



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

**Gorseinon Junior School
Pontarddulas Road
Gorseinon
Swansea
SA4 4FE**

Date of inspection: September 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

Gorseinon Junior School is situated in a small urban town bordering the City of Swansea. The local authority is Swansea. The town has suffered from economic recession and from a reduction in the number of large local employers. It is now a regeneration area.

The catchment consists of a large local authority housing estate, a variety of housing association properties and some private housing. In the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, Gorseinon ranks as 42nd out of 147 wards in Swansea. Around 57% of pupils live in the most 30% deprived areas, which is 17% higher than the Swansea average.

There are currently 172 pupils on roll within seven classes. The school employs eight full-time teachers and two part-time teachers. The school also employs seven teacher assistants. A significant minority of pupils come from single-parent households. There is a travelling child on roll. There are four pupils who receive support from the English Additional Language Service. There are no pupils who speak Welsh as a first language.

Approximately 26% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the local authority and national averages. This percentage has consistently increased over the past few years. Currently, 43 pupils (25%) are on the school's register for special educational needs, nine (5%) of whom have statements for special educational needs.

There are draft proposals to amalgamate the school with the infant and nursery school from which it currently receives its pupils at seven years of age. Since the beginning of this term, the school has been led by an acting head teacher, who was previously the school's deputy headteacher.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Gorseinon Junior School is £3,039, which compares with a maximum of £5,744 and a minimum of £2,550 for primary schools in Swansea. The school has the 59th highest budget per pupil out of the 89 primary schools in Swansea.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is judged to be adequate because:

- standards over the past five years have shown consistent improvement;
- the school has worked effectively to improve standards of oracy and reading;
- pupils at the end of key stage 2 achieve high standards in information and communication technology, and in reasoning skills in mathematics and science; and
- the quality of care, guidance and support is high.

However:

- although the school performs well within the family, it does not compare well to schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals;
- there are inconsistencies in the standard of teaching; and
- there is a lack of regular opportunities for pupils to produce extended writing across the curriculum.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are judged to be good because:

- there has been a trend of continuous improvement at the school over the past five years;
- the school has a track record of undertaking initiatives that have a positive impact on standards and the quality of provision;
- there is a well-established and effective process of self-evaluation;
- the senior management team leads the school effectively; and
- the school has a process of identifying and implementing appropriate priorities for school improvement.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 raise standards in the core subjects;
- R2 improve the quality of extended writing in all subject areas across the curriculum;
- R3 continue to raise standards and improve the provision in Welsh second language;
- R4 ensure a consistently high quality of teaching throughout the school;
- R5 improve the role of the governing body as a critical friend in challenging the school to improve; and
- R6 ensure that the annual reports on pupils' progress to parents meet statutory requirements.

What happens next?

The 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

Generally, nearly all pupils in Gorseinon Junior School make appropriate progress from when they start at the school in Year 3. In lessons, many pupils focus well on tasks and show themselves to be good listeners. They apply themselves conscientiously to activities and show good progress in their knowledge and understanding in a range of subject areas. In a few classes, a minority of pupils do not concentrate fully enough to make good progress in lessons.

Pupils show significant improvement in their reading and oracy skills across key stage 2. Most pupils read fluently and with expression at an appropriate level to their age and ability and discuss the content of the books confidently. Standards at the end of the key stage are high. Pupils' thinking and reasoning skills by the end of key stage 2 are developing well, and most can convey and justify decisions and opinions fluently and confidently, using a good range of vocabulary.

Pupils write adequately in response to specific language tasks, for example setting out a letter of complaint, a recipe and an argumentative piece of writing. However, pupils generally do not produce extended pieces of writing across the curriculum.

Pupils' ability to use information and communication technology to support their learning across the curriculum is excellent. They use computers and digital cameras to produce work of a very high standard in a range of media.

Although outcomes of teacher assessment show an improvement in standards of Welsh second language over the last three years, pupils generally do not consistently make enough progress in using Welsh competently in Welsh lessons and other contexts.

There has been a general improvement in the outcomes of teacher assessments in the core subjects at the end of key stage 2 over five years, with the exception of 2010, when performance dipped. Performance is generally above family and national averages for pupils achieving the expected levels (level 4 and above).

When comparing performance with similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school is consistently in the lower 50% or lowest 25% in all subject areas except English. In relation to results for English, the school was in the upper 50% of similar schools in 2011.

Performance at higher levels (level 5+) is inconsistent, and is generally lower than family and national averages. Pupils who have particular talent achieve a high standard in their area of strengths through projects, entrepreneurial activities and the extended use of information and communication technology.

There is no generally recurring pattern of difference between the performance of boys and girls.

Pupils with additional learning needs, including those with English as an additional language, traveller children and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, make good progress, as do pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs. The performance of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, as a group, are about 10 percentage points below the levels achieved by those not entitled to free school meals. This gap is significantly narrower than the family and national averages.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. Their behaviour is good and they show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe in school and members of the school council are enthusiastic about the role they play in developments. Learners are generally keen to participate in the lessons. Many offer oral responses and most are happy to stand in front of the class to give their point of view or a response to a question.

Many pupils are aware of healthy living and eating and they enjoy using the trim trail and golf course. Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually. Attendance levels are below the family and national average, but compare favourably with those of similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Unauthorised absence is very low at 0.4%.

Decision-making is good. The school council is actively involved in making decisions about life in the school and its improvement. The Eco-committee and Junior Road Safety Officers, alongside the school council, effectively promote initiatives within the school.

Pupils display concern and empathy for characters in stories and for those less fortunate than themselves. Their understanding of their rights and responsibilities as children is beginning to develop well. They are courteous to visitors and appreciate that they should show respect to teachers and other adults at the school.

Most pupils in most classes show respect and concern for their fellow pupils, and take responsibility for their actions, although a few pupils have difficulty in co-operating with each other in the classroom.

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

Teachers provide a good range of learning experiences within and beyond the school. The curriculum requirements at key stage 2 are well met. The curriculum, which is broad and balanced, meets the needs of most pupils and builds on pupils' knowledge and skills. Pupils' learning is further enhanced through a good range of activities including extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

Provision for the development of skills is good. Carefully planned skills-based teaching and learning provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop communication, numeracy and information and communication technology systematically across the school in a broad range of contexts. However, opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length are less well developed. The provision to develop pupils' thinking skills across the curriculum is developing across the school, although is yet to make a significant impact on pupils' learning.

Provision for developing the pupils' Welsh language skills is not consistent across the school. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use the language outside the formal Welsh lesson, and teachers' expectations are generally low.

The school has good provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship, including making good use of links with the local community and places in other parts of the world. The school has achieved the Platinum Green Flag Award as a result of successfully promoting sustainability, and the Impetus Citizenship Award for the work that the children have done on rights and responsibilities. Global citizenship and education for sustainable development is developed well through the topics that pupils study and through the well-programmed enrichment clubs that meet on Friday afternoons.

Teaching: Adequate

The quality of teaching throughout the school is variable, being good in around half the lessons. There are examples of effective work, particularly towards the end of the key stage. In the lessons where teaching is good, there is clear planning and sound classroom management, and teachers provide activities that engage pupils' interest and promote the development of skills. Teachers monitor the learning carefully, and intervene appropriately to support and challenge pupils' learning.

Shortcomings in lessons include a lack of differentiation for pupils of differing abilities, low expectations of pupils and presentations that are teacher-centred and do not engage pupils actively in their learning.

Teachers and support staff generally work effectively as a team. This ensures that individuals and groups of pupils are provided with suitable learning experiences and appropriate opportunities to make progress.

The school has effective policies and procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress. The pupils' individual records are analysed well to ensure that pupils make expected progress. Pupils' assessment of their own work and others is well established. However, strategies to promote assessment for learning are less developed, and are only beginning to make an impact on pupils' learning and outcomes.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, often giving constructive comments for improvement. End-of-year reports to parents do not report on pupils' development in foundation subjects and, as a result, do not meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

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

Very good arrangements are in place to support and effectively encourage pupils' health and wellbeing and to promote involvement in their school and wider community. There is a range of extracurricular and after-school clubs that enrich pupils' experience and these arrangements are having a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing, learning and development.

Learning opportunities enhance pupils' personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school works well with other specialist services to support pupils' individual needs. Nurture groups and clubs help pupils with social and emotional needs to develop confidence.

Provision for those with additional learning needs is good. The school ensures that short and long term help is effective. Teachers have modified the individual education plans to ensure that they include pupils' views when discussing and identifying targets for improvement. Learning assistants provide these pupils with good quality support. Parents are involved throughout and are regularly informed about progress.

The school is effective in developing provision to ensure additional challenge for more able and talented pupils within the curriculum, and gives appropriate support and opportunity for pupils with a talent in a particular area.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community, where pupils receive equal access to all areas of the school's provision. All staff give appropriate emphasis to recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

The school provides resources that are of good quality and sufficient to meet the pupils' needs. The outdoor environment enhances learning opportunities with the trim trail (an outdoor activity area) and crazy golf course promoting physical development. The rainforest garden is an imaginative feature that fosters an appreciation of the natural world.

The school makes full use of the local community to enrich the curriculum. The accommodation is good and adequately maintained.

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

The acting headteacher provides clear, purposeful leadership. With the support of the senior management team, he has contributed effectively to the setting of priorities for development and the continuous improvement in standards and quality over the past four years, and in ensuring that pupils make good progress from particularly low starting-points on entry to the school.

The senior management team and other leaders develop their areas of responsibility well and contribute positively to self-evaluation and whole-school developments. They are building effectively on previous work, and are developing a collaborative style of leadership. Communication within the school is effective and the staff's morale is reasonably high.

Teachers have a good understanding of the current priorities for development in the school improvement plan.

Performance management is well established and is currently being reviewed to reflect the acting headteacher's collaborative approach to leadership.

Staff have responded well to many national and local priorities, particularly in developing literacy, sustainability and global citizenship, thinking and enterprise skills. However, the development of assessment for learning is insufficient.

The governing body knows the school well and has a good range of committees. Governors are well informed on school performance but are not critical enough in their scrutiny of school performance data. Neither do they contribute proactively to school self-evaluation.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and managers identify strengths and areas for development in a systematic way. Subject leaders regularly undertake a wide range of focused monitoring activities. These include observing lessons and scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work. The evaluation reports that stem from this work are of good quality. The findings of self-evaluation clearly feed into the school development plan and priorities for development.

Staff define actions in development plans clearly and set out realistic targets, timescales and resources well. Lesson observations by the acting headteacher provide supportive feedback to staff on the quality of their teaching, but they do not focus objectively enough on the standards achieved by pupils and what needs to improve.

The school regularly seeks the views of parents and learners and these have fed through into school development activities. Staff collaborate in three professional learning communities, which have had a particularly positive impact on standards in reading.

Effective improvement strategies have supported an upward trend in performance over the last four years.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well with a range of strategic partners. It liaises effectively with the partner infant and secondary schools to support pupils' transition to and from the junior school. Teachers from the school have observed lessons in both the secondary and the infant school, and have been visited by both schools' teachers in return.

Teachers from the schools have developed standardisation groups for assessment. The schools have also shared resources; for example, the secondary school has helped the junior school to purchase musical equipment.

The infant and junior schools have used shared funding through the community-focused schools project to undertake joint training, for example in safeguarding.

There are good relationships with the local authority, the traveller community and the local pupil referral unit. The relationship with parents has improved over recent months through an 'open door' policy and more regular communication through the school's website.

Resource management: Good

The school has enough well-qualified and experienced staff. It deploys staff efficiently and teachers manage support staff in classes well. The school makes good use of its internal and external areas.

The acting headteacher and governing body oversee the budget carefully. The school prioritises its spending effectively and currently has a small surplus. There is a good range of resources to support the curriculum and teachers use them well, especially in relation to information and communication technology and music. Expenditure on resources is well matched to school priorities, for example in the development of pupils' reading.

While current performance is only adequate, pupils make good progress from particularly low starting points on entry to the school in Year 3 and there is a clear trend of improvement in performance outcomes over the last three years. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Over five years, there has been a general improvement in teacher assessment results at the end of key stage 2 in all subject areas and the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum). Performance at the expected level or above (level 4+) in English, mathematics and science in 2011 was slightly above the family and national averages in all three subject areas. This was a marked improvement on the performance of the school in 2010, when the results were significantly below the family and national averages in the three subjects, and five percentage points below in the core subject indicator. The 2010 results did not follow the general progress of the previous three years, but the performance for 2011 continued the prior improvement.

Performance at the higher levels (level 5+) or above in English has varied over the past five years and, in 2011, the average performance of pupils was slightly (one percentage point) below the family average, and five percentage points below the national average. Performance at this level in mathematics and science was about five percentage points below the family and national averages. The pattern generally was similar in previous years.

There is no clear pattern of difference in performance between boys and girls achieving level 4 or above at the end of key stage 2, with boys sometimes outperforming girls and vice versa in all three core subjects. Similarly, at level 5 and above, there has been varied performance from both boys and girls over the five years. In 2011, there was no significant difference in relation to English and science, and boys outperformed girls by 13 percentage points in mathematics.

Compared to similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school has been in the lower 50% over the past three years in the core subject indicator. In English, after two years in the lower 50%, the school was placed in the upper 50% in 2011. In both mathematics and science, the school was in the lower 50% of similar schools in 2009 and 2011, and in the lowest 25% in 2010. The school is at the lower end of its free school meals group (within 0.7%), and results in all subject areas in 2011 were very close to the median, in most cases within one percentage point. If the results were to be benchmarked in the next free school meals group, the school would have been in the upper 50% in all core subject areas.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Parent questionnaires

Only four parents responded to the questionnaires and, as a result, not enough information was collected to make any informed response.

Pupil questionnaires

Responses to the questionnaires were received from 143 pupils.

Nearly all pupils state that they feel safe in school and that they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. They believe that the school teaches them how to keep healthy, and most feel that there are lots of opportunities to get regular exercise.

Nearly all pupils believe that they are doing well at school, that teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress, and that they know what to do if they find their work hard. Most pupils believe that homework helps them to understand and improve their work, and many say that there are enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Most feel the school deals well with any bullying, but a minority believe that other pupils do not behave well to allow them to get their work done, and that not all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Terwyn Tomos	Reporting Inspector
Barry Norris	Team Inspector
Elizabeth Halls	Lay Inspector
Andrew Williams	Peer Inspector
Lee Burnell	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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