



*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**

**Blaenycwm C. P. School  
Blaenafon Road  
Brynmawr  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP23 4BR**

**Date of inspection: June 2013**

**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:

<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

Blaenycwm County Primary School serves the communities of Brynmawr and Nantyglo in the Blaenau Gwent local authority. It was created in 1991 following the closure of five smaller community schools. The school describes itself as serving an area of social deprivation. About 7% of pupils are members of the travelling community and a similar percentage speak English as an additional language. The transient population accounts for approximately 5% movement in pupil numbers each year.

There are 248 pupils aged three to 11 years on roll. This includes 42 pupils in the nursery class who attend school on a part-time basis. Thirty-seven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is much higher than the average for Wales (21%). The school has nine classes, a few of which are mixed-age classes.

The school has identified 28% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, of whom a very few have a statement of special educational needs. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher has been in post since 2009.

The individual school budget for Blaenycwm Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £4,254 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in Blaenau Gwent is £5,681 and the minimum is £3,285. Blaenycwm Primary School is 14th out of the 27 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## 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 current performance of the school is good because:

- most pupils make good progress in the school;
- the standards that pupils achieve have improved over the last three years and compare favourably with those in similar schools;
- by the end of key stage 2 there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls;
- nearly all pupils behave well around the school;
- the school provides a wide range of learning experiences; and
- the level of care, support and guidance is good.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher provides strong and effective leadership;
- the school has a record of steady improvement;
- there are effective and inclusive arrangements for self-evaluation and development planning;
- the school has well-considered plans for further improvement;
- the governors provide good support and challenge; and
- staff share the headteacher's vision and are committed to making more improvements.

## **Recommendations**

R1 Further improve standards of reading, writing and independent learning in the Foundation Phase

R2 Improve school attendance

R3 Make sure that the school council has an effective role in decision-making in the school

R4 Share best practice in marking and assessment

### **What happens next?**

'Blaenycwm school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.'

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

The majority of pupils enter the school with speaking and listening skills well below the expectation for their chronological age. Most pupils improve these skills as they progress through the school.

Pupils in the nursery and reception classes develop good listening skills and by the end of the reception year respond well to the teachers' prompts using full sentences with a varied vocabulary. Most of the pupils in these classes are eager to share their ideas but a few do not always listen as well to each other. All pupils, throughout the school, develop increased levels of confidence and enjoy making thoughtful contributions to class discussions as they mature as learners.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, more able readers can recount stories and predict what is likely to happen next. However, many pupils do not use a wide enough range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words. Most pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills and, in key stage 2, read with understanding and fluency. More able pupils in Year 6 enjoy discussing the features that they like in the work of particular authors. They use skimming and scanning techniques well to find relevant information.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase develop their writing skills slowly and often make basic spelling errors in high-frequency words. All pupils have good ideas about what they want to write and express them with imagination. However, a minority of pupils do not apply their knowledge of phonics well enough to spell unfamiliar words.

Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 develop good writing skills and they use these skills well for a wide range of purposes across the curriculum. For example, in a literacy session, all pupils in the class had a lot of fun creating headlines for current news stories using puns, rhymes, alliteration as well as factual statements. All pupils, especially boys, used their imaginative and creative skills as well as developing their writing skills.

By the end of the Foundation Phase and throughout key stage 2, pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy skills. In key stage 2, they apply these skills well in problem-solving tasks such as creating graphs for recording and interpreting the findings of experiments in science. They use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well to interpret and report on the results of their investigations. They also use a wide range of ICT software effectively to support their learning.

In the Foundation Phase, boys generally do not progress as well as girls. However, boys make very good progress in key stage 2, especially in literacy, and by the end of the key stage the standard of their written work is often very good. Pupils with additional needs make good progress in all aspects of their work.

Pupils' standards in Welsh are good throughout the school. Pupils in the nursery class respond confidently in Welsh to questions and many pupils in the Foundation Phase often use Welsh terms in their English prose. Pupils in key stage 2 use the past and present tenses with confidence and write short stories in Welsh using an appropriate range of sentence patterns and phrases.

At the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012, teacher assessments show that the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected outcome (outcome 5) in language, literacy and communication skills placed the school in the top quarter when compared with similar schools. It was in the top half in comparison with similar schools in mathematical development but in the bottom half for personal, social, wellbeing and cultural development skills. At the higher-than-expected outcome (outcome 6), the outcomes for all assessed areas of learning were around the average for similar schools. In comparison with the family of schools, the outcomes place the school at above the average in language, literacy and communication skills, around the average for mathematical development and below average for personal, social, wellbeing and cultural development skills.

At key stage 2, pupils' performance has shown a significant upward trend over the past three years. In 2012, the proportion of pupils who gained the expected level (level 4) placed the school in the top quarter for English and mathematics and the lower half in science when compared with similar schools. Pupils' performance at the higher-than-expected level (level 5) in comparison to that in similar schools placed the school in the top half in English, mathematics and science.

There are no clear trends in the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals in comparison with other pupils. Girls outperform boys consistently in the Foundation Phase, but by the end of key stage 2 there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.

### **Wellbeing: Adequate**

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating healthy food and exercising regularly. They enjoy after-school activities, including the well-attended cookery club where they learn how to prepare healthy food. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they are worried or upset. Nearly all pupils enjoy school.

Attendance levels are slowly improving but at 91% the school is in the lowest quarter when compared with similar schools. A few pupils have a consistently poor record of attendance. Most pupils attend school on time.

The elected school council meets regularly and receives good support from two members of staff. Members have been involved in promoting initiatives, such as improving outdoor play equipment and encouraging healthy eating. However, their role in decision-making is at an early stage of development.

All pupils take part in a range of local and community events, which helps them to learn about the world of work. They engage actively in a good range of activities to raise funds for local, national and international charities.

Nearly all pupils behave very well around the school. They enjoy their lessons and are motivated to learn and listen attentively. Younger pupils participate very enthusiastically in their topic work on pirates.

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

The school provides a wide and valuable range of learning experiences, which meet curriculum requirements well.

All teachers work together enthusiastically to make detailed plans that provide continuity and progression between classes. These plans include activities that meet the needs of different groups of pupils well, including challenging activities for more able pupils. The plans provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy, ICT and problem solving skills across a wide range of subjects.

All teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to work in pairs and groups and this contributes well to the development of their collaborative skills. Visits to places of interest and a range of extra-curricular activities promote most pupils' positive attitudes to learning successfully.

In the Foundation Phase the indoor learning environment is carefully structured to create good opportunities for all pupils to develop their skills across the range of areas of learning.

The school makes good provision for developing the Welsh language skills of pupils throughout the school. Regular Welsh language sessions enable pupils to make good progress in developing their oral skills and all teachers make good use of incidental Welsh and often refer to the history of the local areas.

The school acts sustainably by recycling a wide range of materials. Most pupils have a good knowledge of the reasons why they should recycle and conserve energy. They develop an appropriate awareness of other cultures and of the wider world through studying other countries and through fundraising for charity.

**Teaching: Good**

Nearly all teachers plan well to make sure that lessons have a good pace. All teachers make sure that pupils know what they are expected to do and achieve in the session. All teachers use ICT equipment effectively to share information and to maintain pupils' interest. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and relationships between adults and pupils are generally very good.

Nearly all teachers plan activities that challenge pupils of all abilities and keep pupils actively involved throughout the lesson. Most teachers use a good range of questioning techniques to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and prompt further learning. Support staff work very well with teachers to assist groups of pupils on specific activities.



All teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Many teachers use the recently developed marking policy well and provide pupils with useful information about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Many pupils respond well to teachers' comments. However, a minority of teachers do not identify pupils' frequent errors in spelling and punctuation and do not make it clear enough what pupils need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Teachers' assessment at the end of key stage 2 is secure. However, in a few cases teachers' judgements of pupil performance at the end of the Foundation Phase are higher than the standard of work in pupils' books.

The school's reports to parents are detailed and informative and include targets for improvement. They meet statutory requirements.

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

The school provides a caring and supportive environment for all its pupils. The quality of the care and support pupils receive has a very positive impact on their enjoyment of school and their wellbeing. The school has good and effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and wellbeing. Teachers promote good oral hygiene for Foundation Phase pupils through daily tooth brushing. The personal and social education programme caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes positive behaviour effectively through clear procedures that nearly all pupils understand and appreciate.

The school has good procedures to promote and encourage pupils' regular attendance. However, these measures have not been effective enough in improving the attendance of all pupils throughout the school.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school has good links with a range of outside agencies to encourage positive behaviour and regular attendance. Staff work closely with specialist groups such as educational psychologists to support pupils' particular needs. They provide staff with useful advice, for example on the use of assessment tools for pupils with additional learning needs.

The school provides for pupils with additional learning needs well. School staff identify any difficulties that pupils have promptly. All pupils with additional learning needs have useful individual educational plans that staff use systematically to deliver well-targeted support. As a result of this support, these pupils thrive and make good progress.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school generates a calm, friendly atmosphere where pupils thrive. It has a caring and supportive ethos where all pupils know that they are valued and treated fairly by everyone in the school. The school is particularly effective at dealing with any incidents of bullying through a zero-tolerance approach. This is upheld by a mutually agreed and widely recognised system of sanctions. The school has

consulted with a wide range of stakeholders to produce its comprehensive strategic equality scheme and plan.

The school is set in a large and attractive site. Stimulating displays in classrooms and around the school support a strong learning culture. The building and grounds are very clean and well maintained. Overall, the school has a good range of resources including up-to-date ICT equipment. However, the range of books in the library is too limited. The outside learning environment for younger pupils has been developed successfully but is not always used well enough to promote independent learning.

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

The headteacher has successfully involved staff, governors, parents and pupils in developing a shared and ambitious vision for the school. She is committed to ensuring that all involved with the school work together to secure the best possible outcomes for its pupils.

Leaders and managers have high expectations and set challenging targets for the whole school which have a positive impact on pupils' standards. The headteacher leads well by example and is a very visible presence around the school. There are very good relationships between the headteacher, all staff, governors and parents. All members of the senior management team support the headteacher very well. They have an appropriate range of curriculum responsibilities and carry them out successfully. Many of the team lead effectively on a variety of key curriculum initiatives, such as reducing the gap between the relative performance of boys and girls.

The school's performance management system is thorough and ensures that appropriate targets for staff development are set to improve individual performance and address the priorities of the school's development plan.

Governors provide effective support and an appropriate level of challenge to the school. They analyse end of key stage data thoroughly and are aware of the school's priorities and the aspects of pupils' performance requiring improvement. They have suitable committees and effective structures in place to oversee school procedures.

The school pays good attention to local and national priorities. It has implemented the Foundation Phase successfully and gives a high priority to improving pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school has thorough processes for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers use a wide range of first-hand evidence, such as data analysis, book scrutiny and lesson observations, to form an accurate picture of the work of the school. Self-evaluation procedures take good account of the views of pupils, governors and parents. This information feeds appropriately into the school's

development plan. The plan has a strong focus on raising standards for all pupils, particularly boys. Over the past four years, the school has had a very good track record in securing improved outcomes for pupils.

The school is developing well as a learning community. Staff work together effectively in teams and there is a culture of sharing good practice. Managers identify training needs successfully and evaluate the impact of professional development activities on pupils' standards thoroughly. Teachers' involvement in networks of professional practice has contributed well to raising standards for boys and improving pupils' skills in ICT.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The partnership between the parents and the school is generally good. The school's staff encourage parents to support the school and their children's activities in many ways.

A close link with the on-site playgroup helps pupils to settle quickly into school. There are good links with local schools that ensure that moderation of pupils' standards at the end of key stage 2 and transition arrangements are effective. The school is part of a close network of local schools who work together to develop a system of assessing pupils' skills on entry to school. The outcomes of this feed into the school's current assessment practices well and ensure that pupils develop early learning skills appropriately.

Pupils benefit from partnerships with local businesses, community groups and the local library. All classes visit the library regularly to develop library skills and enjoy story telling sessions and, as a result, many pupils have become members of the library and use it regularly. The school has strong partnerships with a range of sporting organisations that provide expert coaching sessions, and pupils have useful opportunities to develop skills in cricket, rugby, netball and football. These contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school has enough qualified teachers and support staff that are generally deployed effectively. The school makes good use of its accommodation and learning resources. Support staff make a significant contribution to many aspects of the school's life and work, particularly in supporting pupils to improve the standard of all aspects of their work. All staff work well in teams to plan stimulating activities and experiences for pupils and to raise standards. There are appropriate arrangements for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time.

The governing body sets the budget and monitors expenditure carefully. It allocates financial resources successfully to priorities identified in the school's development plan.

In view of the good standards achieved by most pupils and the efficient management of finances, the school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

The baseline assessment of pupils at entry to the school shows that 60% of pupils perform below age-related expectations with more than half six months or more below their chronological age.

In the Foundation Phase in 2012, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected outcome in language, literacy and communication and mathematical development, was above the average for the local authority, Wales and the family of schools. The outcome indicator for personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was below the average in the local authority, Wales and the family of schools. The performance of pupils at the higher-than-expected outcome was close to the average in the family of schools and the local authority in language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development but below the average in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

When compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school is in the highest quarter for language, literacy and communication skills, the upper half for mathematical development, and the lower half for personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

In key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) in 2012 was above the average for the family of schools and the local authority. It was also higher than the all-Wales average in English and mathematics. Pupils' attainment in science was below the average for the family of schools, the local authority and Wales in 2012. The percentage of pupils attaining the core subject indicator has shown an improving trend over the last three years.

The percentage of pupils attaining above-the-expected level in 2012 in English was below the average in the family of schools, the local authority and Wales. It was close to the average in family of schools and the local authority in mathematics and science. Pupils' performance has improved in these indicators over the past three years.

Pupils' performance at the expected level in 2012 in comparison to that in schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was in the top quarter in English. It was also in the top quarter for mathematics and the core subject indicator. However, it was in the lower half in science. Pupils' performance at above-the-expected level in comparison to that in schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was in the top half in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase entitled to free school meals performed better than other pupils in 2012 while in key stage 2 the outcomes for pupils entitled to free school meals were 30% points worse than those of other pupils. This varies from year to year but is generally similar to the situation in other schools in the family.

Girls outperformed boys at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 in 2012, although data from other years shows that there are no clear trends in the relative performance of boys and girls in key stage 2. The performance of boys has improved consistently over the past three years.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Learner questionnaires**

One hundred and one pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire.

All pupils say that the school teaches them how to be healthy and they know whom to ask when they need help with work or when they find work hard. All pupils feel safe in school.

Nearly all pupils feel that the school deals well with bullying and they know whom to speak to if they have any concerns.

Nearly all pupils think that the school gives them good opportunities to have regular exercise.

Nearly all pupils feel that they are doing well in school, they have enough books and equipment and that the homework that they are given helps them to do their work in school better.

Most pupils think that other pupils behave well at playtime and at lunchtime.

Many pupils think that other children behave well and that they are able to get on with their work.

Nearly all these views are more positive than the views of pupils in other schools in Wales.

#### **Parents' and carers' questionnaires**

Thirty-three parents or carers completed the questionnaire. All of these consider that their child was helped to settle in well when they first joined the school and that staff expect their child to work hard, and all feel comfortable approaching the school if there are any problems. All parents or carers also think that their child receives appropriate additional support, and that the school helps their child to take on more responsibility and prepares them well for the next stage of education.

Nearly all parents or carers think that their child likes school and is treated with respect, that teaching is good, that their child is making good progress, and that homework builds well on what their child learns in school. Nearly all parents or carers are satisfied with the school. They think that their child is safe in school and

feel well informed about the progress their child is making. Nearly all parents consider that their child is encouraged to take regular exercise and that the school organises a good range of trips and visits.

Many parents or carers think that children behave well in school.

Nearly all of these views are more positive than the views of parents in other schools in Wales. However, significantly more parents than average feel that children do not behave well in school.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **The inspection team**

Eleanor Davies	Reporting Inspector
Jane Rees	Team Inspector
Deirdre Mary Emberson	Lay Inspector
Justine Baldwin	Peer Inspector
Susan Ware	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))

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language;
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language;
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.



The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.