



*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**

**Cymer Afan Primary School,  
Margam Street,  
Cymmer,  
Port Talbot.  
SA13 3EE**

**Date of inspection: October 2011**

**by**

**Dr David Gareth Evans**

**for**

**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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court  
Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

**© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2011: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.**

## Context

Cymer Afan Primary is a community school for pupils aged three to eleven years. It is situated in the rural village of Cymmer in the Afan valley, about seven miles north of Port Talbot, in Neath Port Talbot Local Authority. There is a variety of rented and owner-occupied houses in the village, with many properties being typical of a former mining community.

It is organised into three mixed-age classes. Nursery and reception age children are taught alongside Year 1 pupils in class 1. Class 2 comprises pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 and class 3 caters for pupils in Years 5 and 6. There are 63 full-time pupils on roll, which include five children of nursery age who attend part-time. The average class size is 21. As a result of the closure of a neighbouring school the intake this year has risen by fourteen pupils. There are four full-time teachers, one part-time teacher (0.4) and three full-time learning support assistants (LSAs), including a qualified nursery nurse, in school. An additional LSA delivers the rapid reading programme.

Over the last two years there have been significant staff changes as a result of retirements and budgetary cuts. The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher due to the retirement of the school's headteacher in the summer of 2011. She will be acting headteacher for the next school year until the school becomes part of the federation of schools in the Upper Afan Valley. The headteacher of the federation of schools, who is currently headteacher of Cymer Afan Comprehensive and Pen Afan Primary school, will then become headteacher of this school. Close links with Cymer Afan Comprehensive School are being fostered to prepare for this venture.

The school receives pupils from the full range of abilities and from a wide range of backgrounds, with a number coming from relatively disadvantaged homes. Twenty-nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure which doubled over the last five years, and this is above national and local averages. Around 17% of pupils have special educational needs, and this figure is slightly below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

There is a small number of pupils from ethnic minority groups. No pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language and English is the predominant language of pupils' homes.

The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark. It was previously inspected in October 2005.

The individual school budget in 2010-2011 per pupil for Cymer Afan Primary School is £5,066, which compares with a maximum of £7,911 and a minimum of £2,483 for primary schools in Neath Port Talbot. The school has the 9th highest budget per pupil of the 71 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot.

## 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 school's current performance is adequate because:

- the school promotes pupils' welfare well;
- the standard of care and guidance is good; and
- the quality of teaching is good.

However:

- the school's performance, in comparison with similar schools, has not been good over the last few years and the attainment of pupils is too variable;
- there are shortcomings in pupils' application of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum; and
- teachers make insufficient use of assessment data to support target-setting and to raise pupils' standards.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are adequate because:

- the acting head teacher is developing a strong sense of common purpose and is fully committed to school improvement;
- subject leaders are focused on raising pupils' achievement; and
- governors are now becoming more actively involved in setting the school's strategic direction.

However:

- although the recently appointed acting headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction, and has a clear view of the school's priorities for improvement, it is too early to judge the impact on improving pupils' standards and the quality of education provided; and
- self-evaluation overall has not, until recently, focused sufficiently on improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning, and the current self-evaluation

report has not had time to impact on standards and provision.

## Recommendations

The school needs to:

- raise standards in reading, writing, numeracy and ICT across the school;
- continue to develop assessment procedures so that information is used fully to raise standards and ensure that pupils are more involved in assessing their work;
- improve provision for the development of skills to ensure progression and continuity across the curriculum;
- develop a robust system for monitoring all aspects of school provision and ensure that self-evaluation is systematic, rigorous and focuses strongly on pupil outcomes; and
- further develop the role of the governing body and other stakeholders in self-evaluation and school improvement.

### What happens next?

*Cymer Afan Primary School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by Estyn.*

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
---	-----------------

### Standards: Adequate

Pupils' assessment results in English, mathematics and science in both key stages have fluctuated considerably over the past four years. The relatively small numbers of pupils in most year groups means that numbers are often too small for reliable comparisons to be made.

The proportion of pupils in both key stages who achieve the core subject indicator (CSI), the expected level in the three core subjects, has been generally below the family, local authority and Wales averages for three of the last four years. Results in 2010 and 2011 are better. However, only 75% of pupils attained the core subject indicator in both key stages in 2011. The school has generally been in the bottom or third quartile for the last five years when compared to schools with similar free school meals figures. Girls usually perform far better than boys in both key stages. Many pupils start in school with skills generally below those normally expected for children of their age, especially in language. From these low starting points, many make adequate progress in their learning throughout the school.

The performance of those pupils entitled to free school meals has generally been below national, local and family averages in the years before 2010. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress, but those of higher ability do not achieve as much as they should.

In lessons and in their work, standards achieved by nursery and reception pupils are good. They communicate their needs and feelings well and use their written work to organise their ideas. Older pupils in the Foundation Phase make adequate progress in comparison to younger pupils, but few demonstrate aspects of higher levels of writing.

Scrutiny of pupils' work in key stage 2 shows that many do not write well. Presentation of work and spelling are often variable in quality and sentence construction is occasionally underdeveloped. There is little evidence of pupils writing effectively for different audiences and purposes. A minority of pupils proof read, edit or revise their work suitably.

Many younger pupils read well for their age and ability; they read accurately and with confidence. A minority of older pupils do not read with sufficient expression and do not develop higher-order reading skills, such as the use of inference or deduction.

Many pupils listen well and take an interest in other pupils' points of view. Many speak confidently in front of others and a few use a mature vocabulary. Although pupils' standards in numeracy and ICT are generally adequate, a minority do not make enough use of these skills in subjects across the curriculum.

By the time they leave the school, many pupils have good standards in Welsh language skills and older pupils' writing skills are of good quality.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and have positive attitudes to healthy living and eating. They benefit from a breakfast club, which enables them to understand the importance of a good nutritional start to the day and most take part in a good range of physical exercise activities.

The school's attendance rate of 90% is below the averages for Wales and similar schools. The school is making a concerted effort to improve attendance rates, working in close partnership with the Education Welfare Officer. Most pupils arrive on time for school.

Most pupils display good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, and they display a positive attitude to learning. The majority of pupils are polite, courteous, and relate well to each other and adults. The caring ethos in the school is apparent in the way older pupils take on responsibilities for the wellbeing of the younger ones.

Pupils' opinions are valued and acted upon by the school. Most pupils are beginning to be involved in deciding what and how they learn.

An established school council meets regularly. Members of the school council and eco committee are actively involved in making decisions about school life and representing the views of their peers.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
---	-------------

**Learning experiences: Adequate**

The school generally provides a good range of learning experiences that successfully engages many pupils. Short-term planning provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to apply these skills across all areas of the curriculum.

The curriculum has recently been organised into an appropriate rolling programme of themes. There is a two-year rolling programme for the Foundation Phase and a four-year programme for key stage 2, but thematic planning does not always pay enough attention to ensuring that pupils' skills in areas of learning and subjects are taught systematically. This means that there is a lack of continuity and progression in pupils' learning in certain areas.

Provision to promote pupils' Welsh communication skills and their knowledge of the Welsh culture and heritage is good.

The school now provides a worthwhile range of out-of-school activities and visits. These enrich most pupils' experiences and are well attended.

The school is successful in promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship through recycling, eco activities and fairtrade initiatives.

### **Teaching: Good**

Most teaching motivates pupils well and ensures that they make at least adequate progress in learning. The warm and positive relationships between adults and pupils and the effective encouragement and support that pupils receive contribute effectively to their progress and wellbeing.

Teachers use a range of approaches and resources well, including the use of the outdoor environment, to engage pupils' interests. In a majority of lessons, teachers' explanations are clear and pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking through effective questioning. Well-planned adult support from LSAs and volunteers makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. In a minority of sessions observed, however, the over-use of worksheets impedes the development of pupils' extended writing skills.

A recently developed assessment system is beginning to track pupils' progress throughout the school. Although the regular marking of work celebrates pupils' success in learning, few comments offer advice on what pupils need to do to improve their work. Pupils' knowledge of their own targets for improvement and their involvement in peer assessment are developing appropriately, but these aspects are not influential in their learning. Reports to parents are detailed and there are now frequent opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their children's progress.

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

The school has a clear emphasis on improving pupils' health and wellbeing. All staff members identify and cater well for pupils' needs in a supportive, caring environment. These arrangements contribute well to pupils' physical and emotional development and support their learning effectively.

The school is a happy, safe and inclusive community where there is respect and care amongst pupils and adults alike. Staff undertake health and safety responsibilities conscientiously and implement them effectively. Pupils and parents indicate that bullying is not an issue in school. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Under the guidance of an enthusiastic, newly appointed co-ordinator, the school identifies pupils who will need additional support early and provides appropriate and extended programmes for them. The school works closely with external agencies



and, as a result, the quality of care and support for these pupils is effective. The school consults parents and involves them increasingly 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 are beginning to improve pupils' basic skills.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The inclusive ethos and supportive ambience are strong features of the school. The school ensures equal opportunities for pupils and promotes positive attitudes to diversity.

Classrooms are spacious and provide a stimulating learning environment. Attractive displays enrich the classrooms and corridors and support teaching and learning well. The building and school grounds are generally in good condition and maintained well.

The school makes regular use of nearby facilities for sports activities and physical education. It has enough equipment and resources to support all aspects of the curriculum.

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

### **Leadership: Adequate**

The recently appointed acting headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction. She has identified key priorities for improvement based on external views and an evaluation of current systems and procedures.

In the very short time that the acting headteacher has been in post there has been a number of significant improvements to the school's ethos and culture. She has begun to establish an openness and transparency of approach, and is increasingly gaining the support of all stakeholders. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these initiatives on improving pupils' standards and the quality of education provided.

Staff members at all levels are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and they generally carry them out appropriately. The acting headteacher has created a more strategic system of leadership, which is clearly focused on raising pupils' achievement. Leaders at all levels share a strong sense of common purpose and are committed to school improvement. They are embracing new opportunities for leadership and are becoming more accountable through a more purposeful use of data.

The school has a clear line management structure and appropriate performance management arrangements; however, LSAs are not yet part of the performance management process.

The school pays appropriate attention to many national and local priorities. Self-evaluation processes are now beginning to have a more positive impact on pupil outcomes. The school's implementation of the Foundation Phase has improved standards in skills; and environmental awareness, healthy living and citizenship are promoted well.

Governors are supportive and gradually becoming more proactive and involved in the life and work of the school as critical friends. They are beginning to make better use of various sources of information, including performance data, to carry out their role in monitoring the school's performance.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The acting headteacher has guided the school well towards a more realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. Formal self-evaluation has not been a regular part of school life until recently and self-evaluation has not involved all stakeholders. Robust and self-critical self-evaluation is at an early stage of development.

The acting headteacher and members of staff have produced an honest, open and accurate self-evaluation report, which identifies clearly most of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school is now beginning to use data appropriately to track individual pupils' and class progress and to provide useful information for teachers. The acting headteacher has recently established a new monitoring cycle, but monitoring procedures are at an early stage of development. Previous monitoring records show that the school has not been sufficiently self-critical or rigorous in identifying areas for improvement in learning, teaching or provision.

The acting headteacher and subject leaders are beginning to draw upon first-hand evidence of teaching and learning. Strengths and areas for development are now analysed appropriately and shared with staff in regular meetings. This process allows teachers to reflect on whole-school practices and to appraise new approaches to learning and teaching adopted by the school.

Generally, however, the targets that are set for individual teachers as a result of lesson observation and book scrutiny are not always sufficiently, robust specific and measurable. This means that important areas, such as curricular planning, have not been fully addressed.

The school improvement plan is a focused and comprehensive document which communicates key priorities clearly.

Teachers develop their professional knowledge appropriately through staff meetings and in collaboration with local schools. However, there are too few opportunities for staff members to explore new ideas about effective learning and teaching.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school works in partnership with various agencies, including the local authority, statutory and non-statutory services. There are also effective links with other local schools. The school works well with its partner primary schools as part of the local cluster arrangements. The school co-operates appropriately with other primary schools in the area as well as with the secondary school to ensure the quality of assessments of the pupils' work. The transition of pupils from primary to the secondary school is well organised and ensures that pupils settle well when they arrive.

Partnerships with the local community make positive contributions to widening the choices for pupils. These partnerships help to enrich and support all pupils' learning and wellbeing. Pupils benefit from parents, carers and older people in the community assisting with learning activities.

There are no links with industry due to the lack of employment opportunities in the locality. The area lacks any large retail outlets to visit; however, the school purchases fruit from the local greengrocer and this is sold by pupils at breaktimes.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The school manages its resources appropriately and funding is generally directed towards strategic priorities. Careful budgeting balances the staffing costs and the need for effective provision and building maintenance.

Overall, staff members are deployed well. The school makes good use of staff expertise, for example in providing curricular enrichment opportunities. Effective use is made of the planning, preparation and assessment time available to teachers. The deployment of LSAs is good and they contribute effectively to pupils' learning.

Overall, in view of pupils' outcomes, the quality of teaching, care and guidance, the school provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

#### Summary of Data:

Pupils' assessment results in English, mathematics and science in both key stages have fluctuated considerably over the past four years. The relatively small numbers of pupils in most year groups means that numbers are often small for reliable comparisons to be made.

Nearly all pupils start in the school with skills below those normally expected for children of their age, especially in language. From these low starting points, nearly all make good progress in their learning throughout the school.

In key stage 1, pupils' results in English and mathematics were exceptionally poor in 2008 and 2009 and well below national, local and family averages. No pupils attained the higher level three in English in the last four years and no pupils attained level three in mathematics in 2008, 2010 and 2011. The percentage of pupils attaining the core subject indicator (CSI), the expected level in English, mathematics and science, has been generally below national, local and family comparators over the last five years. Girls have performed far better than boys in the three core subjects over the last few years. The performance of pupils has usually been in the third and fourth quarters for the three subjects and the CSI for three of the last four years, when compared to schools with the same free school meals figures.

There is a similar picture in key stage 2 where pupils' results have been generally poor since 2007 and below or well below national, local and family averages. However, they improved markedly in 2010, but fell slightly again in 2011. Girls have performed far better than boys in English, mathematics and science over the last few years. The performance of pupils has usually been in the third and fourth quarters for the three subjects and the CSI for three of the last four years, when compared to schools with the same free school meals figures. Compared to these similar schools, pupils' attainment at the higher level five has fluctuated considerably over the last four years in the three core subjects, but there was a marked improvement in 2011 in English and mathematics

## Appendix 2

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Learner questionnaires**

Thirty-three key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire. All the pupils agree that they are treated with respect and feel safe in school, and that the school deals well with any bullying. They all agree that the school teaches them how to be healthy. They are all of the opinion that enough resources are available for them to do their work and also they feel that they are doing well at school. All the pupils agree that standards of behaviour are good in the lessons and during play time and lunch time.

#### **Parent questionnaires**

Fifteen parents, or carers, completed the questionnaire and the level of parents' satisfaction with the school is mainly positive. However, a few did not feel satisfied with the school; they did not think that their child was making good progress in school; neither did they agree that the teaching is good, nor that the homework built well on what their children had learnt in school. A few did not agree that their children received appropriate additional support in relation to individual needs. All agreed that children behave well in school, that staff treat all children fairly and with respect and that their children are encouraged to be healthy and to take healthy exercise. Nearly all expressed the opinion that the school is well run.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Dr David Gareth Evans	Reporting Inspector
Mr Enir R. Morgan	Team Inspector
Mr Gwilym Davies	Lay Inspector
Mrs Kirsty Bevan	Peer Inspector
Ms Penny Argyle	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