



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

**Pen Afan Primary
Park Lane
Blaengwynfi
Port Talbot
SA13 3UL**

Date of inspection: April 2011

by

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



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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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Context

Pen Afan Primary School opened in April 2009 in a new, purpose-built building as a result of amalgamation between Abergwynfi Infant and Junior Schools.

The school is situated at the head of the Afan Valley, in the Neath Port Talbot local authority area. It serves the former mining villages of Abergwynfi and Blaengwynfi. The area is one of considerable economic deprivation and is designated as a Communities First neighbourhood.

There are 81 full-time pupils on roll and 17 children attend the nursery. Pupils are organised into four mixed-age classes. All pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Approximately 37% of pupils are entitled to free schools meals, which is significantly higher than the all-Wales average of just under 20%. The school has identified 18% of pupils with additional learning needs but no pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

The school has not been inspected previously. However, Abergwynfi Infant School was last inspected in 2008. Important shortcomings in learning, teaching and standards resulted in special measures being required and these remained in place when the school closed in spring 2009. Abergwynfi Junior School was last inspected in 2003.

Since the last inspection of both schools there have been significant changes to staffing in the new school, with the headteacher, a few senior staff and teachers being replaced. The current headteacher has been seconded to the school since April 2010 and has been working alongside the Federation headteacher since September 2010.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Pen Afan Primary School is £4,247, which compares with a maximum of £7,911 and a minimum of £2,843 for primary schools in Neath Port Talbot. The school has the 21st highest budget per pupil out of the 71 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot.

Summary

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

Current performance

Although there are some significant strengths in the teaching, in the care, support and guidance and in partnership working, the school's current performance is judged as adequate because:

- pupils' overall performance in English and mathematics over the last few years has generally not compared well with that of other similar schools;
- no pupils achieve above the expected levels at seven and 11 years of age; and
- there are weaknesses in pupils' ability to write at length and to apply their thinking skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Prospects for improvement

During the recent, fairly short period of stability, the school has made significant progress because:

- the headteacher has successfully continued to develop the newly amalgamated infant and junior schools;
- the headteacher and governors have successfully developed a shared vision for the new school; and
- there is a very positive ethos that encourages improvements in provision and standards.

Prospects for improvement in Pen Afan primary school are good because:

- self-evaluation is developing well;
- it will move into a federation of schools led by a new headteacher who is already involved in the strategic management of the school;
- the federation of schools promotes good practice and shares resources, including staff; and
- a member of the extended federated leadership team will continue to be based at the school.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 raise standards in English, especially in writing in key stage 2, and mathematics and improve the number of pupils who achieve at above the expected levels at seven and 11 years of age;
- R2 improve the proportion of good quality teaching across the school;
- R3 further develop provision for pupils' key skills, including thinking skills; and
- R4 improve the role of governors in challenging the work of the school.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor progress in addressing the recommendations and report their findings to Estyn.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Most pupils start school with skills below those expected for their age and ability. However, they make good progress in most areas of learning during their time in the Foundation Phase. In all classes, many pupils have good recall of previous learning and work together co-operatively and productively to respond to set tasks and to questions posed by their teachers and other adults.

Pupils with additional learning needs and those in receipt of free school meals generally make appropriate progress. However, in both these groups and across the school, boys do not make as much progress as girls in developing their reading and writing skills.

Across the school, many pupils listen well and speak confidently in a wide range of situations. Many read competently for their age and discuss the content of books knowledgeably. They generally apply these skills effectively to tasks across the curriculum but, by the end of key stage 2, only a very few pupils write well at length or effectively use numeracy skills.

In key stage 1, pupils' performance in the core subject indicator, the expected level in English, mathematics and science, improved considerably in 2010 when compared with that of other similar schools. This performance is significantly above the local authority and Wales averages and is the joint best in the family of schools (a group of schools with similar characteristics). However, due to the small number of pupils, this outcome needs to be treated with care because one pupil's results can have a significant impact on the school's overall performance. No pupils in 2010 attained above the expected level (level 3) in English, mathematics or science.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance has been very variable over the last four years. A downward trend in pupils' performance in 2010 places the school in the lowest quarter when compared with other similar schools. This performance is about the same as the family average but considerably below the local authority and Wales averages. In 2010, no pupils attained above the expected level (level 5) in English, mathematics or science. This places the school lowest in its family group.

However, in the lessons observed and from scrutiny of pupils' work, there is evidence that a few pupils are now achieving above the expected levels in reading, oracy and mathematics. Targets for 2011 point towards a slight improvement on recent years.

Pupils' attitudes to learning Welsh and the culture and heritage of Wales are generally positive. The Welsh language development of most pupils is appropriate taking into account their starting point. Many older pupils hold simple conversations and are confident in asking and answering questions in Welsh. The majority of pupils show increasing confidence with independent writing skills. Older pupils engage well in role play activities in Welsh and this has a positive impact on their use of the

language in everyday life.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and they approach adults confidently if they are worried or upset. They use circle time well to explore their feelings and discuss any problems. Nearly all pupils behave well, both in classes and around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors.

Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to become fit and healthy. They regularly choose the healthy option at lunchtime and participate well in a wide range of physical activities. For example, older pupils are very enthusiastic about the 'Bike It' club that encourages them to cycle to school.

The school has excellent procedures for improving attendance including first-day responses by text, telephone and home visits. As a result, absence rates are steadily declining but are still below average when compared to those of similar schools.

The Eco committee, Healthy Schools committee and school council all provide good opportunities for pupils to share in the decision-making processes of the school. The school council is effective and older members have a good understanding of their roles. They have made a worthwhile contribution to improving the outdoor environment of the school.

Pupils' involvement in the community is a strength of the school. Pupils have been actively engaged in a number of local community projects. For example, they worked well with the British Legion to re-site the World War One memorial plaque in the school hall. Pupils have also raised funds for a variety of charities.

Pupils follow the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme and, as a result, understand better how to act appropriately in a variety of social situations and how to improve their learning.

Many pupils have good attitudes towards their learning, enjoy themselves in the activities they undertake and are increasingly involved in making decisions about how and what they learn. When they are enthused by an activity, they sustain concentration appropriate to their age and ability.

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| Key Question 2: How good is provision? | Good |
|---|-------------|

Learning experiences: Good

The school generally provides a good range of learning experiences that are often stimulating. Teachers ensure that activities provide good continuity and progression and reinforce pupils' learning in a range of relevant cross-curricular contexts. As a result, most pupils are actively involved in their learning.

The curriculum meets the needs of many pupils. However more able pupils are not always challenged enough, particularly in English. Role-play opportunities across the

school help pupils to develop their problem solving strategies and their ability to work with others. Provision for communication, numeracy and information and communication technology is planned but does not yet have a positive enough impact on pupils' learning. In addition, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills and to apply these skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is appropriate and enables pupils to make good progress. An enthusiastic Eco committee is at an early stage in developing sustainable initiatives in the school. Most pupils show a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities as global citizens. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a good understanding of Chinese culture and traditions.

A good range of extracurricular activities and visits to places of interest, in the local area and further afield, enhances pupils' learning experiences.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching ranges from excellent to adequate. Most teaching motivates pupils and, as a result, they make good progress. Teachers and other adults have good subject knowledge and use a range of activities appropriately to challenge most pupils. Teachers have positive relationships with pupils and expectations of behaviour are generally good. Most lessons are well planned with good pace, and resources are used to good effect. In addition, learning objectives and success criteria are shared with pupils and peer assessment and partner talking are well used.

Teachers provide pupils with good quality support and guidance to help them improve their work. Pupils' progress and wellbeing are recorded and tracked effectively. Teachers in key stage 2 take part in cluster meetings for standardisation and moderation. However, their assessments at the end of both key stages do not always reflect accurately the levels achieved by pupils, particularly in writing.

Parents are well informed about their children's achievements through detailed reports. These are clear and informative and include targets for improvement. Pupils and parents are encouraged to respond to these reports on progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Pupils and parents value the school's efforts in providing a safe and caring environment. Through regular newsletters and the Learning Gateway the school provides a wide range of relevant information that helps parents to support their children's learning.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the school's personal and social educational provision. As a result, most pupils have a good understanding of how to manage their feelings and how to treat others fairly and with respect.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Joint working between the school and the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service provides pupils with

relevant and worthwhile opportunities to learn about other cultures.

The school has a very strong commitment to the promotion of healthy lifestyle. This is promoted effectively through a well-attended school breakfast club and a popular fruit tuck shop.

The school uses the expertise of specialist services very well. The Team around the Child (TAC) initiative enables the school to work closely with health and social services specialists in order to provide timely and appropriate support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

The school identifies pupils' learning needs effectively. Pupils and parents are involved in setting relevant targets to further help pupils improve their work. Clearly targeted support for specific groups of pupils who need extra help with their work has resulted in a significant improvement in the attitudes, confidence and behaviour of these pupils. In particular, the school's provision for nurture is excellent and provides the most vulnerable pupils with a safe, supporting, stimulating and caring environment.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community, which treats all pupils equally and fairly. There is a clear emphasis on recognising and celebrating differences and the school has recently celebrated many aspects of Chinese culture. Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically and this helps to establish a friendly and calm school environment.

There are clear and well-ordered procedures to deal with bullying or harassment. Pupils have a good awareness of the high standards of behaviour expected of them.

There is an ample supply of resources that staff and pupils use effectively. The recent purchase of mini laptops has improved the school's information, communication and technology provision.

The new school provides a modern, stimulating learning environment for pupils. It is well maintained and enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work. Foundation Phase pupils have access to a small but appropriately planned outside area. Older pupils make good use of the Multi Use Games Area. Plans to use the other outside areas to improve learning experiences for pupils are progressing well.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher, leadership team and governors are successful in developing a shared vision for the school based on the school motto 'Learn to live. Live to Learn'.

The headteacher has successfully managed considerable change, continuing to develop the fairly recent amalgamation of the infant and junior schools on a new school site. The appointment of key teaching and support staff is having a positive impact on improving standards in many aspects of school life.

The headteacher provides clear, effective leadership and has high expectations. These promote a very positive whole-school ethos. Well-organised and regular staff meetings along with appropriate performance management systems are successful in helping to further improve the learning and teaching.

There are concerns about the future leadership of the school with the loss of the current headteacher at the end of the spring term. However, these concerns are being effectively addressed by the new federated headteacher who is already involved significantly in the strategic management of the school. There are also appropriate plans to ensure a leadership presence on the school site from members of the extended federated leadership team. The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations. Under the leadership of a long-serving and conscientious chairperson, the governors share the headteacher's sense of direction for the school. They support the school well and generally know about the performance of the pupils and the initiatives the school is developing. However, their role in challenging the school is not well developed.

The school is making good progress in introducing initiatives that meet local and national priorities such as the Foundation Phase, Assessment for Learning and the Gateway website project. It is currently working very well on the SEAL programme in order to develop pupils' empathy, self-awareness, social and motivational skills. These initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Improving quality: Good

A wide range of first-hand evidence has been used well to identify the main strengths and areas that the school needs to develop. This evidence includes the performance of pupils, classroom observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of parents. In addition, the school takes good account of recommendations made by the local authority following reviews of its work.

There are processes to review all aspects of the school's work over a reasonable period of time. These inform appropriate priorities for school development that contain clear success criteria against which the school can evaluate progress. Implementation of the school development plan is generally having a positive impact on provision and standards in the school.

The school is developing as a learning community with teachers involved in a number of networks of professional practice, for instance the literacy network that operates across the cluster of schools. In addition, staff also collaborate well with other schools to improve their professional knowledge, and Foundation Phase staff have visited other schools to share good practice.

Partnership working: Excellent

There is a good range of partnerships that help to enrich and support pupils' learning and wellbeing.

There are good links with parents and carers and they are very positive about the effective arrangements made for pupils new to the school.

The school works very effectively with the local authority attendance officers. This is an outstanding example of partnership working. This work is having a measurable impact on the welfare and attendance of, in particular, vulnerable pupils.

Transition arrangements between the federated schools are effective. Cross phase teaching in French, music and physical education takes place on a regular basis. This makes a very effective contribution to improving pupils' standards at key stage 2 and prepares them very well for the next stage of their education. This is an example of excellent practice in joint planning and resourcing.

Resource management: Adequate

The school generally manages its budget well with spending decisions appropriately linked to priorities for improvement. There is a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff and these are deployed effectively. The school identifies and meets the needs of all staff through performance management procedures. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment sessions effectively. The strategy of using specialist key stage 3 teachers to cover these sessions is a very efficient use of funding. The use of the federation bursar to monitor finances is also cost effective.

The school accommodation is very well ordered and managed. There is generally a good range of learning resources with book resources and information and communication technology equipment recently given a high priority. These are managed and used well.

In view of the outcomes achieved by most of the pupils, the standard of care, support and guidance provided, and the appropriate management of the budget, the school overall provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Forty-one pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Inspectors also talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils across the school. All pupils think that teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress and pupils know whom to talk to if they find their work hard or if they are worried. As a result, all state that they are doing well at school and nearly all pupils feel safe there.

Most pupils feel that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and that they have lots of opportunities to get regular exercise. Nearly all pupils feel that they have enough books and equipment and all feel that homework helps them to improve their work in school.

All pupils state that the school deals well with bullying and that children behave well at break and lunchtimes. However, a few think that the behaviour of others interferes with their work in class.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Eighteen parents attended the parents' meeting and forty-four parents completed the questionnaires. Nearly all expressed very positive views about all aspects of school life and they feel it is well run.

All parents state that their children were helped to settle into school when they first started and that their children like school and are happy and safe there. All parents also feel that teaching is good and nearly all feel that children are expected to work hard. As a result, nearly all parents state that their children are making good progress, are becoming more mature and taking on responsibilities, and are encouraged to be healthy. Nearly all parents feel that there is a good range of activities in school and that homework given is appropriate. Most parents state that children receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs and nearly all feel that children are treated fairly and with respect.

Nearly all parents state that school staff are approachable if they have concerns or questions but a few do not feel they are well enough informed about their children's progress. Also, a very few parents do not feel that children behave well in school and they are not sure about whether their children are prepared enough for moving on to their next school. Many parents are clear about what to do if they need to raise any issues with the school or to make a complaint.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Mike McGuire | Reporting Inspector |
| Liz Miles | Team Inspector |
| Jenny Rathbone | Lay Inspector |
| Alexine Bartholomew | Peer Inspector |
| Rhys Harris (Head) | 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 |