



*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**

**Fochriw Primary School  
Pontlottyn Road  
Fochriw  
Bargoed  
CF81 9LL**

**Date of inspection: February 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:

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

Fochriw Community Primary School serves the former mining village from which it derives its name. The school caters for 100 pupils including 13 nursery children. Pupils are organised into four mixed age classes. The school employs four full-time teachers excluding the headteacher.

About 29% of pupils have additional learning needs. Currently no pupils have a statement of special educational need.

About 39% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the average for the local authority and Wales. The school is the most challenged in its family of schools. The area it serves is socially and economically disadvantaged. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnic origin and no pupil speaks Welsh as their first language.

The school was last inspected in January 2007. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2009. She is also headteacher of another local school and divides her time equally between both schools.

The individual school budget per pupil for Fochriw Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,312 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Caerphilly is £4,640 and the minimum is £2,620. Fochriw Primary School is 22nd out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Adequate</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of Fochriw Primary School is adequate because:

- a majority of pupils make good progress from a low starting point;
- nearly all pupils behave well in classes and around the school;
- staff provide a high level of care, support and guidance to pupils; and
- the quality of teaching is now consistently good;

However:

- at key stage 2 pupils' performance in English, particularly that of boys, does not compare well with that of pupils in other similar schools; and
- in the Foundation Phase pupil outcomes in mathematical and personal and social development are very low when compared to those of other similar schools.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are judged adequate because:

- the headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the school;
- the school works effectively to address national priorities;
- the headteacher has a track record of effectively addressing underperformance of staff;
- pupils' progress forms part of the performance management system; and
- the school engages well with a range of partners to improve pupils' wellbeing and standards.

However:

- the self-evaluation process is not rigorous enough in monitoring the standards or provision in all subjects;
- the school does not involve all stakeholders in the self-evaluation process; and
- the governing body has not been effective in challenging the school's low performance over a long period.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in reading and writing at the end of key stage 2, particularly for boys
- R2 Improve standards and provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the school
- R3 Develop governors' understanding of their responsibilities and their role as a critical friend
- R4 Improve the process of self-evaluation to focus more clearly on raising standards
- R5 Improve the outdoor learning area to enable pupils to experience all areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum fully

### **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

Most pupils enter the school with skills, especially language skills, significantly below those normally expected for pupils of their age. During their time at the school a majority make good progress in relation to their starting point.

Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good by the end of key stage 2. Most older pupils speak clearly and effectively in lessons when asking and answering questions. They engage readily in conversations with adults. Older, more able pupils discuss their views confidently and know how to distinguish between a fact and opinion.

Across the school, pupils standards of reading have improved as a result of intervention strategies and a whole school focus on improving reading levels. However, a majority of pupils still read at a level below their chronological age.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, a majority of pupils are beginning to use a variety of strategies to develop as readers. A few older, more able pupils are confident readers and access information quickly from different sources, such as reference books and websites. They understand the main themes in a story and offer their opinions about events and characters.

The quality of pupils' writing in the Foundation Phase is very variable. Many pupils do not have a secure grasp of basic punctuation and spelling and their work is often untidy and poorly presented. By the end of key stage 2 many pupils achieve appropriate standards in their writing. In English lessons they produce extended pieces of writing with a clear structure and many use interesting word choices to keep their audience engaged. However, pupils do not write at a similar standard in other subjects.

Overall, standards in mathematics are adequate, but pupils at lower key stage 2 make good progress in using and applying their numeracy skills. Throughout the school, pupils do not apply or use their ICT skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum.

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

Pupils in the Foundation Phase generally achieve appropriate standards in Welsh. They understand and respond to a limited range of simple questions and instructions. Standards in lower key stage 2 are good. Many pupils ask and answer questions confidently using a range of language patterns in the present tense. However, pupils do not build on these skills as they progress through the school and, as a result, standards at the end of the key stage are only adequate.

In 2012, teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase suggest that the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) and the higher-than-expected outcome (outcome 6) in language and personal skills is below the average of similar schools. Fochriw Primary School is the most challenged in its family of similar schools.

Compared with 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 the lowest 25% for personal skills and mathematical development.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance over the last three years has generally not compared well with that of pupils in other similar schools. In 2012, the overall performance of pupils was below the average for the family of schools.

When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the performance of pupils has placed the school in the lower 50% for English for the past three years. However, performance in mathematics and science has been more variable with the school being consistently in the top 50% for science.

In 2012 boys outperformed girls in language, literacy and communication and mathematical development at the expected level in the Foundation Phase. In key stage 2, girls performed significantly better than boys at the expected level in English.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know whom to speak to if they are worried or concerned. Many pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and are keen to take part in exercise.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good. They are polite and courteous and relate well to each other and adults. Most are very attentive in lessons, settle quickly to their work and remain on task.

Pupils are involved in making decisions about what they want to learn. They use mind mapping well to record what they already know about a topic and to identify aspects that they would like to study further. Pupils' voice is developing appropriately through the school council. They have been involved in the development of the school playground by purchasing equipment. Two members of the council represent Fochriw on a local authority junior forum where they identify possible improvements to the local area.

Attendance has compared favourably with that of similar schools for three of the last four years. However, in 2011-2012 it dipped to the bottom 25% when compared with the attendance rates of similar schools. A few pupils have consistently poor records of attendance. The school works hard to ensure children are punctual and attend regularly and unauthorised absences have reduced.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>
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<b>Good</b>
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**Learning experiences: Good**

The school provides a good range of stimulating learning experiences which interest and engage pupils well. Teachers plan successfully for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. However, planning for the development of ICT skills is underdeveloped and pupils lack opportunities to use a suitable range of skills across the curriculum. The curriculum meets the requirements of pupils with special and additional needs well. Educational visits to Caerleon and an industrial heritage site are organised throughout the year to enhance the curriculum and enrich pupils' learning experiences effectively. The school offers a suitable range of after school clubs, such as eco club and creative club, which many pupils attend.

Provision for Welsh is good. Most teachers use incidental Welsh well during lessons and encourage pupils to respond in Welsh wherever possible. Welsh is used extensively on signs and wall displays. The school promotes the Welsh culture effectively through, for example, an annual eisteddfod, Welsh folk dancing and a study of the history of the locality.

The school provides a few opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, for example through thematic work on Ghana. The provision for sustainable development is good overall. Through the work of the eco committee, the school has achieved Green Flag status and the Fairtrade Award.

**Teaching: Good**

Following a period of considerable staff changes, the quality of teaching is now consistently good. Teachers share clear learning objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and use a good variety of questioning techniques to extend pupils' understanding. They plan a range of interesting tasks, which engage and motivate nearly all pupils. Most teachers match learning activities to pupils' needs appropriately and, as a result, pupils sustain interest in tasks and in key stage 2 work well independently. Teachers have supportive relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Many teachers share their planning with learning support assistants effectively and this ensures they provide well-focused support for pupils with additional learning needs.

The school has a systematic process for tracking pupils' progress, which it uses well to identify pupils in need of additional support. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is detailed and in a majority of instances identifies the next step for the pupils to take to improve their work. Teachers often encourage older pupils to reflect on the quality of their own work and, as a result, many pupils identify their own targets for improvement. Younger pupils know what their target is and what they need to do to improve their work.

Annual reports to parents are clear and informative. They identify what pupils need to do to improve their work.



### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Assemblies and personal and social skills lessons provide pupils with a good understanding of what is right and wrong and help them to build positive relationships with other pupils. Staff relate to pupils well and, as a result, pupils are confident in seeking support. The school successfully promotes the importance of a healthy lifestyle. It achieves this through effective policies, well planned lessons and a variety of appropriate extra-curricular activities. The school makes good use of the support and advice it receives from a range of external agencies.

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

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very good. Robust procedures are in place to ensure that the school identifies pupils in need of support at an early stage and provides for their needs well. Staff use assessment information effectively to develop individual education and play plans that support pupil progress appropriately. The school works hard to ensure that parents are involved in the process.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school is an inclusive community with a supportive and caring ethos. It has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The school provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment that is well maintained. Displays celebrate the work of pupils well and effectively enhance the learning environment. There are sufficient resources that are well matched to pupils' learning needs. The internal Foundation Phase area is stimulating and well set out. However, the school has not yet developed the outdoor learning area well enough for pupils to experience all areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum fully.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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### **Leadership: Adequate**

Since her appointment, the headteacher has concentrated on creating a supportive ethos for learning. Along with the deputy headteacher she has created a clear vision for the school. This is based on high expectations of staff and the need to provide the best learning opportunities for all pupils.

The headteacher has established systems to ensure individual staff accountability is agreed and understood clearly. She rigorously challenges staff underperformance and has good support procedures in place to ensure teaching is good. All staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. However, distributed leadership is at a very early stage of development.

Leaders analyse data well and share outcomes with staff and governors. They have a clear understanding that although a majority of pupils make good progress; pupil attainment compared with that of schools in the same family remains below the average.

The headteacher works hard to involve governors in the life of the school. As a result, governors are beginning to develop a better awareness of their roles and the strategic and operational work of the school. However, their understanding of school performance, priorities and vision is weak. The governing body's ability to hold the school to account as a critical friend is at a very early stage of development.

The school has made appropriate progress in addressing national and local priorities. The Foundation Phase is generally implemented successfully and improving pupils' wellbeing and standards in literacy are a high priority.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The school's arrangements for involving all teachers in self-evaluation are comparatively new. Until recently only senior leaders were involved in data analysis, scrutinising pupils' work, listening to learners, observing lessons and evaluating standards in English and mathematics every year. On the whole, this process identifies the main areas that require improvement in these subjects well. However, the process is not rigorous enough in monitoring the provision or standards in other subjects. The school has not yet involved pupils or parents in the process of self-evaluation.

Overall, the self-evaluation report shows that leaders understand the factors impacting on the low end of key stage standards well. However, the report is too descriptive and not evaluative enough. The report does not celebrate successes, or identify key areas for development clearly, but it does link closely to priorities in the school development plan.

The current school development plan focuses well on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Expected outcomes and quantifiable targets are clearly included. However, the previous plan is not reviewed and this hinders the role of the governing body in operating as a critical friend and their ability to hold the school to account.

All staff have opportunities to observe good practice both within and beyond the school. The staff benefit especially from sharing expertise with the other school, for which the headteacher has responsibility. This has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching. The school is working appropriately to expand its commitment to professional networks, especially with schools within the locality and with the local secondary school.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school works well with a range of partners to improve provision for pupils' learning and wellbeing and to improve outcomes.

Links with parents and carers are good. The school keeps them well informed through newsletters and a very informative and interesting website. This has a positive impact on the engagement of parents. Parents are supportive and raise a significant sum every year towards school funds. This partnership enhances many aspects of the school's provision very effectively.

The school has established valuable links with the local community to enhance and enrich children's learning experiences. The intergenerational project in conjunction with Communities First has a very positive impact on relationships in the village. This is breaking down barriers and forming mutual trust between the older generation and the young.

The school works well in partnership with the local authority and, as a result, is beginning to tackle underperformance. Effective links with the behaviour support unit and the educational psychologist have improved pupils' behaviour and fostered a work ethic within the school.

The school works well with the local high school and the local Flying Start provision to ensure effective transition and continuity in pupils' learning and wellbeing. End of key stage 2 moderation is effective and ensures the accuracy of pupil assessments.

**Resource management: Adequate**

The school employs an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff and now makes good use of their experience and expertise to enhance pupils' knowledge and skills. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well to support pupils. The school now manages its budget appropriately having successfully moved out of a significant deficit situation.

Arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time are suitable. The school's performance management processes are appropriate.

Due to the shortcomings identified in standards and leadership, the school provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

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 the Foundation Phase, 60% of pupils achieve the expected level (outcome 5) in relation to the development of their language, mathematical and personal skills (the Foundation Phase indicator). This is below the average for the family and considerably below the average for schools in Wales. The percentage of pupils who achieve the higher-than-expected level (outcome 6) is below the average for the family and Wales for language, literacy and communication, mathematical and personal and social development.

When compared with schools in Wales with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's outcomes place it in the lower 50% for the development of pupils' language, literacy and communication skills and in the lowest 25% for mathematical and personal and social development.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who achieve expected level (level 4) or above in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator) is below the average for the family. There is a downward trend in performance over the past four years in standards of English and in the core subject indicator. Standards in mathematics and science fluctuate more, but generally remain below family and Welsh averages.

In 2012, in relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school is in the upper 50% for science, but close to the lower 50% boundary. It is in the lower 50% for mathematics and in the lowest 25% for both English and the core subject indicator.

The proportion of pupils who achieve the higher-than-expected level (level 5) in English is generally around the average for the family. Mathematics has been consistently below, and science has been around or well above, the average for the family for the past three years. At the higher level, the school's performance in comparison to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, places it in the lower 50% in English and mathematics and in the higher 50% in science.

Boys outperform girls in language, literacy and communication and mathematical development at the expected level in the Foundation Phase. This is also the case for personal and social development at the expected and higher level.

In key stage 2, girls perform significantly better than boys at the expected level in English, with a difference greater than the family average. However, boys outperform girls in science. At the higher level, more able girls outperform boys in science by more than the family average.

The school's results at the end of key stage 2 show that there is a trend for pupils who do not receive free school meals to outperform those who are entitled to free school meals over the past three years.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Learner questionnaires

Forty pupils completed the questionnaire. All responses were very positive and compared favourably to the national benchmarks.

All pupils:

- feel safe in school;
- know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset
- believe that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress;
- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- feel they are doing well at school;
- believe that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work;
- feel that nearly all children behave well in class and at playtime and lunchtime;
- believe that homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school;
- think that the school deals well with any bullying; and
- feel that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and provides them with lots of chances to get regular exercise.

#### Parent questionnaires

Twenty-eight parents or carers completed the questionnaire.

All parents or carers strongly agree or agree that:

- their child was helped to settle in well when they started school;
- the school encourages their child to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- their child is safe in school;
- they feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem;
- they understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress;
- they are satisfied with the school and think it is run well;
- the staff expect their children to work hard and to do their best;
- their child likes school;
- the teaching is of good quality;
- their child is making good progress;

- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular needs;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility; and
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school.

Most parents feel that the range of activities for their children including trips and visits is good.

The responses to all the statements were very positive and above the national benchmarks.

### Appendix 3

#### The inspection team

Jane Rees	Reporting Inspector
Maldwyn Pyrse	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Sian Lewis	Peer Inspector
Helen Leaman	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://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.