



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

**Cymmer Junior School
High Street
Cymmer
Porth
RCT
CF39 9EY**

Date of inspection: May 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

Cymmer Junior School is on the outskirts of Porth in Rhondda Cynon Taff. There are 131 pupils aged seven to 11 years in the school. Pupils come from two feeder schools, Cymmer Infants and Rhiwgarn Infants. There are five mainstream classes and a local authority designated class for pupils with social, emotional, behaviour and learning difficulties. Around 43% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This figure is significantly above the local authority and Welsh national averages.

Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the main language and no pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Very few pupils are of a mixed ethnicity. The school has identified 36% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Currently, no pupil has a statement of special educational need. Very few pupils are looked after by the local authority. There have been eight fixed term exclusions in the last 12 months.

The school was last inspected in June 2007. The current headteacher took up her post in January 2012 and a new deputy headteacher has been appointed very recently.

The individual school budget per pupil for Cymmer Junior School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £4,010 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,197 and the minimum is £2,561. Cymmer Junior School is 29th out of the 113 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of Cymmer Junior School is adequate because:

- most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school;
- most pupils behave very well in classes and around the school;
- many pupils make good progress from their individual starting points;
- most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress;
- the majority of teaching is good or better; and
- pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics is improving significantly.

However:

- attendance rates in recent years do not compare favourably with those of other similar schools;
- pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science over the last few years has often not compared well with that of pupils in other similar schools; and
- standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) need improvement.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are judged as good because:

- the new leadership team has had a positive impact on raising standards of pupils' progress in a short amount of time;
- leadership is effective and staff work well together;
- there are good arrangements for self-evaluation;
- there is a clear focus on priorities that relate well to improvements in standards and quality; and
- there are a range of effective partnerships that impact positively on pupils' levels of wellbeing.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in science and ICT
- R2 Improve pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Continue to improve rates of attendance
- R4 Establish target setting arrangements to enable pupils to consistently identify and recognise their progress
- R5 Develop the role of the governors as critical friends

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Overall, most pupils make good progress, from their individual starting points, as they move through the school.

Most pupils speak clearly and listen attentively in a range of situations. They often give thoughtful responses to questions set by teachers and other adults. A majority of pupils, particularly the more able, work together well during discussions and during collaborative tasks. They also talk confidently and enthusiastically about their learning experiences.

By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read confidently with fluency, accuracy and understanding. Readers who are more able display good skills such as deduction and inference during English lessons. Many pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They express clear preferences about authors and styles of books. A minority of younger pupils make good progress in reading from their starting points but do not read fluently with suitable expression.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. By Year 6, many pupils write effectively for a range of purposes. For example, they produce extended pieces of well organised text to present information about topics and create interesting stories.

Many pupils have positive attitudes to learning Welsh and make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Many older pupils respond correctly to a range of questions using the past and present tenses. They read enthusiastically, with appropriate understanding and developing confidence. They write in a suitable range of genres often using a good range of vocabulary and accurate sentence patterns.

Most pupils make good progress in developing and applying mathematical skills during mathematics lessons. Many work collaboratively to solve problems successfully. However, pupils do not consistently apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum at levels that match their abilities. Pupils have a limited range of ICT skills and do not apply these often enough to effectively support or extend learning experiences.

Pupils who need extra support with their learning make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils who are more able often respond well to the higher level of challenge provided in lessons and often produce work of a high standard. Pupils entitled to free school meals make good progress from their starting points but overall they do not achieve as well as other pupils.

In 2012, the percentage of pupils who attained the expected level or above, in English, mathematics and science was slightly below the average for the family of

schools. When compared to that of schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, performance at the expected level or above is in the lower 50% for the core subject indicator and mathematics and in the lowest 25% for English and science. The trend of performance, over the last three years, is not consistently high across all subjects.

Overall, more able pupils' performance at the higher than expected level is weak. In 2012, pupils' performance was slightly below the family average across all subjects. In English, the school has been in the lower 50% of similar schools for the last four years. In mathematics, the school has been in the highest 25% of similar schools for two of the last three years but now sits in the lower 50%. In science, the school is in the lower 50% of schools and has been for three of the last four years.

Over the last five years, girls' performance at both the expected and higher than expected levels has been better than that of boys. However, boys' performance at both level 4 and 5 was significantly better than girls' in all subjects in 2012.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and engage well in individual and collaborative group tasks. They are polite and respectful towards adults and each other. The majority of pupils demonstrate good listening and co-operative skills and are very supportive of each other's learning. Most pupils are involved in setting their own learning goals alongside the teacher and have a clear understanding of what they need to do to succeed in lessons.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in classes and around the school. They develop appropriate skills to manage their own behaviour and demonstrate good levels of self-control. Pupils feel safe in school and nearly all feel that the school deals well with any bullying. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle and can identify healthy lifestyle choices. Older pupils promote healthy eating through a successful fruit tuck shop.

Pupils respond well to opportunities to take on additional responsibilities in the school, for example working as play leaders, prefects and digital leaders. Pupils also show considerable care and consideration for others through charity and fundraising activities.

Although attendance has not compared favourably with that of other similar schools over the last two years, it has improved in the current academic year. Pupils monitor their own class attendance and are very proud of recent improvements. Pupil attendance for this academic year exceeds the local authority target. Nearly all pupils attend punctually.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Adequate

The school provides pupils with a diverse range of experiences to stimulate their learning effectively. Practical learning activities have a positive impact on pupils'

knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly those who are less able. When, for example, pupils write about a den building experience following a school trip, their work is of good quality. Pupils contribute meaningfully to the planning process and they receive many opportunities to develop and apply their thinking skills.

Whole school planning for literacy is comprehensive. As a result, pupils regularly apply their communication skills well across the curriculum. This is having a positive impact on progress and standards. The school offers a broad range of literacy support programmes to secure improvements for pupils with specific needs. However, pupils receive insufficient opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and opportunities to develop pupils ICT skills are limited. Planning for the progressive development of skills in science is not strong.

Teaching staff use Welsh regularly and effectively in the classroom and around the school. Pupils have many interesting opportunities to learn about their locality and about Wales, its history and culture, for example through residential visits to Llangrannog. Many pupils attend clubs regularly and enjoy activities such as cooking and cricket.

Provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship is good and the majority of pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of sustainability issues. Pupils learn about the lives of others, helping to develop a good sense of global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers have up to date professional knowledge and plan stimulating and engaging learning experiences. Lessons generally build well on prior learning and develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding well. Teachers deploy assistants effectively and they provide valuable support to pupils. All adults are good language role models and their relationships with pupils have a positive impact on learning.

In the most effective lessons, teachers engage pupils in interactive experiences that develop thinking and communication skills very well. These learning experiences challenge pupils to achieve high standards. In a minority of lessons where teaching is less successful, tasks are not as well suited to the needs of pupils.

Teachers generally use assessment for learning strategies successfully. Pupils often make useful contributions to setting targets for individual lessons. As a result, pupils understand clearly what they need to do to succeed and reflect effectively on their learning. The most able pupils frequently assess their work in detail and suggest suitable improvements. Teachers often provide useful comments when marking pupils' work that indicate what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, the school does not have a target setting system that enables pupils to be fully aware of their longer term learning goals.

Teachers use a variety of tracking systems to monitor pupil progress effectively. They use this information to inform provision well, for example to allocate suitable intervention strategies to individuals or groups of pupils.

Parents and carers receive appropriate information and reports on their child's achievements and wellbeing.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides effective care support and guidance for all pupils. Support for vulnerable pupils is a notable feature of the school's work. Staff liaise closely with agencies such as educational psychologists and children's services. This ensures high levels of support for pupils with additional learning needs and for those who need help to manage their behaviour. A range of effective interventions are in place, which secure good pupil progress.

The school's provision for personal and social education encourages pupils to think about and express their feelings and develop empathy towards others. There is a strong culture of mutual respect throughout the school. A range of opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively results in pupils being supportive and respectful of each other while engaging in group or paired work.

Provision for moral and social development is a strength of the school and promotes sound values. There is good provision for cultural and spiritual development across a range of contexts, for example through periods of reflection within school assemblies.

Pupils and parents are regularly involved in evaluating progress towards targets in individual education plans. However, targets are not always clearly linked to the work, which pupils are undertaking in class.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school is a happy learning environment with a strong inclusive ethos. All adults understand the needs of the pupils very well. Pupils from the specialist class benefit from regular opportunities to integrate into mainstream classes. Provision for religious and personal and social education enables pupils to develop a good understanding of issues concerning children's rights, racism and bullying. The school treats all pupils equally and fairly. As a result, all feel safe and valued in school.

Recent improvements to the condition and use of the school building are having a positive impact on standards of teaching and learning. The school uses refurbished rooms effectively, for example, to provide withdrawal sessions for those in need of additional support or for specialist music lessons. Pupils, staff and parents are very appreciative of these improvements. The classrooms are bright and welcoming and displays contain a good balance of learning aids, examples of children's work and support materials.

The school has a good range of materials to support and promote reading at all levels and the library is an inviting space for pupils to work and undertake independent research. However, most resources for ICT are outdated and this impedes the development of pupils' skills.

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

Leadership: Good

The headteacher has been in post for a relatively short time. She provides positive and supportive leadership. There is a clear educational vision that includes the views of staff, pupils and parents. The headteacher works effectively with the recently established senior leadership team to provide purposeful direction to the work of the school. The leadership team has high expectations of what pupils and staff can achieve and there is a clear focus on raising standards, particularly in reading and writing. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities well and there is effective communication throughout the school.

The governing body provides worthwhile support to the school. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are actively involved through visits classes to observe standards of reading and they engage in learning walks with members of the school council. However, although governors understand the need to challenge the school to improve further, they have not yet developed the capacity to act as a critical friend.

School leaders ensure that there is an appropriate focus on national and local priorities, for example improving literacy skills and standards of pupils' wellbeing.

Improving quality: Good

The new headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's current strengths and areas for development. The newly established self-evaluation arrangements are effective. Senior leaders use a good range of first-hand evidence in the self-evaluation process. They gather evidence from regular observations of teaching, analyse performance data and scrutinise pupils' work. The information is used well to set clear priorities for improvement. The school ensures that all staff, governors, pupils and parents are involved in the self-evaluation process.

The school improvement plan is a clear, precise document that prioritises targets realistically. The resulting strategies are having a positive impact on standards in teaching and learning, for example through an improvement in the quality of pupils' writing. All staff are effectively involved in keeping improvement plans under review.

The school is developing as an effective learning community and staff are committed to improving their own practice. Staff work regularly on a range of projects and activities with other schools in the same family and this enhances continuous professional development and is helping to raise standards

Partnership working: Good

The school has been very proactive in establishing a broad range of partnerships, which it uses effectively to benefit pupils and bring about improvement. This is a very strong feature of its work. The school works very successfully with external agencies to offer additional tailored support to pupils and their families.

Close working partnerships with the probation service and the voluntary sector have been particularly beneficial. This partnership has led to many positive changes to the learning environment provided for pupils. Partnerships with the local authority education service are good.

The headteacher has recently established a very good working relationship with the two feeder infant schools and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Meetings to moderate pupils' work and share information in more detail have resulted in better learning outcomes for pupils when they transfer from one school to another.

Partnerships with parents have improved significantly since the appointment of the new headteacher and this has had a positive impact in a number of areas such as pupils' wellbeing and raising levels of attendance. Parents feel confident to approach the school for help and support and most parents are happy with the provision offered.

Resource management: Adequate

The school currently manages its budget well and allocates resources appropriately. Leaders ensure that all expenditure relates well to priorities for school improvement and the wellbeing of pupils.

There are sufficient teaching and support staff with the appropriate skills knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff are suitably deployed to support learning. The school identifies and meets the professional needs of all teaching staff through appropriate performance management procedures. Continuing professional development for all staff supports the achievement of the school's priorities for improvement well. There are suitable arrangements for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time.

In view of the outcomes and progress achieved by many pupils, the school overall provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level 4 in 2012, placed the school at or slightly below the average for other schools in the same family in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator. The school's performance is significantly below the all Wales averages in all subjects and the core subject indicator.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the performance of pupils at level 4 or above placed it in the lower 50% for the core subject indicator and mathematics and in the lowest 25% of schools for English and science.

In English and mathematics and science, the proportion of more able pupils who achieve the higher than expected level 5 is slightly lower than the average for the family and significantly lower than the all Wales average. When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school is in the lower 50% for English, mathematics and science.

The performance of pupils entitled to free school meals is significantly below that of other pupils. In 2012, only 33% of pupils entitled to free school meals achieved the core subject indicator compared to approximately 73% of pupils not entitled to free school meals.

These trends in performance outcomes have been broadly consistent over the last five years.

The performance of girls, over the last five years and across all subjects, is often significantly better than boys'. However, in 2012, boys' performance in all subjects at both level 4 and level 5 was significantly better than girls'.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaires (110 responses)

All, or nearly all pupils:

- feel safe in school;
- feel that they are doing well and that the school helps them to keep healthy;
- believe that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress;
- feel that the school deals well with any bullying and that they know whom to talk to if worried or upset; and
- feel that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Most pupils:

- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- feel that homework helps them to understand and improve their school work; and
- believe that the school provides lots of chances for them to get regular exercise.

Many pupils:

- feel that children behave well so that they can get on with their work; and
- feel that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Pupils' views are generally similar to the views of pupils in other schools across Wales.

Parent questionnaires (10 responses only)

All, or nearly all parents feel that:

- their child was helped to settle when he or she first started school;
- their child is making good progress at school;
- teaching is good and staff expect children to work hard and do their best;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs; and
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take responsibility.

Most parents feel that:

- the school is well run and they are satisfied with the school;
- their child likes the school;
- staff treat the children fairly and with respect;
- homework builds well on what their child learns at school;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school; and
- there is a good range of activities including trips and visits.

These views are generally similar to the views of other parents or carers across Wales.

Many think that:

- pupils behave well at school; and
- their child is safe at school.

A majority feel that:

- they are kept well informed about their child's progress; and
- they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems.

A minority say that:

- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

These views are significantly less positive on average than those of other parents or carers across Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Richard Lloyd	Reporting Inspector
Janet Marsden	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Jane Jenkins	Peer Inspector
Ingrid Elliott	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.