alongside their children have significantly improved attitudes to learning for many children and families. This has helped to improve attendance and has built firm relationships between the school and many of its families. As a result of the school's outstanding success in encouraging parents to attend 'Language and Play' and 'Number and Play' sessions, a teacher and support assistant have designed their

own 'Science and Play' scheme, which helps parents to support their children's learning in science. This innovative partnership work is a highly effective way of supporting the school's priorities and has had a very positive impact on standards in the Foundation Phase.

Through the school's very close working relationship with the on-site Flying Start group, children receive support from a very early age. This helps them to overcome possible barriers to their learning. It has a significant impact on the ability of children to transfer successfully to life in the nursery. Parents are very positive about how this provision helps their children make progress in their learning. The headteacher has shared the good practice from this pilot setting with others and this work has been influential in shaping the development of other Flying Start groups in the local authority.

Highly imaginative strategic partnerships between the school and the local community enrich and support pupils' learning and wellbeing. For example, pupil representatives regularly attend local urban planning meetings. These pupils have a significant influence over the decisions that the group makes, and they fully understand their role in shaping the future of the environment through their participation. The shared use of resources, such as the community kitchen and the outdoor play area, means that the school can offer its pupils a wider range of facilities than it could provide alone. This enhances learning opportunities for pupils and contributes well to community cohesion.

The school works well with the local cluster of schools and across the borough to share good practice and to develop learning resources. Transition planning agreements within the cluster prepare older pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its budget appropriately. It has sufficient qualified teachers and support staff, which are deployed effectively. The school's spending decisions relate well to priorities for improvement and benefit all pupils. The school has managed to extend its budget where possible by securing additional funding. This has allowed substantial investment in laptop computers. CCTV cameras have been deployed effectively to protect resources. The development of outdoor provision, including the forest school resources, has contributed to the reduction in damage caused by vandals.

In view of the good standards obtained by most of the pupils and the appropriate use made of the budget allocated to the school, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Thirty-four parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Most expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. All parents feel that their children were helped to settle when they joined the school. Nearly all agree that their children like coming to school and are confident that they are safe there. Most feel that teaching is good and that teachers expect their children to do their best. Most are confident that their children are making good progress and think that homework builds successfully on what children learn in school. However, a few do not feel that they know enough about their children's achievements. Most believe that teachers help their children to become more mature and take on responsibility, although a few are unsure about how well prepared their children will be for the move to the secondary school. Nearly all are happy with the support their children receive for their additional learning needs. A few parents feel that behaviour is not as good as it could be and that staff do not always treat their children fairly, although this was not the view expressed at the parents' meeting. Most agree that the school is well run and they feel comfortable to approach staff if they have any questions or concerns.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety-seven pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire and most were very positive. Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school and they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset or are finding their work difficult. Most think that bullying is dealt with effectively. Nearly 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 agree that the teachers and support staff help them to progress in their learning, but a few do not feel that they are doing well at school. Nearly all think that there are enough resources to enable them to learn effectively and they feel that homework helps them to improve on their work in school. A minority think that behaviour is not always good enough and that this sometimes prevents them from getting their work done as well as they could.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Sarah Morgan	Reporting Inspector
Stephen Lamb	Team Inspector
Deidre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Kate Prendergast	Peer Inspector
Mrs C Matchett (Headteacher)	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