



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

**Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School
Woodland Road
Beddau
Pontypridd
CF38 2DH**

Date of inspection: November 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.

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Context

Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School is in the community of Beddau in Rhondda Cynon Taf. There are 291 pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11, including 46 full-time nursery pupils. There are nine mainstream classes for pupils from nursery to Year 6. There are also two classes that cater for up to 20 pupils aged seven to 11 years who have severe and complex learning difficulties. Most mainstream pupils come from the local community, but the 17 pupils currently in the learning support classes come from across the local authority.

Approximately 20% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is similar to the all-Wales average, but well below the local authority figure. Around 26% of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs. In line with the local authority's current practice, no pupil has a statement of special educational needs or a note in lieu of a statement. There are no pupils who are looked after by the local authority. All pupils speak English as their first language and no pupil speaks Welsh at home. No pupils receive support for English as an additional language.

The headteacher has been in post since 2003. Since January 2010, there has been a very significant change in staffing at the school. Seven out of ten teachers in the mainstream classes have been appointed to the school in the past two years.

The individual school budget per pupil for Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,556 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,197 and the minimum is £2,719. Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School is 59th out of the 107 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	Adequate

Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate. This is because:

- standards at the end of key stage 2 improved in 2012 and work in many pupils' current books is good;
- pupils are happy in school, they have good attitudes to learning and they show pride in their work;
- the quality of teaching in nearly all classes is good; and
- staff provide a high level of care and support for pupils and this has a positive impact on standards of wellbeing.

However:

- pupil attainment in end of key stage assessments has not compared well to that of other, similar schools for the last four years;
- although writing skills have improved, many pupils, particularly boys, do not achieve good enough standards in writing; and
- pupils' thinking and independent learning skills are not good enough.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are judged to be adequate. This is because:

- the school has appointed many new teachers over the past two years. This has ensured that learning experiences and teaching are generally good, but it is too early to judge the impact of these improvements on end-of-key-stage outcomes;
- the school has very recently extended its senior leadership team to include new staff with teaching and learning responsibilities and the co-ordinator for additional learning needs. However, this new team has not been together long enough to have established a clear strategic direction for the school or to secure significant improvements in standards; and
- although current self-evaluation processes and school improvement plans are generally appropriate, the school has no track record of continuous school improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in end of Foundation Phase and key stage 2 assessments.
- R2 Improve boys' writing, and the thinking and independent learning skills of all pupils.
- R3 Involve all stakeholders in agreeing a clear strategic direction that focuses on improving pupil outcomes at all levels.
- R4 Set high expectations for leaders at all levels and enable them to carry out their strategic roles and responsibilities successfully.
- R5 Engage all governors more fully in the work of the school and enable them to support and challenge leaders in relation to the standards the school achieves.
- R6 Link school improvement planning more accurately to the outcomes of self-evaluation.

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

The current standard of work in many pupils' books is good and this reflects the many improvements in teaching and provision the school has made over the past year. Many pupils present their work well and the majority achieve appropriate standards in relation to their ability and starting points. Pupils receiving specific support for mathematics and literacy in the mainstream make good progress in relation to their starting points and against their targets, as do pupils who attend the two learning support classes.

In 2012, pupils' outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase were generally poor in comparison with those of other, similar schools. The only exception to this was the proportion of more able pupils who achieved the higher outcome 6, which compared well with performance levels of other schools in the family.

The performance of 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science has been consistently below that of similar schools for the last five years. However, there were notable improvements in all subjects in 2012. These are particularly significant when considering the outcomes of pupils in mainstream classes separately from those in the learning support classes.

There are significant differences between the outcomes of boys and girls at the end of key stage 2, but these are in line with family, local authority and Wales averages when excluding pupils in the learning support classes. However, boys' standards in writing in end of key stage assessments are poor when compared to those of girls.

Most pupils listen well and speak confidently, engaging and responding suitably in class. The majority write for a range of purposes across the curriculum with increasing accuracy and at an appropriate level. Standards of reading are mainly good. Most read accurately and fluently, with good expression. However, the least able pupils have not developed a wide enough range of phonic and other strategies to help them attempt unfamiliar words. Pupils' numeracy and information and communication technology skills are good. They use them appropriately to enhance and present work across a range of subjects. Despite many pupils gaining generally suitable skills in these areas, most do not develop good enough thinking and independent learning skills to enable them to achieve the highest possible standards.

In the Foundation Phase, pupils' Welsh language skills develop well. Many pupils are enthusiastic and speak confidently in short phrases. In upper key stage 2, a few pupils use extended sentences when speaking to adults. The majority of older pupils write simple dialogues and short pieces of personal writing, supported by writing frames. Reading skills are less well developed. Outcomes of teacher assessment in Welsh at the end of 2012 show a small improvement from 2011.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise. Nearly all pupils report that they feel free from physical and verbal abuse in school and they feel confident to report any incidents of bullying or harassment.

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. Nearly all follow the rules and are polite and respectful towards one another and adults. All pupils are motivated and engaged in their lessons. Attendance rates overall have improved for each of the last four years. They compare favourably to the 2011 local authority figures and the school is now in the upper 50% of similar schools. There have been eight temporary exclusions over the last academic year. However, nearly all of these exclusions involve a very few pupils who have been identified as having severely challenging behaviour.

The school council plays an active part in decision making. Members meet regularly with the governing body and senior staff, who listen and respond to pupils' views well. Most pupils work productively together and the majority are developing the skills to improve their own learning steadily.

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

The curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences, which engage most pupils effectively and cover statutory requirements. Teachers organise the curriculum effectively around well-planned topics. Short term planning identifies plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their skills across the curriculum. However, in a few classes, this is not always evident in lessons. All teachers have a consistent approach to planning and many match activities well to the abilities of most of their pupils.

Enrichment activities are varied and many pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of clubs and out-of-school learning opportunities on offer. Teachers use visitors, class trips and residential visits effectively to further develop pupils' understanding of class topics.

Provision for Welsh language development and the Welsh dimension is good. Displays in corridors, suitable vocabulary around the school and Welsh assemblies help pupils to develop positive attitudes towards this aspect of the curriculum.

Most pupils, led by the enthusiastic members of the eco council, are committed to promoting energy saving and recycling. Pupil awareness of global citizenship is developing appropriately through strong links with a school in Sri Lanka.

Teaching: Good

Most teachers motivate pupils well and ensure that lessons address the needs of most pupils. Nearly all teachers have good subject knowledge and share very clear

lesson objectives with pupils consistently and effectively. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and this creates a positive learning environment, within which pupils feel confident to ask questions and take risks. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and presentation of work. However, too many lessons are overly teacher-directed and do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to think creatively and act independently. In these lessons, a minority of pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

Opportunities for pupils to review their own learning are good. Evaluative marking and helpful oral feedback enable pupils to understand how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve. Many teachers regularly encourage pupils to evaluate their own work and that of others, and a few more able pupils are becoming reflective learners as a result.

All teachers track pupil progress appropriately and gather relevant information about pupils' achievement through standardised testing and teacher assessment. Teachers use the outcomes of these assessments appropriately to identify individuals whose attainment is particularly poor and who require specific help in mathematics, for example. Staff in the learning support classes use this information very well to set specific targets, measure progress and identify areas for further improvement. However, teachers in the mainstream do not always analyse and use data effectively enough to identify more general underachievement and to plan to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupil reports provide parents with relevant information and offer appropriate opportunities for parental feedback.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has good procedures in place to promote pupils' wellbeing. There are clear school rules and the behaviour policy helps to ensure that the school is an orderly community. Provision for encouraging pupils to eat healthily is well established. Learning experiences provide appropriate opportunities to promote pupils' moral, social, cultural and spiritual development. As a result, pupils show respect for each other and demonstrate appropriate reverence in the daily act of collective worship.

There are strong links with a wide range of specialist services, particularly in relation to vulnerable pupils and those in the learning support classes. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Provision for pupils with identified additional learning needs in the mainstream and in the learning support classes is good. The mainstream additional learning needs co-ordinator and specialist staff in the support classes have relevant expertise. The specific interventions available meet the particular needs of specific groups and individuals well. Individual education plans and regular reviews of pupils' work and progress are effective. This helps parents to support their children's development well. Effective planning, skilful adaptation of lessons and the effective use of resources in the learning support class enable pupils to make generally good progress in relation to their starting points.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an orderly and calm environment with a positive ethos. Staff ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their backgrounds, are fully included in all activities. There is a clear emphasis on celebrating diversity and enabling pupils to learn about different religions and cultures.

The school's accommodation is good. Although a few classrooms are small, staff make effective use of all available areas and facilities. The yards are in very good condition and are very well marked, encouraging pupils to play a wide variety of games. The school has developed extensive outdoor learning facilities. Foundation Phase classes use these areas regularly and effectively to promote good learning. However, key stage 2 teachers do not always use the outdoor facilities well enough to support learning. There are plenty of good quality resources for delivering all aspects of the curriculum.

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

Major changes in staffing have enabled the school to establish an extended leadership team very recently. Leaders now have clear roles and responsibilities that all staff understand. The new Foundation Phase leader has brought about a good range of improvements in a very short time. These changes have had a significant impact on provision and organisation in Foundation Phase classes. However, members of the team have not yet agreed a clear strategic direction for the school. Senior leaders do not set high enough expectations for the extended leadership team or themselves, nor have they provided sufficient time for them to carry out their whole-school responsibilities successfully.

Governors are developing a clearer understanding of the reason for the changes that the school is making, particularly in relation to the Foundation Phase and literacy. However, the governing body has been slow to respond to difficulties the school has faced and has not challenged leadership well enough in relation to the standards achieved.

The school has recently made good progress in fully establishing the Foundation Phase. It pays appropriate attention to other national and local priorities, such as improving outcome for pupils who receive free school meals.

Improving quality: Adequate

Leaders and managers have not focused sufficiently on the most important areas for improvement until recently. The school does not have a good track record of managing or improving standards. Self-evaluation has previously lacked rigour and has not drawn upon performance data and other evidence from key partners sufficiently.

However, the newly formed senior leadership team is developing a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders are beginning to

use the outcomes of self-evaluation to determine future priorities for improvement. There is an appropriate three year development plan in place. The annual development plan identifies relevant key priorities for improvement in the coming year, although measurable targets are not linked accurately enough to pupils' prior attainment. Leaders now focus well on achieving progress against the school's agreed priorities.

A culture of teamwork is now developing well and, as a result, the school is growing as a learning community. Staff collaborate well with teachers in other schools in the cluster in relation to mathematics and improving provision for more able and talented pupils, but these activities are at an early stage of development and there are no formal professional learning communities.

Partnership working: Good

Positive partnerships with parents and the local community enhance pupils' learning experiences and wellbeing effectively. For example, individuals from the community, visits in the locality and long-established links with the local church strengthen topic work and pupils' spiritual development well. Contact through newsletters, website and text messages ensure that parents receive appropriate and timely information. Parents appreciate this good communication as it enables them to support their children's education and the school's activities.

Transfer arrangements and moderation activities with the local secondary school and cluster primary schools are good and help to ensure joint understanding of standards at the end of key stage 2. The school collaborates well with other schools to employ a community liaison officer. The resulting provision of a Pyramid Club has improved the self-esteem and confidence of a targeted group of vulnerable pupils significantly.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has enough staff and resources to deliver the national curriculum effectively. Teachers are appropriately deployed in the school. For example, the school has recently invested in two additional part time teachers who support smaller teaching groups in key stage 2. This is helping to raise standards in literacy and numeracy.

There are enough support staff in the Foundation Phase to support the learning of young pupils well. However, key stage 2 teachers have very limited classroom support and there are no arrangements for releasing school leaders. This makes it difficult for them to drive improvement throughout the school.

The school monitors its budget regularly and current spending plans are suitably linked to school priorities. However, despite some evidence of very recent improvements in key stage 2, the school has not succeeded in securing continuous improvement in standards over the past four years. In view of the standards achieved by pupils, the school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Generally, attainment at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012 was poor in comparison with that of other, similar schools. The exception to this was the performance of more able pupils, which was good. There was no significant gap between how well boys and girls achieve at the age of seven at the expected Foundation Phase Outcome 5. However, far more girls than boys achieved the higher Foundation Phase Outcome 6 in all three assessed areas of learning.

The performance of 11-year-olds at the end of key stage 2 in English, mathematics and science has been consistently below its family, local authority and all-Wales averages for the last five years. However, although the school's assessment outcomes place it in the bottom quarter of schools with similar proportions of free school meals, there was a significant rise in attainment in all subjects in 2012. These are particularly significant when considering the outcomes of pupils in mainstream classes separately from those in the learning support classes.

Although there are significant differences between the performance of boys and girls at the end of key stage 2, gender differences are in line with family of schools, local authority and Wales average outcomes when excluding Year 6 pupils in the learning support class. However, even taking this into consideration, boys' standards in writing in end of key stage teacher assessments are poor when compared to those of girls.

Pupils with additional learning needs in the mainstream and those in the learning resource base make good, and sometimes very good, progress in relation to their personal targets and their starting points. The numbers of pupils receiving free school meals in each year group are very small so any differences between the outcomes of pupils receiving free school meals and other pupils are not significant.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Forty parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Responses are overwhelmingly positive and are broadly similar to the views of parents and carers in other schools across Wales.

All are satisfied with the school and agree that their children:

- like school and behave well;
- were helped to settle in well when they started at the school; and
- are encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise;

All parents or carers also feel that:

- teaching is good;
- staff expect pupils to work hard and do their best;
- homework builds well on what their children learn in school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their children receive appropriate additional support for their particular needs;
- the school helps their children to become more mature and take on responsibility; and
- their children are prepared well for moving on to the next school.

They feel that the school is well run, they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems and they understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints

Nearly all parents or carers feel that their children:

- are safe at school; and
- are making good progress

A very few do not feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and they do not think that the range of activities available to their children is good enough.

Responses to pupil questionnaires

One hundred and one pupils from key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Their views are very similar to the opinions of pupils in other schools in Wales.

Nearly all pupils:

- feel safe in school;
- know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- say that the school teaches them how to be healthy.

- feel they have lots of chances for regular exercise;
- think they are doing well at school;
- say they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work; and
- think that homework helps them to understand and improve their school work.

All say that:

- teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress; and
- they know whom to ask if they find their work hard.

Most pupils feel that the school deals well enough with any bullying. A few pupils are concerned that other children do not always behave well enough in class, at playtime and at lunch time, but this is in line with the responses from most other schools in Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Morgan	Reporting Inspector
Enir Rees Morgan	Team Inspector
William Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Julie Farmer	Peer Inspector
David Thomas	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.