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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Graig Y Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community School
Addison Way
Graig Y Rhacca
Machen
Caerphilly
CF83 8WW**

Date of inspection: 26 – 29 September 2011

by

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Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn**

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

Graig Y Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community School was originally separate infant and junior schools, built in 1968 and 1974 respectively, which were amalgamated in 1990. It is situated on the Graig Y Rhacca estate outside Caerphilly within a Community First area. Most pupils come from the immediate locality and are from local authority housing. Their social and economic circumstances are described as significantly disadvantaged; 68% are entitled to receive free school meals, which is significantly above the local authority (LA) and national averages. Approximately 13% are on the child protection register, which contributes to a higher than average pupil mobility.

There are currently 125 pupils on roll, taught in five mixed-age classes, plus a part-time nursery for 27 three to four year olds, most of whom transfer from the neighbouring Flying Start provision. The number on roll has fallen since the last inspection. There are six full-time teachers and one part-time teacher, including the headteacher.

Baseline assessments indicate that attainment on entry is generally below the national average. Around 42% of pupils are registered as requiring special educational needs (SEN) support, which is well above the LA and national averages; none has a statement. Four pupils are looked after by the LA. Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the first language and very few come from an ethnic minority background. No pupils use Welsh as their first language.

The school was last inspected in November 2005. Since then significant improvements have been made to the school grounds and buildings and there have also been several staff changes. The current headteacher, who was previously the deputy, took up her post immediately after the last inspection and a new deputy was appointed in 2006; she has since transferred to another school. An acting assistant headteacher was appointed in June 2011.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Graig Y Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community School is £3376 which compares with a maximum of £6296 and a minimum of £2486 for primary schools in Caerphilly. The school has the 14th highest budget per pupil out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly.

Summary

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

Current performance

Although the school has many strengths and nearly all aspects of its work are judged to be good, its current performance is adequate because:

- in both key stages the school's overall results at the expected and higher levels of attainment for both key stages have been generally below the LA and Wales averages for the last three years and currently the school is placed almost entirely in the lower 50% or lowest 25% of similar schools;
- the current trend in pupil performance is downwards overall, although the majority of pupils achieve their targets and there is evidence of recent improvements in specific areas;
- boys perform less well than girls, especially in key stage 2; and
- pupils in key stage 2 are insufficiently challenged in their reading.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher provides strong leadership;
- the new senior leadership team is beginning to work well and there is evidence of effective team work involving all staff;
- self-evaluation procedures are robust;
- teaching is consistently good; and
- improvements in the school environment enable pupils to have rich learning experiences within a safe and supportive setting.

Recommendations

In order to increase its effectiveness, the school needs to:

- R1 raise attainment levels at the end of each key stage;
- R2 improve the performance of boys;
- R3 increase the level of challenge in the provision for pupils' reading in key stage 2;
- R4 continue to promote links with parents; and
- R5 continue to develop distributed leadership.

What happens next?

The 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?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Most pupils have the basic skills required to access the curriculum at their level of development. In addition, most, including those on the SEN register, achieve well in accordance with their needs and abilities and individuals targeted for extra support for literacy show a marked improvement. The more able respond well to tasks set in a higher year group.

Nearly all pupils' listening skills are good and many, particularly in key stage 2, speak clearly and confidently. However, reading skills, especially in the older classes, are generally below average and the majority of pupils have a reading age lower than their chronological age. Handwriting and presentation are consistently good across the school and there is evidence of advanced writing skills, especially among the more able, although spelling is less well developed.

Pupils develop appropriate numeracy, information and communication technology and thinking skills across the curriculum, although their mental agility and use of alternative strategies to reach solutions quickly are generally underdeveloped.

The school's overall results at the expected and higher levels of attainment for both key stages over the last three years have been generally below the LA and Wales averages, but at times better than the family. The current trend in pupil performance is downwards overall, although there is evidence of recent improvement in English in key stage 2 and in the higher level of attainment in key stage 1.

The results for 2011 place the school in the lower 50% or lowest 25% of similar schools for each core subject in both key stages, except for science in key stage 1. Boys perform less well than girls, especially in literacy in key stage 2, and those on free school meals attain significantly lower results than their peers in both key stages.

However, the school's end of key stage assessment results need to be treated with caution, due to the varying nature of cohorts, the level of challenge faced by the school and the high percentage of pupils with SEN and on free school meals. Moreover, value added evidence indicates that the majority of pupils, despite starting from a low base, achieve their targets and predicted levels, especially in key stage 2.

The majority of pupils in the Foundation Phase make good progress in Welsh second language. Most at the end of key stage 2 use basic questions and answers competently in a familiar context, but are less confident when responding to new situations.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are happy in school and have a very positive attitude to learning. They take on responsibilities willingly and enthusiastically and show care for others; older ones regularly help those younger than themselves.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their personal, social and learning skills. Most are well motivated and develop their independent learning skills successfully, working productively with others.

Most pupils understand about a healthy lifestyle and how to keep fit and free from danger. They become involved in regular exercise and many develop well in their self-esteem and physical health.

Nearly all pupils consistently behave very well; they have positive attitudes to peers and adults and are courteous and polite.

Attendance, at 92.1% in 2010-11, has improved since the last inspection and is above that for similar schools, but is below the average for primary schools across Wales. Unauthorised absence is higher than average. Most pupils arrive punctually, but a very few are consistently late in the mornings.

Most pupils play an active part in the life of the school. Their views inform teaching and learning and contribute to termly planning processes and the self-evaluation of lessons and topics. The School Improvement Group and the Eco Warriors are involved in decision-making and make a positive contribution to school life.

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced and organised effectively across the school, ensuring continuity and progression.

Pupils are placed in classes by ability, with the exception of the nursery. All classes in the upper building are also set for mathematics; this is a recent change and its impact is yet to be evaluated. Withdrawal groups across the school are organised effectively and have resulted in increased engagement and improved standards, particularly for the less able.

Planning in both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is very good and caters for every pupil's developmental needs; it is monitored by members of the senior leadership team to ensure consistency, coverage and effective transition. There is a clear link between assessment and planning.

Basic skills are progressively developed and mapped. The school gives pupils many opportunities to develop these through its 'stage' not 'age' approach. Various strategies and intervention programmes are used to improve literacy skills, but pupils, especially in key stage 2, are not sufficiently challenged in their reading and do not read a wider range of texts beyond the set reading scheme. There is good genre

coverage for writing across the school. Provision for pupils' personal and social education is very good.

Ensuring effective Welsh language provision and celebrating the Welsh dimension have a strong and clear focus across the whole school. Welsh is appropriately timetabled, carefully planned and prominently displayed. Days of significance to Wales are celebrated and Welsh culture is enhanced through learning about the locality.

A range of activities during school time and after school are led by staff and external providers, which help to enrich learning. The use of the outside area is a very good feature, especially in the Foundation Phase. A range of thematic related visits and visitors are also offered that enhance pupils' experiences and support the curriculum effectively.

The school acts in a sustainable way and ensures its pupils receive a good grounding in the importance of sustainable development. The study of other cultures is a prominent feature of the curriculum and the innovative 'One World Our World' scheme ensures pupils are given a fine appreciation of what life is like in other countries across the world.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is consistently good across the school. All lessons are thoroughly planned and learning intentions, success criteria and differentiated tasks are clearly identified.

All teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge and are good language models for pupils; they use relevant subject vocabulary and appropriate questioning techniques.

The majority of lessons are effectively structured and well paced. Instructions are clear and class and time management techniques are good.

Teachers use a range of strategies and approaches and, especially in key stage 2, they encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to produce their own ideas.

Staff know pupils very well and establish very good relationships with them. Behaviour is very well managed, so that a calm and productive working atmosphere prevails in nearly all lessons, which is a feature of the school. Class work is effectively monitored and praise and encouragement are used well.

The school has very comprehensive and rigorous assessment procedures that carefully track pupils' progress and directly inform planning and teaching. Relevant individual targets are set and regularly reviewed and a range of useful records, including portfolios of work, are kept.

Assessment for learning strategies are well developed in the majority of classes and peer and self-assessment processes are becoming well embedded in practice. Pupils regularly review their own learning, identify their strengths and set appropriate targets

for improvement. Collaborative group work and the sharing of achievements are regular features of many lessons.

Marking is very thorough and conscientious, although pupils do not always respond constructively to the comments made.

Annual pupil reports are of exceptional quality and meet statutory requirements. Achievements are well documented and the way forward is clearly identified. Opportunities are afforded to pupils and parents to contribute to the reports and to meet teachers to discuss progress in learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a very calm and orderly community with a friendly and supportive atmosphere that ensures pupils feel safe and secure. There is a strong emphasis on wellbeing and all pupils, staff and other stakeholders are valued as individuals.

Robust procedures to promote health, fitness and wellbeing, based on detailed policies, relevant action plans and strategic meetings, support all pupils, including those who are vulnerable.

The school has effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour is very well managed through a whole-school approach and most pupils recognise the need to be fair and honest. They are involved in devising rules and work and play together very successfully.

Pupils with SEN are identified early and well supported; they have access to all areas of the curriculum. Individual education plans are formulated, developed and evaluated with the involvement of all stakeholders. Differentiated teaching approaches, tasks and resources are matched to individual pupil needs and a range of intervention programmes and withdrawal groups help them to achieve their potential.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding. There is very close liaison between the school and all local services.

There are good arrangements for monitoring absence and punctuality. The school has implemented a number of initiatives to effect improvements in these areas and is continuing to work diligently with the education welfare officer and the very few families whose children are persistently absent or late.

Learning environment: Good

All pupils experience equal access to all areas of the school's provision, based on an inclusive ethos, which the school actively promotes.

All members of the school community are treated with mutual respect and feel equally valued regardless of their background. The school successfully promotes tolerant attitudes to ensure all are free from harassment and oppressive behaviour.

Diversity is respected and celebrated through the curriculum. A disability equality scheme and a detailed accessibility plan are in place.

The well-maintained buildings and grounds meet the needs of pupils well. All classrooms are stimulating, effective learning environments, celebrating pupils' work. The development and use of the outside areas is particularly inspiring. These are real strengths of the school.

There are sufficient learning resources.

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

The school has a clear vision and sense of purpose. Its strategic direction is clearly communicated through its plans and policies, which are implemented consistently throughout the school.

The headteacher provides very effective and strong leadership. She leads by example and has successfully implemented many of her own creative ideas to take the school forward. She has established good relationships with staff and all stakeholders.

The acting assistant headteacher, although new to the post, supports the headteacher well and performs her duties and responsibilities enthusiastically.

The senior leadership team is developing its role well, but, due to its very recent establishment, has not yet had time to impact significantly on pupils' standards and progress. It meets weekly and all members are allocated regular management time.

All teachers have a management role and many take on extra responsibilities both within the school and externally, for which they are allocated regular non-contact time. All staff work well together as a team within a co-operative ethos. Performance management procedures are in place for all staff and meet statutory requirements.

The governing body meets regularly and relevant committees are in place; it effectively fulfils its statutory obligations, although currently there are a number of vacancies. Governors are generally well informed and have subject interests and most attend relevant training events. A majority visit the school on a regular basis to observe classes.

All statutory policies are in place and are regularly reviewed. The school consistently meets local and national priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Self-evaluation and development planning are an integral part of the school's working life, ensuring a positive impact is made on standards, provision and the wellbeing of all pupils.

The self-evaluation process is firmly based on a wide range of first-hand evidence and the views of all stakeholders. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school through regular monitoring activities.

The self-evaluation report and school improvement plan are well constructed comprehensive documents that provide an accurate and clear analysis of the school's performance and its strengths and areas for development. Realistic and challenging targets are set.

The school has responded well to the recommendations in the last inspection report.

The school is beginning to benefit from staff participation in a growing number of internal and external professional learning communities, involving external bodies and local and national initiatives.

Partnership working: Good

The school has developed a significant number of partnerships with other schools in its cluster and is developing links with its family of schools. It works effectively to quality assure work, for example in the moderation and standardisation of pupils' work.

Very beneficial transition arrangements are in place with the neighbouring Flying Start pre-school provision and designated staff work in support of curricular and pastoral needs. Good transition links are also established with the main receiving secondary school.

Relationships with parents/carers are good overall and the school works hard to engage with them, but often there is a limited response and getting all involved is a target for development.

Parents/carers are well informed about the school and they attend various events. Homework arrangements are clearly outlined, but reinforcement of learning at home is not always well supported. The school has an 'open door' policy and staff meet with parents/carers briefly at the beginning and end of each day when necessary.

Community participation and development is a continuing strength. The school is very much involved in the work of the community and takes part in various events. It also has strong links with the LA and local colleges and universities.

Resource management: Good

The school has a full complement of staff, all of whom are appropriately qualified and effectively deployed. Good use is made of support assistants to enhance pupil learning.

All staff have the opportunity to attend relevant courses and events and whole-school training is regularly provided. Professional development is closely aligned to the school improvement plan and performance management targets.

Teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time, based on the employment of a higher learning teacher assistant, is effectively implemented and meets statutory requirements. All staff are allocated additional time in support of the National Workload Agreement.

Resources, facilities and accommodation are effectively managed and the buildings and grounds are very well maintained. Resources are reviewed regularly and future needs are carefully planned. All staff contribute to resource decisions.

The school has had a relatively large underspend for the last three years, although this has been due mainly to unexpected income. Expenditure is related to priorities for improvement and is regularly reviewed.

Although standards are generally below LA and national averages and have declined recently overall, the school is successful in many ways; all aspects of provision and management are good and a very good learning environment is provided. In light of this context, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The school's results for 2011 in key stage 1 at level 2 and above were below the family, LA and Wales averages in English and mathematics. Over the last three years, attainment in all three core subjects has been generally below the LA and Wales averages, but at times better than the family, particularly in mathematics and science. Results improved until 2009, but then declined in English in 2010 and in all three core subjects in 2011. At level 3 in 2011 results were better than the previous four years, but still below the family, LA and Wales averages, except in English which was similar to the family. There is a trend of slow improvement in all three subjects at level three.

In key stage 2 in 2011 results at level 4 and above were better than the previous two years in English, but below the previous three years in mathematics and science and below the family, LA and Wales averages in all three subjects. Over the last five years, results have tended to fluctuate in all three core subjects, but have remained below the family, LA and Wales averages, except in 2008 and, in comparison to the family, in mathematics and science in 2010. At level 5 in 2011 results in English and science were better than the family, but below the LA and Wales averages; mathematics was below all three comparators. The trend was upwards until 2008 in mathematics and science and until 2009 in English, but there has been a decline at level 5 in the last two years in all three subjects.

The 2011 results in key stage 1 place the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools for the core subject indicator and for English and mathematics, but in the better 50% for science. In key stage 2 the results place the school in the lower 50% for the core subject indicator and English and in the lowest 25% for mathematics and science.

In key stage 1 girls attain better than boys in English at both level 2 and above and at level 3 and they tend to do better in mathematics and science at level 2 and above. In key stage 2 there is a distinct trend of girls consistently outperforming boys at both level 4 and above and at level 5.

Those on free school meals attain significantly lower results than their peers in both key stages. In 2010 100% non-free school meals pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 attained the core subject indicator compared to 53.3% and 50% respectively on free school meals and there was a similar picture in the previous two years.

In speaking and listening pupils in both key stages attain below the family, LA and Wales averages, except, in comparison to the family, in key stage 1 at level 4 and above in 2009 and 2010 and in key stage 2 at level 5 in 2011. Boys do particularly less well.

In reading pupils in key stage 1 attain below the family, LA and Wales averages, except at level 2 and above in comparison to the family in 2008 and in relation to all three comparators in 2009. In key stage 2 pupils attain below the LA and Wales averages, but mostly above the family. Boys perform consistently less well in both key stages. The majority of pupils have reading ages below their chronological age.

In writing pupils in both key stages attain consistently below the family, LA and Wales averages, except in key stage 2 at level 5 in 2011 in comparison to the family. Boys perform consistently less well in both key stages.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty-three parents completed the questionnaire, of which thirteen were returned late. Four parents added written comments, three of which were positive. One parent was concerned about the complaints procedure.

All parents:

- are satisfied with the school;
- think teaching is good;
- feel their child makes good progress; is helped to become more mature and is expected to do his/her best;
- think that homework is appropriate;
- feel they are kept well informed; and
- think their child is safe at school, well supported and encouraged to keep healthy.

All except one parent:

- say that their child likes school;
- feel their child was helped to settle in well, as well as being well prepared for moving on to the next stage of his/her education;
- think pupils are well behaved;
- believe there is a good range of activities provided;
- think the school is well run; and
- feel comfortable about approaching the school with any suggestions or problems and understand the procedures for dealing with complaints;

Nearly all parents:

- consider staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifty-seven key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire.

All pupils:

- say they feel safe in school;
- consider the school deals well with any bullying;
- feel pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time;
- think they learn to keep healthy;
- believe they have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;
- say they know who to ask if they find work hard; and
- think they have enough books and equipment.

All except one pupil:

- say they know who to talk to if they are worried or upset; and
- think they are helped to learn and to make progress

Nearly all pupils:

- feel they are doing well at school;
- think that pupils behave well in class; and
- consider that homework helps them to improve.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Dr. P. David Ellis	Reporting Inspector
Mrs. Owenna Davies	Team Inspector
Mr. Ted Tipper	Lay Inspector
Mr. Patrick Affley	Peer Inspector
Mrs. Nikki Dargie	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