



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
Pontnewynydd Primary School**

**Lower Leigh Road
Pontnewynydd
Pontypool
NP4 8LQ**

Date of inspection: March 2011

by

Mr Stephen Dennett

Under Contract 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:

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

Pontnewynydd Primary School is situated in the town of Pontypool. It serves a large local authority (LA) housing estate and a mix of rented and private housing. The social and economic circumstances of the area served by the school are mainly disadvantaged.

Since the school's last inspection in 2005, the number on roll has fallen and there have been a number of staff changes. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007 and the deputy headteacher in May 2008. The building has recently been extensively remodelled to accommodate the foundation phase and a television studio. There are currently 154 pupils on roll. Around 47% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the local and national averages. Eleven pupils are looked after by the local authority (LA) and there are a number of other vulnerable pupils at the school being supported by social services. Approximately 25% of the pupils have additional learning needs (ALN) and three have statements of special educational need (SEN). The school has a special needs resource base (SNRB) for pupils in key stage 1, funded by the LA, which currently has two pupils. English is the home language of nearly all pupils, all of whom are from white backgrounds; a small minority of pupils speak Welsh at home.

The 2010/11 individual school budget per pupil is £4,314, which compares with a maximum of £8,471 and a minimum of £2,792 for primary schools in Torfaen. The school has the fifth highest budget per pupil out of the 32 primary schools in Torfaen.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is excellent because:

- Nearly all pupils have made exceptional progress over time and achieve standards that are well above those of similar schools;
- Provision for the development of pupils' information and communication technology skills (ICT) is sector leading and pupils' achievement is very high as a result;
- The progress made by nearly all pupils with ALN is very good;
- Teaching and learning are excellent, especially at key stage 2;
- Provision for pupils' care, support and guidance is excellent and there are a number of sector leading aspects, including provision for the most vulnerable pupils; and
- The partnerships the school has with parents/carers, the community and the LA have had a very significant positive effect on pupils' achievement.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- Leadership and management are highly effective and communicate a determined commitment to further improvement;
- Standards have improved very significantly over the last six years, especially at key stage 2;
- Provision, including teaching, has been improved very significantly and there are now elements that are sector-leading;
- The school has consistently tackled identified weaknesses very effectively and can show that the actions it has taken have led to measurable and continuing improvements in standards;
- Arrangements for self-evaluation are excellent and lead to well-constructed school improvement plans; and
- The school consults widely with pupils, parents and the community to ensure that its plans for improvement are based on the needs of all interested parties.

Recommendations

In order to further improve the already excellent outcomes for pupils, the schools needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' handwriting and presentation skills; and
- R2 ensure that all pupils' Welsh language skills are developed consistently throughout the school.

NB Both the above areas for further development have been identified in the school current improvement plan

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Excellent
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Standards: Excellent

According to the 2010 teachers' assessments at the end of key stage 1, standards were above the family average, but below national and local averages in all three core subjects (English, mathematics and science). Standards have been maintained at good levels for the past three years, although declining slightly following the national trend. Compared with schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals, the school was in the top 50% for English and science and the core subject indicator (the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level in English, mathematics and science combined); in mathematics it was in the lower 50%. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 was above the family average, but below the local and national average in English. In mathematics and science it was above all three indicators. These figures are slightly distorted by the performance of pupils in the SNRB, all of whom have moderate learning difficulties.

The school's performance in at key stage 2 against the main indicators over the past three years compares well with family and national averages and are just below the local average. In the 2010 teachers' assessments, pupils' attainment was above all three indicators in mathematics and science. Attainment in English was above the family and national averages, but below the local average. Compared with similar schools, the school was in the top 25% for all three core subjects. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 is above the family average, but below the local and national average in English. Progress in all three core subjects is exceptional with all nearly pupils making at least 2 National Curriculum levels progress and 33%

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making 2.5 levels progress. Standards have improved dramatically over the past six years and continue to rise.

In 2010 girls did better than boys at key stage 1 overall, but the gap in performance is narrowing. At key stage 2 overall, the gap in performance has narrowed significantly from previous years and is now not statistically significant. Pupils with ALN and potentially vulnerable pupils make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Pupils eligible for free school meals did slightly better than those who were not, but all age groups are making excellent progress in relation to their starting points.

In lessons, pupils generally make at least good progress and in a minority progress is excellent. They use their speaking skills very well, especially when making television recordings and presentations. Their reading skills are good and they use them effectively. Most pupils apply their writing skills well to write a series of instructions, although their handwriting is sometimes untidy and standards of presentation are very variable. Nearly all pupils have excellent ICT skills, which they use effectively when producing television programmes in the school's studio.

Overall pupils make good progress in Welsh language lessons, and standards are good by the end of key stage 2. Pupils' oracy skills show a steady improvement and reading and writing skills are developing well. Pupils in the foundation phase ask and answer simple questions about themselves and about members of their family confidently. Pupils at the top of key stage 2 describe their favourite hobbies, using a good variety of questions and extended answers. All pupils use Welsh greetings and sing Welsh songs and hymns with accuracy and enthusiasm.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils say they feel safe, happy and secure in school. Behaviour is consistently very good with most pupils showing courtesy and respect to each other, staff and visitors. Most pupils recognise the importance of keeping fit and healthy and know that they need to eat healthily and take regular exercise to achieve this. Pupils are highly motivated and engaged in lessons. They regularly participate with interest and enthusiasm. Most pupils co-operate and interact effectively supporting each other in their learning. Pupils take some responsibility for their learning by choosing topics. The school council and eco committee are well established and effective in making decisions and representing the views of the rest of the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously and have been proactive in contributing to the vision and aims of the school, the healthy lunch boxes and the recycling initiatives. Pupils' attendance at 91.4% is in line with that of similar schools, but below the national average. Most pupils arrive at school punctually and ready to learn.

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

The curriculum is broad, balanced and coherent and meets the needs of pupils well. Progression is managed well by establishing a consistent planning format. Pupils throughout the school are grouped carefully according to both age and ability to

secure equal opportunities for all. Several innovative curriculum initiatives, including 'First Steps' have been used successfully to increase the engagement of both boys and girls in their learning. The school provides a varied programme of extra-curricular activities, outside visits and visitors, which makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Planning for the development of the key skills of literacy and numeracy is thorough and of a good standard. Specific key skills are listed for each lesson, together with the activities designed to develop them and the teaching and learning strategies that will be employed. Provision for the development of ICT skills is sector leading, as it enables pupils to participate in writing, directing and producing television programmes.

Provision for the development of Welsh is good. Both teachers and classroom assistants have acquired a good level of language skills. Their high level of commitment and enthusiasm results in pupils' positive attitudes towards learning a second language. Planning for the teaching of Welsh shows coherence and progression. However the school is aware that the use of incidental Welsh in a range of contexts is inconsistent and is currently beginning to address the issue. The Welsh dimension in the general curriculum is good, and is enhanced by activities on days of special celebrations such as St David's Day.

Education for sustainable development is integrated well into several aspects of the curriculum. The eco council is proactive and has engaged enthusiastically in a range of interesting projects to improve the environment of both the school and the community. The school has gained its second 'Green Flag' for sustainability. Global citizenship is taught effectively throughout the curriculum, but particularly in geography and religious education.

Teaching: Excellent

The quality of teaching is excellent in the school, particularly in key stage 2. Its effect on pupils' progress has been exceptional, particularly over the last four years. Teachers in each phase plan their lessons together, to ensure that the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities are met very well. The pace of lessons is generally brisk and succeeds in sustaining pupils' interest and attention very effectively. Excellent relationships between pupils and both teaching and support staff enforce shared expectations of good behaviour and of high standards of work. Teachers use an excellent range of interesting resources very effectively, in particular the exceptional ICT resources. They employ a variety of relevant teaching strategies to ensure the active engagement of pupils in their own learning. Support staff make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning, especially those with ALN.

The school has comprehensive policies and effective procedures for assessing pupils' learning, and for recording and reporting their progress. Pupils' books are marked consistently and work is evaluated effectively. The information recorded from a range of teachers' assessments and standardised tests is used purposefully to set realistic and ambitious targets for groups of pupils and for individuals. It is used effectively to identify pupils who may need additional support and more able pupils who are underachieving. Pupils' involvement in assessing their learning and in setting their own targets is developing well. Annual reports to parents give clear judgements about pupils' achievements, and inform parents of how their children can improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school has excellent policies and procedures that enable effective teaching and learning to take place. All members of the school and local community make a positive contribution to providing a stimulating, safe and caring environment for pupils and staff. The school has excellent strategies and reward systems that promote positive behaviour. These contribute to all pupils feeling valued and cared for and have a positive effect on standards of learning and wellbeing. There are good systems for promoting attendance and punctuality. Excellent arrangements are in place to support pupils' health and wellbeing including a dental programme for foundation phase and a healthy friends' initiative. Pupils' personal, social, moral and cultural development is effectively promoted through the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme and well planned learning experiences. These successfully promote values of honesty, fairness and encourage pupils to reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs. The school fully meets safeguarding regulations with an appropriate child protection policy and procedures in place. Transition arrangements between feeder nursery schools and the comprehensive school are very good. Pupils communicate with the comprehensive school staff and pupils through visits and video conferencing. This is sector-leading practice. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is excellent because pupils make very good progress in learning. Pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school and effectively supported by outside multi-agency workers and a family link worker. The most vulnerable pupils are regularly monitored and strategies implemented have successfully raised their self-esteem, confidence and attitudes.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a caring and fully inclusive community where staff and pupils demonstrate mutual respect and care. There are well-established, clear policies and procedures in place to ensure equality of opportunity. Pupils are supportive of each other and have confidence in the staff. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity through a variety of activities and displays.

The school buildings and outside areas are well maintained and sufficient for the number of pupils. Many resources are matched to pupils' learning needs with excellent ICT learning resource facilities. The classrooms, hall and corridors are decorated with colourful and informative displays of pupil's work that reinforce learning and celebrate achievement. There are appropriate facilities for the disabled but access is only possible to the ground floor of the building.

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

The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and senior staff are excellent. The improvements that have been made over the past four years have demonstrated that leaders provide a clear and very effect strategic direction to the work of the school. There are a number of sector-leading aspects to the school's work, including the television studio, the 'First Steps' teaching strategy and the effective early learning programme. The school is successfully promoting excellent

outcomes for pupils. All staff share a common vision for improvement and the ethos is excellent throughout the school. The school is very well run on a day-to-day basis and administrative procedures run smoothly. The governing body make a good contribution to the running of the school through a good range of appropriate committees that oversee its work effectively. Governors show determination in challenging and supporting the professional management in bringing about necessary improvements. All policies and legal requirements are carried out consistently. The school take good account of local and national initiatives. It has made good progress in implementing the foundation phase. The school has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving outcomes and wellbeing for pupils, particularly the inclusion agenda.

Improving quality: Excellent

The school's procedures for ensuring quality improvement are excellent. Self-evaluation and developmental planning is a regular part of the school's working life. The self-evaluation report produced for the inspection was helpful, accurate and firmly based on first-hand evidence. Processes are rigorous and involve all aspects of the school's activities. Managers use the information from the self-evaluation process to set relevant priorities and challenging targets for improvement. Planning for improvement is clear, detailed and monitored effectively. The school has dealt very successfully with the recommendations of the last inspection. Strategies that are used to bring about improvement are supported by effective research and have brought about proven results in improved outcomes for pupils. There are a number of professional learning communities in the school, which are helping to improve provision and raise standards. Staff are supported very well by an effective system for continuous professional development. The school also has strong links with the local cluster of school and has run various training events, as well as participate in training run by other providers.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has an extensive and appropriate range of effective partnerships. The multi-agency approach for pupils with ALN is particularly effective in securing good outcomes for pupils' learning and wellbeing. Partnership with parents is very good. A family link worker has a positive effect on developing relationships between school and parents of more vulnerable pupils. All staff work as part of a team to plan and resource interactive programmes of work that engage and motivate pupils to learn and reach their full potential. Links between an adjacent primary school are effective in providing joint training for governors and staff development. Excellent transition plans and arrangements enable pupils in Year 6 to be prepared for the next stage of their development. The school successfully involves outside agencies in providing enriched curriculum activities that promote pupils' health and wellbeing. These links provide a wide range of resources that the school could not otherwise provide.

Resource management: Excellent

Staffing and financial resources are deployed very effectively to support learning and improvements throughout the school. The use of shared resources through well established and efficient partnerships contribute to improved outcomes for pupils. Effective use is made of support staff and planning, preparation and assessment time

is planned well. The schools spending decisions are reviewed regularly and relate very effectively to priorities for improvement.

The school provides excellent value for money because highly effective management of resources, including staff, leads to pupils making exceptional progress in learning and achieving standards that are well above those of similar schools.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twelve questionnaires were submitted by parents/carers, some with written comments. All parents were satisfied with the school and agreed that it is well led and managed. They all agreed that their children enjoyed school and that they were well cared for, supported effectively and kept safe. All parents said their children made good progress and that teaching was good. A very small minority did not agree that the school helped their children to be healthy or that their child was well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Seventy-four pupils responded to the questionnaire for learners. They all said they felt safe in school and that the school helped them to be healthy and take regular exercise. All pupils said that they knew what to do if they found their work hard. A very small minority of pupils felt that behaviour in lessons sometimes prevented them getting on with their work. A few also said they did not have equipment.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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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