



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

**Dolau County Primary School
Bridgend Road
Llanharan
Pontyclun
CF72 9RP**

Date of inspection: February 2012

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2012: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Context

Ysgol Gynradd Dolau Primary School is a bi-lingual school and is situated on the outskirts of the village of Llanharan, in Rhondda Cynon Taf. There are currently 392 pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11 years. Of these pupils, 59 attend the nursery class.

The majority of pupils come from homes in which the predominant language is English. The school provides education through the medium of English and Welsh. Although approximately 50% of the school's pupils attend the Welsh stream, most of them are from non-Welsh-speaking homes. Approximately 1% of the school's pupils come from an ethnic minority background.

Pupils represent the full range of ability on entry to the school. Seventeen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the national figure of around 25%. Approximately 19% of children are on the school's additional learning needs register, with no pupils having a statement of educational needs.

The present headteacher was in post when the school was last inspected in February 2006.

The individual school budget per pupil for Dolau Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £2,851 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,499 and the minimum is £2,788. Dolau Primary School is 96th out of the 114 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 current performance of the school is good because:

- nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning during their time in school;
- pupils' behaviour and self-discipline in lessons and at break-times are exemplary;
- staff provide a wide range of stimulating learning experiences that engage the interests of pupils;
- teachers plan the curriculum thoroughly; and
- nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe in school.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and senior management team provide strong leadership;
- leaders and managers identify strengths and areas for development effectively;
- governors have a clear knowledge of the performance of the school and hold it to account rigorously for the standards and quality it achieves; and
- teachers are involved in a number of professional learning communities which have a positive impact on standards.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

R1 raise the standards of reading in Welsh as a first language in the Foundation Phase; and

R2 ensure that the best practice in teaching is extended across the school.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning during their time in school.

In the English stream, most of the pupils read in English to a level that is appropriate to their age and ability. They make full use of their extended writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils' oracy skills are developing well, with the majority having a wide vocabulary and the ability to discuss a variety of topics effectively at an appropriate level. In Welsh second language, most pupils read at a level that is appropriate to their age and ability. Many pupils in key stage 2 are able to hold simple conversations and answer simple questions in Welsh in other subjects. They write with increasing confidence in Welsh as they progress through the school.

Pupils at key stage 2 in the Welsh department make good progress in their reading skills in both languages and are able to use those skills appropriately in other subjects. However, the reading skills of many Foundation Phase pupils in Welsh are not as well developed. Pupils' oracy skills are developing well in both languages, and most pupils are able to discuss their work maturely with other pupils and adults. Many pupils in the Foundation Phase write confidently, while most of the older pupils in key stage 2 are able to write extensively and maturely in a range of genres in both languages.

Performance data over the last five years reflects a slight downward trend in the performance of seven-year-old pupils. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level 2 or above, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, has generally been higher than the average for the family of similar schools, but variable when compared to the Wales averages. The percentage of pupils who attain the expected level 2 or above in Welsh first language has been higher than that the family of schools and all-Wales averages over two of the last four years. When compared to schools within the same free school meals band, the school has fluctuated between the first and fourth quarters.

The data for 11-year-old pupils shows a generally consistent trend in performance over five years. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected level 4 or above in the core subjects of English, Welsh first language, mathematics and science has been either similar to or higher than the average for similar schools and generally higher than the all-Wales average. When compared to schools within the same free school meals band, the school has fluctuated between the first and fourth quarters.

In key stage 1 and key stage 2, the percentage of pupils attaining levels higher than expected has been variable when compared to similar schools and Wales averages over the last five years.

There is no significant pattern of a difference in the performance of boys when compared to that of girls or between pupils entitled to free school meals when compared to those not entitled.

The progress made by pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding. Pupils recognised as more able and talented make good progress.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils' behaviour and self-discipline in lessons and at break-times are exemplary.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy and they take part in the regular exercise opportunities provided by the school. Many pupils take part in school clubs and teams, which also contributes to their confidence and wellbeing.

Pupils and teachers plan aspects of class themes and learning together. This approach promotes pupils' enjoyment in their work and develops a positive attitude to learning. Nearly all pupils show a good level of motivation in class and during a wide variety of extra-curricular activities.

Pupils' attendance is slightly above 93%, which compares favourably to the levels of attendance for other similar schools and the national average.

Most pupils have good social and life skills. They have specific responsibilities in their classes and around the school, which they undertake with maturity. They accept responsibility for their work and actions and show respect and care towards their peers and staff. They take part in a wide range of community activities, and support local and national charities well.

The school council and eco council are both effective and have had a positive impact on a number of improvements to the school environment. Documentary and display evidence across the school indicates that both groups make a good contribution to school life, activities and decisions.

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

Learning experiences: Excellent

The school provides a wide range of very stimulating learning experiences that engage the interests of pupils across the school.

Teachers plan the curriculum thoroughly. Long and medium term planning in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 is an outstanding feature in the way it ensures continuity and progression in the development of pupils' skills in communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) from lesson to lesson and from year to year. This is a notable feature that is worthy of emulation.

Pupils are also provided with appropriate opportunities to contribute their own ideas within the planning process, which promotes ownership of their learning. The school regularly holds designated 'skills days', which enhance this provision and have a positive impact on the development of specific skills.

Provision for Welsh language development is effective. Teachers promote the history, geography, culture and music of Wales very well. Teachers ensure that

pupils from the Welsh and English streams work and play well together and use Welsh appropriately as a medium of communication in both formal and incidental situations.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include sports and creative opportunities. These opportunities enable pupils to enhance their use of Welsh outside the classroom.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is an outstanding feature of the school. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to broaden their awareness and extend their knowledge of other areas of the world, for example Sri Lanka and Uganda. Work in this area has been recognised with an International Schools Award and deemed outstanding practice by the Welsh Government.

Teaching: Good

All teachers use a wide range of teaching methods and strategies to enable pupils to make good progress. Most teachers have thorough subject knowledge and a sound awareness of the importance of developing pupils' skills. Teachers are generally good language models. Teachers and classroom assistants know the pupils well and this contributes significantly to the quality of learning.

In the many lessons judged as good or excellent, teachers have high expectations, and make very effective use of time and resources to engage and motivate pupils. In the few lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently.

Teachers assess pupils' progress in learning regularly and thoroughly, and use this information effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers make effective use of assessments to target underperformance.

Assessment for learning strategies are embedded throughout the school. Teachers share learning objectives, encourage peer assessment and use success criteria regularly with pupils. The process of setting targets for individual pupils is established throughout the school and is evident in teachers' marking. These have a constructive impact on the quality of pupils' work.

Reports to parents are informative, easy to understand and meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an orderly community where everyone is valued. Adults and pupils show mutual respect for each other. The school has effective programmes to support pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing. Circle time, religious education lessons and daily acts of worship contribute well towards developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Within these daily acts of worship, pupils have appropriate opportunities to reflect on the message that is presented.

The guidance provided to pupils is good and promotes their educational progress

and wellbeing effectively. The school emphasises the importance of physical health appropriately through different areas of the curriculum. This is enhanced by good outdoor play facilities and by pupils having equal opportunities to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The school liaises effectively with many specialist agencies, which include the police, the local authority, health services, and social services.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs, including the more able and talented pupils, is an outstanding feature. The expertise of the designated additional learning needs teacher is used very effectively. The curriculum meets the requirements of specific groups and individuals and offers an effective personal programme for those with specific needs. This includes suitable individual plans for pupils with additional needs and regular reviews of their work involving both pupils and their parents. As a result, pupils and their parents are well aware of the progress they make and what is expected of them in order to improve further.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community, where all pupils have equal access to all areas of learning. Teachers emphasise the importance of recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity by means of a suitable personal and social education programme including active links with locations in various European countries and further afield in countries such as Sri Lanka and Uganda.

The building and external facilities are maintained well and are very strong features of the school's environment. The school uses these facilities effectively in order to enrich pupils' learning experiences. Creative use is made of the land, forest area and fields around the school for outdoor lessons. The new extension provides a high quality learning environment. It has been designed to fully meet the needs of the Foundation Phase and provides full access to pupils with mobility difficulties.

The school makes very good use of any spare accommodation for teaching music, physical education, art and science. Displays across the school are outstanding and create a pleasant and stimulating environment which enhances learning.

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

Leadership: Good

Under the leadership of the headteacher, the senior management team promote the school's mission 'Our road to success is continually under construction' successfully. Their drive and firm commitment to continually improve standards and provide pupils with exciting opportunities for learning is central to the school's life and work. Senior leaders have created effective management structures to support and empower all staff that enables them to fulfil their roles effectively. All members of staff have clearly defined responsibilities. They work well together in a range of effective teams that provide clear direction and leadership to their areas of responsibility. This is a

strong feature of the school's leadership.

The governing body carries out its duties effectively. Governors have a clear knowledge of the performance of the school and hold it to account rigorously for the standards and quality it achieves. Governors fulfil their legal and regulatory duties well, and contribute effectively to school improvement.

Well-structured performance management arrangements link appropriately with the school's priorities and also many local and national priorities and identify suitable professional development opportunities for all staff. These contribute well to improvements in standards. In view of the wide range of activities and services it provides, the school plans for and meets national and local priorities effectively.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and managers identify strengths and areas for development in a systematic and effective way. Subject leaders regularly undertake a wide range of focused monitoring activities which include observing lessons and scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work. The evaluation reports that stem from this work are of good quality. They highlight priorities for development and clearly feed into the school development plan.

Improvement plans include a broad range of actions and identify members of staff with responsibility for their delivery. They also include clear success criteria which are based on pupil outcomes, and well-defined timescales for evaluation and completion. Leaders review these plans regularly and adapt them when necessary with a focus on raising standards.

The school is an effective learning community with a positive culture of collaboration and effective teamwork. There are a number of professional learning communities both within and outside the school that are having a positive impact on standards. Teachers share good practice with others across the school effectively. A particularly successful initiative has involved all teachers undertaking joint observations in order to identify effective teaching strategies which have been adopted in many classes.

Partnership working: Good

The school has an extensive range of strong partnerships. The partnership with parents is an outstanding feature. Parents are supportive of all the activities that the school provides and appreciate the efforts made by all members of staff. The school parent teacher association is extremely active and has made a very significant contribution to purchasing resources. The school regularly organises various workshops for parents in order to raise their awareness, and enable them to support their children.

Pupils regularly take part in concerts and functions in local churches and chapels, and often entertain older members of the community in neighbouring care homes.

Links with the local Cylch Meithrin and other nursery providers are well established and help new pupils settle in well when they start school.

Detailed transition plans with the local secondary schools include curricular and pastoral links. These are effective in helping older pupils prepare for the next stage in their learning. Teachers from both the school and neighbouring primary schools work effectively with secondary school colleagues to ensure consistency in assessment. Teachers also work together across the phases in order to ensure continuity in many subject areas.

The Students Motivate Innovative Learning via Enterprise (SMILE) project is a notable partnership with the local further education college, which has enabled the school to develop pupil skills and raise their awareness of what that institution offers in terms of courses and experiences.

The school also has effective partnerships with two initial teacher training institutions and regularly host students on placement.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its finances well. It prioritises and monitors expenditure carefully and resources the school's priorities appropriately. The school deploys teaching and support staff effectively in order to meet the needs of all pupils. There is effective management of teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. There are plenty of good-quality learning resources and excellent standards of accommodation, which leaders manage well.

In view of the appropriate use the school makes of its funding and the good progress made by nearly all pupils, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Performance data over the last five years reflects a slight downward trend in the performance of seven-year-old pupils. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected level 2 or above, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, has generally been higher compared to the family of schools (a group of schools with similar characteristics) average, and variable when compared to the Wales average. The percentage of pupils who attain the expected level 2 or above, in Welsh first language has been higher compared to the family of schools and Wales averages over two of the last four years. Over the last two years it has been lower. When compared to schools within the same free-school-meals band, the school has fluctuated between the first and fourth quarters. In 2011 the school was placed in the third or fourth quarters for each of the core subjects. In 2011, the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 or above in English, mathematics and science was higher than the average percentage for the family of schools but lower than the Wales average. In Welsh as a first language, this was lower than the family and Wales averages. End of key stage data also suggests that the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 3 in English has been variable when compared to the family of schools and Wales averages over the last four years. In Welsh and science the percentage has generally been higher than the family of schools average but lower than the all-Wales average. In mathematics it has been higher than the averages for the family of schools and Wales.

The data for 11-year-old pupils at the end of key stage 2 shows a generally consistent trend in performance over five years, with the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level 4 or above in the core subjects of English, Welsh first language, mathematics and science being consistently either similar to or higher than the average for similar schools and generally higher than the Wales average. When compared to schools within the same free-school-meals band the school has fluctuated between the first and third quarters in Welsh, been consistently in the third quarter for English, between the second and third quarter for science and between the second and fourth quarter for mathematics. The school was within the third quarter for English and the second quarter for the other three core subjects in 2011 and performed better than the family of schools and all-Wales averages. End of key stage data also suggests that the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 5 has been variable when compared to similar schools and Wales averages over five years.

There is no significant pattern of a difference in the performance of boys when compared to that of girls or between pupils entitled to free school meals when compared to those not entitled.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaires:

Estyn received 104 responses to the learner questionnaire. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school, that the school teaches them to keep healthy, that the school provides them with lots of chances to get regular exercise and that the teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress. Nearly all know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard. Most of the pupils feel that the school deals well with any bullying and that they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. Most also feel that they are doing well at school, that homework helps them understand and improve their work in school, that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work and that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime. Many pupils feel that other children behave well and that they can get on with their work.

Parent questionnaires:

The 66 responses from parents are very positive. All the parents either agree or strongly agree that:

- they are satisfied overall with the school;
- their child likes the school;
- their child was helped to settle in well when he or she started;
- their child is making good progress;
- teaching is good;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do their best;
- homework that is given builds well on what their child learns in school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their child is safe in school;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next stage in their education;
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits; and
- the school is well run.

Nearly all agree or strongly agree that:

- pupils behave well in school;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise; and
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Huw Watkins	Reporting Inspector
David Davies	Team Inspector
Prydwen Elfed-Owens	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Ceri Emanuel	Peer Inspector
Gareth Evans (Headteacher)	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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	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

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.