



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

**Aberdare Town C.I.W. Primary School
Wind Street
Aberdare
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF44 7HF**

Date of inspection: January 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:

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

Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School is a voluntary aided school in Aberdare in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school has no prescribed catchment area. Many pupils come from the parish of Aberdare but a few come from church families in other nearby parishes.

The school has just over 300 pupils aged three to 11 years on roll, including 53 who attend the nursery. There are 11 classes in the school and the majority are mixed age classes.

Pupils come from areas that are neither economically advantaged nor disadvantaged. About 12% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is much lower than the average for Wales (21%).

The school has identified about 16% of its pupils as having additional learning needs. This is well below the average for Wales (22%). A very few pupils have a statement of special educational need.

Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupil speaks Welsh at home.

The headteacher was appointed in 1997 and the deputy headteacher in 2010. Three senior members of staff have retired during the past two years. The school was last inspected in 2006.

The individual school budget per pupil for Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £2,727 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,197 and the minimum is £2,561. Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School is 106th out of the 113 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- many pupils make good progress;
- many pupils achieve good standards in reading, writing and Welsh;
- nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of wellbeing;
- teaching and assessment strategies are generally successful; and
- there are very good relationships between staff and pupils.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher's vision for the school is clear and shared by staff and governors;
- governors support and challenge the school effectively;
- there are established and appropriate systems to evaluate the school's performance;
- links between the school self-evaluation report and the school development plan are generally clear;
- staff learn well from each other and share examples of good practice; and
- the school has valuable partnerships with the local community and other local schools.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise pupils' standards in information and communication technology (ICT) across the school and in mathematics in the Foundation Phase
- R2 At key stage 2, ensure that all subjects in the National Curriculum are covered to an appropriate level and depth
- R3 Ensure that learning experiences provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their writing, numeracy and ICT skills
- R4 Develop further the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders
- R5 Involve all staff in regular self-evaluation activities
- R6 Ensure that the school development plan has a manageable number of priorities that are measurable and focus on improving pupils' standards

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?

Good

Standards: Good

The baseline assessment of pupils on entry to reception shows that many have knowledge, understanding and skills that are in line with the level for their age. During their time in school, many pupils make good progress from these starting points.

Pupils in nursery and reception classes develop their early literacy skills successfully. In nursery, many pupils handle books as readers and discuss what is happening in the pictures well. Many recognise a few initial sounds. In reception, pupils know that sounds go together to make words and a majority are able to read back their own writing. More able pupils make very good attempts at spelling unknown words.

Across the school, pupils speak well and most have good listening skills. In group and collaborative activities, pupils generally listen well to the suggestions of their peers and build on each other's ideas appropriately.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 develop their reading skills well and at a level consistent with their stage of development. Most pupils in Year 6 read fluently and with expression. They understand the main themes in a story and offer their opinions about events and characters. Many pupils skim and scan texts effectively to find relevant information. Pupils use their reading skills well across the curriculum.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils write short pieces with appropriate sentence punctuation. They structure their recounts chronologically and a few use an interesting and lively vocabulary. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils achieve good standards in their writing. They write well across a range of genres and use interesting words to keep the reader interested. However, pupils do not write to a similar standard outside of their English lessons.

Overall, standards in mathematics are adequate at the end of the Foundation Phase, but good by the end of key stage 2. Standards in ICT are adequate. Across the school, pupils do not apply their numeracy or ICT skills consistently across the curriculum.

Standards in Welsh are good. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils develop their oral skills well. In key stage 2, pupils build on this good start. By Year 6, a majority of pupils can read Welsh texts at an appropriate level and write short dialogues and descriptions using an appropriate range of sentence patterns and phrases.

Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress. A majority make significant gains in developing their reading skills.

In 2012, teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase show that the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected outcome (outcome 5) in language and personal skills was around or slightly above the average for the family of schools. Pupil outcomes for the development of mathematical skills do not compare as favourably. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher-than-expected outcome (outcome 6) was generally around the family average. Aberdare Church in Wales Primary School is the most challenged in its family.

Compared to schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, the performance of pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase places the school in the lower 50% for language and personal skills and the lowest 25% for mathematical development.

The proportion of pupils who attain the expected level (level 4) at the end of key stage 2 is generally below the family average in English, but around the average in mathematics and science. The proportion gaining the higher-than-expected level (level 5) is slightly above the family average in English and mathematics, but below the average in science.

Compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the performance of pupils places the school in the lower 50% for mathematics and science and the lowest 25% for English. Evidence gathered through the inspection suggests that the school sometimes assesses pupils' reading levels too harshly and a very few pupils, in key stage 2, awarded a level 3 in reading should have been awarded a level 4.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of wellbeing and feel safe and happy in school. Their social and emotional development is very good and their understanding of the values curriculum is excellent. Nearly all pupils have a very positive attitude to healthy living and express their views confidently. They know the importance of being physically active. Through curricular and other school activities, including extra-curricular provision, pupils acquire a good range of social and life skills which prepare them well for life outside school.

Pupils are highly motivated and take pride in their work. They co-operate very well and show high levels of care and concern for each other. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. School councillors are involved appropriately in the school's decision-making processes. They consult regularly with all pupils about their life in school. Pupils with additional responsibilities take their roles seriously and provide good role models for others. From the time they start school, pupils develop good thinking, collaborative and concentration skills. The overall rate of attendance has improved over the last four years but is slightly below of the average for other similar schools.

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

Staff in the Foundation Phase plan learning experiences flexibly and meet pupils' needs and interests well. Planning in key stage 2 covers the National Curriculum

requirements for foundation subjects adequately. However, there is no cohesive overview of the curriculum at key stage 2. As a result, curriculum coverage in a few subjects, particularly in science and ICT, is not to an appropriate level or depth in all classes. Good use is made of the local community to enhance pupils' experiences and there is a suitable range of extra-curricular clubs. The school meets the statutory requirement for teaching time in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

Planning for the development of literacy and numeracy skills is generally good in English and mathematics lessons. However, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their writing, numeracy and ICT skills across all subjects or areas. The school's provision for Welsh is good but its provision to develop pupils' understanding of the Welsh dimension is not as strong. The school promotes sustainability well and as a result most pupils have a good understanding of its importance. The school's promotion of education for global citizenship is not as well developed.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers structure their lessons well and provide good opportunities for independent and collaborative learning. Many ask effective questions that extend pupils' answers and challenge their thinking. They share learning objectives and provide good opportunities for pupils to agree and discuss success criteria. Most teachers use positive behaviour management strategies well. Learning support assistants in the Foundation Phase make a very good contribution to enhancing pupils' learning experiences. In the few cases where teaching is less successful, there is a lack of challenge for pupils of average ability, particularly in mathematics, and teachers do not have high enough expectation of what their pupils can achieve.

Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly. They track progress carefully at individual and group level. Teachers' marking is generally good although this is not consistent in all classes. Most teachers provide pupils with clear feedback so they understand how to improve their work. In lessons, teachers provide useful opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress and understanding. School leaders track pupils' progress effectively and use the information well to inform teaching groups in English and mathematics. A majority of teachers also use this information well to inform their short term planning. End of key stage assessments are generally accurate but the school sometimes judges pupils' standards of reading too harshly at key stage 2. This is particularly true for those pupils on the border between level 3 and level 4. Reports to parents are clear and informative.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Provision for pupils' social and emotional needs is good and pupils feel safe and well cared for. The school places a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about values and this develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively. Through its curriculum and extra-curricular activities, the school promotes the benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle successfully. Staff involve pupils fully in developing their own class rules and often refer to them in their teaching. This has a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.

The school's arrangements for the early identification and monitoring of pupils with additional learning needs are good. The school meets pupils' individual learning needs well through an effective range of literacy catch-up and support programmes. Learning support assistants provide good quality support, which impacts positively on the progress that pupils make. Individual education plans are child-friendly and these ensure that pupils and their parents are involved in setting targets and assessing progress. The school links effectively with specialist services to support these pupils further. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a very caring and inclusive ethos. Staff take good account of pupils' backgrounds to make sure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and opportunities to succeed in all aspects of school life. They promote equality well and place a strong emphasis on celebrating pupils' talents and achievements.

Externally, the school has made best use of a difficult space and all pupils have good opportunities to work and play outside. Staff use the available internal spaces well and generally overcome effectively the limitations of an old building. The school has a separate dining hall and an annex which houses three classrooms. There are good toilet and changing areas in the main school building, but no facilities in the annex. Displays in classrooms and around the school are attractive and presented well. Learning resources are of a suitable quality and generally meet pupils' needs.

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

The headteacher's vision for the school is clear and shared by staff and governors. The deputy headteacher provides good support to the headteacher. Leaders hold regular meetings that focus appropriately on school improvement and lead to clear action points. Middle leaders are beginning to have an increasing awareness of their whole school responsibilities. However, they are not involved fully enough in judging standards or monitoring the curriculum across the school.

School leaders organise performance management for teachers and support staff well. They analyse strengths and weaknesses effectively and use their findings to set appropriate whole school and individual improvement targets.

Governors support the school effectively and have a good understanding of the school's performance data. Governors act as critical friends and provide a suitable level of challenge about the standards the school achieves. They have an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths, priorities and financial position.

The school pays good attention to local and national priorities. It has implemented the Foundation Phase successfully and improved pupils' standards of wellbeing and reading well.

Improving quality: Adequate

The headteacher has established detailed and appropriate systems to evaluate the school's performance. The self-evaluation procedures identify strengths and areas for improvement well. Senior leaders carry out a good range of monitoring activities which include data analysis, regular lesson observations, scrutiny of planning and pupils' work, and listening to learners. However, other staff are not involved fully enough in self-evaluation procedures.

The school has successfully introduced initiatives to improve pupils' standards of Welsh, reading and wellbeing. However, staff do not always implement or monitor improvement priorities consistently. There are generally clear links between the school self-evaluation report and the school development plan. The development plan is a comprehensive and detailed document that identifies generally appropriate priorities and includes suitable actions and timescales. However, there is not enough use of specific, quantifiable targets linked to pupils' standards to help to measure progress and impact.

Teachers' involvement in networks of professional practice has contributed well to the effective introduction of a thinking skills programme and the values curriculum.

Within the school, staff learn well from each other and share examples of good practice supportively. This has had a positive impact on pupils' standards of reading.

Partnership working: Good

Partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are good and contribute effectively to realising the school's aims. The school provides appropriate opportunities for parents to be part of its life and work. The school's website and regular newsletters keeps parents well informed. In particular, the links with the parish church and a local day centre help pupils to understand their roles and responsibilities in the wider community. There are effective strategic links with the diocese. The school has constructive links with local businesses and this helps to develop pupils' understanding of the world of work.

There is effective collaboration and planning between the school and the local secondary school that pupils transfer to at the end of key stage 2. This helps to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress in the next stage of their learning. The school makes good use of its family of schools and has visited a few in order to target aspects for further development, such as improving pupils' reading and thinking skills.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its financial resources well. The headteacher plans and monitors expenditure closely to ensure that the school has appropriate resources. Governors monitor spending and the budget effectively. Careful financial management has enabled the school to make necessary improvements to the school buildings and to create a stimulating outdoor environment.

The school generally deploys its teachers and learning support staff well. There are enough well-qualified and experienced teachers and other staff to support pupils' learning effectively. The school makes good use of in-school and external training to develop staff skills. Leaders manage the provision for teachers' planning, preparation, and assessment time well.

Overall, many pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points and achieve well by the end of key stage 2. As a result, the school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The baseline assessment of pupils on entry to reception shows that many have knowledge, understanding and skills that are in line with expected level for their age.

The school is the most challenged in its family of schools. The family of schools is a group of schools that face broadly similar challenges.

In 2012, the proportion of pupils in the Foundation Phase who attained the expected outcome (outcome 5) in language and personal skills was good and above the average for the family. Fewer pupils achieved the expected outcome in mathematical development. The proportion of pupils who attained higher than the expected outcome (outcome 6) was around the average for the family in all three areas of learning.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school is in the lower 50% for the Foundation Phase indicator, language and personal skills. It is in the lowest 25% for mathematical development. The school is in the upper 50% for the development of pupils' personal skills at outcome 6.

In key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level (level 4) or above in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) is generally around or just below the average for the family of similar schools. In 2012, the school's performance placed it second lowest in the family. However, a two year downward trend was reversed.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance in the core subject indicator and all three subjects has placed it consistently in the lower 50% or lowest 25% for the past three years. Its relative performance in English is particularly weak.

The proportion of pupils who attain above the expected level (level 5) in English is generally around the average for the family of similar schools. Mathematics and science are usually below the average for the family but increased to around the average in 2012. The school's performance at the higher level has placed it consistently in the lower 50% or lowest 25% in comparison to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to the relative performance of boys and girls, girls perform a little better than boys at the end of the Foundation Phase. The difference is smaller than the average for the family of schools, the local authority and Wales. At key stage 2, in line with national norms, girls perform better than boys in the core subject indicator and English. Boys consistently perform better than girls in mathematics and science. The differences are greater than those of similar schools, the local authority and Wales.

The gap between the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals and other pupils at the end of key stage 2 is not significant.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Parent questionnaires

Forty-eight parents or carers completed the questionnaire.

Nearly all parents or carers say that:

- their child likes school and is safe; and
- staff expect their child to work hard and do his or her best.

Most parents or carers say that:

- they are generally satisfied with the school and it is well run;
- their child was helped to settle when they started;
- their child is making good progress;
- teaching is good;
- homework builds well on what their child learns in school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect; and
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to their needs.

Many parents feel that:

- their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- they are well informed about their child's progress;
- they are comfortable approaching the school;
- they understand the school's complaints procedures;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibilities;
- their child is well prepared for moving to the next school; and
- there are a good range of trips and visits.

The views of these parents and carers are generally slightly less positive than the benchmarks for responses from all primary schools inspected in Wales. In particular, they are less positive about the amount of opportunities for their child to take part in regular exercise, approaching the school with a concern and how well informed they were about their child's progress.

Pupil questionnaires

One hundred and forty-seven pupils in key stage 2 completed the pupil questionnaire.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- the school teaches them how to be healthy;

- they are doing well and that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn;
- they have enough books and equipment; and
- they know what to do if they are finding work hard.

Most pupils think that:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- their homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school; and
- there are enough chances for regular exercise.

Many pupils say that:

- nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunch time; and
- other children behave well in the class so they can get their work done.

The views of pupils are generally slightly more positive than the benchmarks for responses from all primary schools inspected in Wales. In particular, pupils are more positive about the behaviour of other children both within the classroom and at lunch and play times. However, pupils, particularly boys, are more negative about their chances to get regular exercise.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Liz Miles	Reporting Inspector
Jane Rees	Team Inspector
Enir Morgan	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Cheryl Wheldon	Peer Inspector
Gillian Cheverton	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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.