



*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**

**Ystruth Primary  
East Pentwyn  
Blaina  
Abertillery  
Gwent  
NP13 3XG**

**Date of inspection: January 2011**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR  
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

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

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

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## Context

Ystruth Primary School is situated in the small town of Blaina, between Abertillery and Brynmawr, in the county borough of Blaenau Gwent. It serves the local area, which is designated a Community First area by the Welsh Assembly Government.

There are 298 full-time pupils on roll, and a further 41 pupils attend the nursery on a part-time basis. The school is organised into 14 classes, including two specialist resource base (SRB) classes for pupils with social and communication difficulties. All pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to receive free school meals is 35%. This is well above local and national averages. There is one pupil who is being 'looked after' by the local authority (LA).

The school has identified 26% of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). All pupils in the two SRB classes have a statement of special educational needs. This equates to 4% of the total number of pupils in the school. There have been two fixed term exclusions in the past year.

The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Standard and fourth Healthy Schools award, and holds gold Green Flag status. It is also an accredited Forest School.

Since the last inspection in 2005 there have been no significant changes to the senior leadership of the school.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Ystruth Primary is £4,097, which compares with a maximum of £10,493 and a minimum of £3,203 for primary schools in Blaenau Gwent. The school has the 11th highest budget per pupil out of the 28 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The school is good because:

- most pupils, including those with ALN, make good progress during their time at school;
- teaching is good overall and pupils benefit from a varied and interesting curriculum;
- there is a friendly, welcoming and inclusive ethos that ensures that all pupils feel happy and secure; and
- links with parents and the community are good.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the very experienced headteacher provides clear leadership and vision for further improvement;
- leaders and managers have successfully developed a well-organised system for evaluating all aspects of school performance; and
- all staff work well as a team in order to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

## Recommendations

In order to improve further, Ystruth Primary School needs to:

R1 raise the level of challenge in order to meet the needs of the more able pupils;

R2 improve standards in Welsh at key stage 2;

R3 provide more opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length across all areas of the curriculum; and

R4 refine the school self-evaluation report so that it reflects the good monitoring systems and focuses more clearly on outcomes for pupils.

### **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

Many children enter school with skills below those normally expected for children of their age.

Pupils' performance in the core subject indicator (CSI), the expected level in English, mathematics and science, has varied considerably in key stage 1, but has improved in key stage 2 over the past four years.

In key stage 1, when pupils from the SRB classes are included, 75% of pupils in 2010 achieved the CSI. When these pupils are excluded, achievement of the CSI is just above 81%, which is higher than the LA and national average. This would put the school in the second quarter when compared to similar schools.

In key stage 2, 84% of pupils in 2010 achieved the CSI. This performance is above the LA and national average and places the school in the first quarter when compared to similar schools.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance in English is better than in similar schools, the LA and nationally. However, pupils' performance in writing is not as good and is lower than in similar schools. Overall, boys do not achieve as well as girls, and boys' performance in writing is significantly lower than girls'.

Pupils with ALN make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points by the end of key stage 2. Pupils in the two SRB classes achieve good standards in relation to their ability, prior achievement and special educational needs.

The achievement and progress of pupils in lessons are generally appropriate for their age and abilities. Most pupils have good recall of previous learning. They work together co-operatively and productively to respond to tasks and to questions posed by their teachers and other adults.

Most pupils listen well and speak confidently in a wide range of situations. Most read competently for their age and are able to discuss the content of books knowledgeably. They generally apply these skills effectively to tasks across the curriculum. Most pupils' writing skills are good throughout the school. They write with increasing confidence and accuracy as they move through the school. In key stage 2, pupils use a variety of writing styles, punctuate their work correctly and use descriptive language to enhance their writing. However, these skills are not always evident in their writing in subjects other than English.

Pupils use their numeracy skills effectively to solve practical everyday problems across a range of subjects.

The Welsh language skills of most young pupils are developing appropriately. However, by the end of key stage 2, pupils make little progress in the development of language patterns and the vocabulary they use.

**Wellbeing: Good**

All pupils feel safe in school and know how to seek help with any problems. They have positive attitudes to keeping healthy and understand the importance of exercise.

All pupils have very positive attitudes to school and are enthusiastic and attentive learners. They behave very well and show respect and concern for others. They are polite and courteous. Pupils have a good understanding of their school motto, 'Together everyone achieves more' (TEAM), and express pride in their school.

Most parents and pupils understand the importance of good attendance and there are thorough policies and procedures in place to encourage it. However, despite the school's best efforts, attendance is just under 93%, which is below national figures.

The school council is well established and pupils have a good understanding of their role. They feel that their suggestions are taken account of and their decisions make a positive contribution to the life of the school.

Pupils' involvement in a good range of community partnerships has contributed to most pupils having well-developed social and life skills. They co-operate well with each other and increasingly take responsibility for their learning as they progress through the school.

Pupils in the SRB classes achieve good standards of wellbeing. They behave calmly, appear happy in school and are usually content to interact with adults and with other children. Given that these pupils have difficulties with social communication and are prone to anxiety and distress, this is a significant achievement and represents valuable progress in the school.

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

The school provides a broad range of learning activities that are stimulating and engage pupils effectively. The work is well organised to match the age, needs and abilities of the pupils, including personalised programmes for pupils with specific learning needs.

Withdrawal groups support pupils' literacy and numeracy skill development and contribute significantly to an improvement in pupils' attainment.

Teachers' planning identifies both subject and key skills to be taught and lessons generally provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop and apply these skills. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length in the full range of subjects at key stage 2.

Extra-curricular activities both in and out of school stimulate and enhance learning successfully. The broadening, enriching and empowering (BEE) afternoon further enriches pupils' learning experiences and promotes effectively pupils' wellbeing and social and life skills.

There is a strong Welsh ethos at the school and schemes of work make appropriate provision for the Welsh dimension. The strong links with the Chartist museum and work on Owain Glyndwr add to pupils' understanding of Welsh history. Although provision for Welsh language development is good in the Foundation Phase and key stage 1, there are limited opportunities for pupils to maintain progress as they move through the school.

The school eco-council has contributed significantly to pupils' understanding of sustainability and this has enabled the school to achieve eco-schools gold Green Flag status. Pupils encourage energy saving and recycling conscientiously.

Pupils' understanding of their place in the wider world is developed well through a range of appropriate activities, including pen-pal links with Poland and sponsoring a child in Gambia.

### **Teaching: Good**

Generally, the quality of teaching is good. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and provide stimulating activities that foster learning and challenge pupils. Support provided for groups and individuals is well focussed and makes a valuable contribution to pupils' progress. As a result, pupils are well motivated and actively engage in the learning activities. In a few lessons, teachers do not promote enough the development of pupils' independent learning and thinking skills.

Teachers and support staff make effective use of the interactive whiteboard and other resources. Teachers plan an appropriate range of activities that meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. Teaching and assessment in the two SRB classes are good overall. In the key stage 1 class, assessment and planning for learning are excellent.

Teachers' plans contain clear learning objectives and varied opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Teachers' marking of work is consistent throughout the school. It gives each pupil a clear idea of how well they are doing and identifies the next steps in their learning. Assessment for learning (AfL) is at an early stage of development, but agreed strategies are well embedded throughout the school. Pupils review their work at the end of the session and indicate their level of understanding with a traffic light system.

The school has clear and robust arrangements for tracking the progress of pupils. In addition, teachers make effective use of standardised tests, as well as using their own assessments, to set individual learning targets and plan future learning objectives for pupils.



Good moderation and standardisation processes, in partnership with the local cluster of schools, ensure the accuracy of teacher assessments.

Parents and carers are well informed about the progress of their children through regular consultations and annual reports.

**Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school provides a very good level of care, support and guidance to all its pupils. The pupils feel valued and safe within its nurturing environment. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning.

Overall, the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The school has achieved phase four of the Healthy Schools Award, and this is reflected in pupils' good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Teachers and support staff work effectively with a number of outside agencies to provide individual support for pupils' learning and care needs.

The school has a clear and well-managed system for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with ALN and special educational needs. Early diagnosis provides pupils with timely support that is specific to their needs. Teachers and support staff use a range of appropriate programmes to support pupils, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are used well to ensure that these pupils make good progress.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. The anti-bullying policy is supported well by pupils through its group of 'playground buddies'.

**Learning environment: Good**

The school is an inclusive community and staff expect all pupils to treat each other fairly and with respect. All pupils have equal access to each area of the school's provision and pupils are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school. Pupils consider each other's views when making decisions during meetings of the school council.

Pupils benefit from good quality accommodation that is well maintained and resourced. The classrooms and outside areas are attractive and stimulating learning environments. Extensive displays in classrooms and communal areas celebrate pupils' work and achievements.

Accommodation includes specialist requirements for pupils in the two SRB classes.

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

Leaders and managers convey their vision and values for the school successfully to all staff and they work together well in delivering the agreed aims and objectives.

The headteacher and the senior management team provide effective strategic direction that focuses on improving outcomes for pupils. Subject co-ordinators provide effective support and respond well to their responsibilities as part of the school's system of distributed leadership. The school has well established performance management arrangements that support school improvement and reflect school priorities effectively.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations. Under the leadership of an experienced chairperson, the governing body is successful in helping the school to set its strategic direction and it carries out its duties well. Governors support the school conscientiously and take an active role in the self-evaluation process. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are therefore able to act as critical friends and challenge the school when appropriate.

The school succeeds in meeting national and local priorities, especially in its effective introduction of the Foundation Phase. It has introduced the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme successfully. This has resulted in pupils' better understanding of how to act appropriately in a variety of social situations and how to improve their learning.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school has extensive and effective self-evaluation processes, which involve all staff, governors, parents and pupils. Staff and governors use a wide range of relevant evidence to evaluate standards and provision. This includes scrutinising pupils' work, reviewing teachers' planning, observing lessons and listening to learners. The systematic and well-planned process enables staff and governors to review all aspects of the school's work over a reasonable period of time and has led to improvements in standards.

The school improvement plan (SIP) is a detailed document, which clearly sets out the school's priorities as identified from the self-evaluation process. The plan clearly identifies the costs, allocation of responsibilities, success criteria and staff training requirements needed to secure improvement.

Most of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been met. Further action is required to improve standards in Welsh at key stage 2, and this is a target in the current SIP. Although the self-evaluation processes are effective, the self-evaluation report itself is too long and descriptive and does not focus enough on outcomes for pupils.

The school is developing into a strong learning community and there is a culture of collaboration between staff to agree planning procedures and to share best practice. It has close links and works well with neighbouring schools, in particular in relation to transition arrangements. The headteacher has recently met with other headteachers from schools identified in its family of schools.

These initiatives have a positive impact on the development of best practice, which in turn improves the standards that pupils achieve.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has established a range of effective partnerships with the community it serves, the LA, local schools and support services. These partnerships secure good outcomes in pupils' wellbeing and learning.

The school works well in partnership with parents, and strategies such as the parents and children together (PACT) workshops develop a positive relationship between school and home. Parents state that they are kept well informed and they feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have a problem.

The Friends of the School contribute well to the activities and funds of the school. The school has well-established links with the Chartist museum, St Peters' Church and Capel Salem.

There are effective procedures with pre-school settings that help children settle quickly in nursery. The successful arrangements with the secondary schools enable older pupils to prepare effectively for the next stage of their education. Partnerships with Communities First and the local community contribute well to the pupils' personal and social development and to their learning outcomes.

The school has been involved in several effective joint resourcing projects such as the use of cluster funding to employ a part-time speech therapist.

The cluster of schools has effective procedures for moderating and standardising pupils' work accurately in the National Curriculum core subjects.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school manages its budget well and links spending decisions closely to the priorities identified in the SIP to improve pupils' learning. The school has an appropriate number of qualified teachers and support staff. The support staff are deployed efficiently and teachers and support staff work well together to create a good learning environment.

Teachers make good use of the planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time provided and this has a positive impact on the quality of planning and assessment.

The school is a well-organised and attractive learning environment, both indoors and outdoors.

In view of the good outcomes achieved by most pupils and the high quality of care, support and guidance, the school provides good value for money in terms of the use made of the budget allocated to it.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Only 16 parents completed the questionnaire and four parents attended the parents' meeting. This represents a limited view of the overall number of parents in the school. Nevertheless, these parents express a great deal of satisfaction with the school and have very positive views about its work.

Parents believe that their children are happy, behave well and are respectful. They state that their children are making good progress and that the school staff are approachable if they have concerns or questions. Parents state that children receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs. However, a very few do not believe that their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school and a few do not know how well prepared their children are.

Parents feel that they are listened to and most know how to make a complaint when necessary.

#### **Responses to learner questionnaires**

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. They feel that the school deals well with any bullying and that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress. Nearly all pupils agree that the school helps them to live a healthy lifestyle and that there are enough resources to enable them to learn well. Most pupils think that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime, but a few think that sometimes pupils' behaviour prevents them from getting their work done as well as they could. Nearly all feel that homework helps them to improve on their work in school.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Lynda Newton	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Roberts	Team Inspector
Julie Anne Price	Lay Inspector
Sue Willan	Additional Inspector
Julie Thompson	Peer Inspector
Liz Harris (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