



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

**Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon
Greenfield Terrace,
Glancynon,
Abercynon,
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF45 4TH**

Date of inspection: July 2012

by

Dr David Gareth Evans

for

**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

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon is a designated bilingual primary school. It serves the town of Abercynon and other communities in the lower Cynon Valley. There are 337 full-time pupils at the school, including 45 full-time and part-time children of nursery age. The school serves an area which is disadvantaged; 18.1% of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is slightly below the national average.

Most of the pupils come from English-speaking homes; and 1.2 % comes from an ethnic minority background, which is lower than the local authority average. Approximately 11% of pupils have additional learning needs, which is well below the national average. One pupil has a statement of educational needs. No pupils are looked after by the local authority.

Since the last inspection the senior leaders of the school have changed. A new head teacher was appointed in January 2011 and he is the third since the previous inspection in May, 2006. One member of staff was on maternity leave during the inspection.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Abercynon in 2011-12 means that the budget is £2,759 per pupil. The maximum per person in the primary school in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,499 and the minimum is £2,788. Ysgol Gynradd Abercynon is 103 out of the 114 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

Aspects of the current performance of the school are good because:

- most pupils make good progress in their numeracy and information and communication technology skills, and literacy skills are good in the Foundation Phase;
- pupils behave well, are courteous and they have a positive attitude to learning; and
- pupils' health and wellbeing are promoted effectively.

However, current performance is only adequate because:

- there is not sufficient progress in the extended reading and writing skills of many pupils in both languages in key stage two;
- there is not sufficient challenge to ensure that the most able pupils achieve well; and
- although assessment systems are developing, they are not sufficiently embedded, assessment for learning has not developed well enough and marking does not always show clearly enough how pupils can improve the standard and content of the work.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the head teacher has introduced a number of beneficial priorities that produce a clear strategic direction for the development of the school;
- there are robust self-evaluation systems in place that provide a clear picture of those aspects where there is need for improvement; and
- the school development plan identifies clear priorities and appropriate strategies for implementation.

Recommendations

In order to improve further the school needs to;

- R1 raise extended reading and writing skills in both languages in key stage 2;
- R2 provide more opportunities to promote pupils' thinking skills and ensure that pupils are more independent as learners;
- R3 ensure that learning activities fully extend pupils of all abilities, including the more able ones; and
- R4 reinforce assessment strategies.

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

In lessons, most pupils work productively and make appropriate progress against their learning objectives. However, they do not show an increasing ability to work independently and their thinking skills are only adequate. Pupils who have additional learning needs are making continuous and steady progress, and their work books show that they achieve standards that are good.

Overall, pupils' oral skills are developing well in the Foundation Phase and in key stage 2. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They become increasingly confident when talking about their work, in both languages, and they express themselves clearly and correctly. Pupils show a willingness to offer responses when they are questioned by their teachers. Most use Welsh naturally when conversing with each other, with pupils from non-Welsh speaking homes quickly becoming fluent.

Most pupils make good progress in their reading skills in the Foundation Phase, but in key stage 2 many pupils' reading skills in Welsh and English are only adequate. A minority of pupils nurture an interest in books and develop into keen readers. Pupils from the Foundation Phase and some from key stage 2 discuss fervently the characters and events in the stories which they have read. In key stage 2, a minority of pupils use their investigative skills confidently in gathering information on various matters, and use their translation skills to present information. Pupils of higher ability do not fully develop their ability to respond to books.

Many pupils in the Foundation Phase make appropriate initial progress in their ability to write independently. They use an increasing range of vocabulary and phrases, and start to vary sentences and use punctuation. In key stage 2, a minority of pupils make good progress in their ability to write for an increasing range of purposes in both languages, including expressing an opinion on current affairs. Key stage 2 pupils do not make sufficient use of re-drafting skills to improve their initial efforts. They use their extended writing skills in other subjects such as history, but this aspect has not been fully developed. Pupils of higher ability do not fully develop their extended writing skills across the curriculum.

Pupils' numeracy and information and communication technology skills are developing well in the Foundation Phase and in key stage 2.

In the Foundation Phase, the proportion of seven year old pupils attaining the expected level (level 2) overall has compared favourably with the family of similar schools' averages over the last five years. This has often placed the school amongst the highest 50% compared with similar schools with respect to free school meal entitlement. The percentage attaining the higher level (level 3) has varied over the last five years.

In key stage 2, there has been a clear pattern of improvement in pupils' attainment. Overall, the proportion attaining the expected level (level 4) over a period has been around or above the family of schools' averages. In the last two years, the results have placed the school amongst the highest 50% of schools when compared with similar schools with respect to free school meal entitlement. Girls' attainment, especially at level 5, is significantly better than boys, particularly in English and Welsh.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils are courteous and cheerful in their involvement with each other and are able to identify well with adults. Their behaviour and attitudes reflect their full participation in learning. Most are diligent and enthusiastic workers and they collaborate harmoniously. They express viewpoints, make decisions about their lives in school and enjoy taking responsibilities for making decisions for the benefit of the school and others.

Pupils feel safe in the school and they have positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating. They enjoy physical activities in lessons, in after-school clubs and during residential visits.

The school's attendance rate for 2010-2011 is 91.03%, which is lower than the national and family averages. Absence without permission is higher than the figures for the local authority and Wales over the last five years. Nevertheless, the school is working to improve attendance and is aware of the value of this to pupils' overall wellbeing and, as a result, the attendance rate rose during the first two terms in 2011-2012, although the attendance rate for the summer term to date is 90.6%.

The school has a School Council, an Eco- Committee and a Healthy Committee and pupils enjoy taking responsibility and making decisions for the benefit of the school and others. They have all met the Governing Body and they are part of the interviewing process for staff appointments.

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

A range of interesting experiences are provided which engage and respond to the needs of many pupils. The activities fully satisfy the requirements of the Foundation Phase and the national curriculum. Nevertheless, the provision does not always provide enough challenge for higher ability pupils and there are far too many work sheets in the books which hinder pupils' progress in some classes.

There is effective planning for developing communication skills in the Foundation Phase, but the provision in key stage 2 for developing reading and writing in both languages is not completely effective. The provision for developing numeracy and information and communication technology skills is good across the school.

Good attention is given to the Welsh Dimension and the school arranges various activities in order to ensure that pupils understand and celebrate the culture of Wales.

There is effective provision to enable pupils to learn about sustainability and world-wide citizenship and the school operates in a sustainable manner. Pupils are aware of their responsibility to help others from less fortunate backgrounds than themselves and they regularly collect monies for charities.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is good. Where teaching is effective, teachers have good subject knowledge. They use a range of techniques and resources to engage nearly all pupils. There is a successful working relationship between pupils, teachers and support staff. A stimulating learning environment is created with purposeful questioning which enriches the learning. In the effective lessons teachers are good language models in Welsh and English.

In a small number of lessons where teaching is adequate, there is lack of pace in the sessions and teacher expectations are too low, especially with regard to challenging the more able pupils.

Although the school has a number of appropriate new assessment processes, which include the assessment of pupils' achievements, target-setting and progress-tracking systems, they are not fully embedded.

Assessment for learning strategies are gradually becoming established in the school's procedures and appropriate attention is now given to success criteria, which help pupils to improve their work. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent on occasions because it does not always show pupils clearly how to improve their work.

Reports to parents satisfy statutory requirements and give good attention to pupils' progress and development. They show the way forward and there is an opportunity for pupils to self-assess their performance during the year.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are effective procedures and policies in place to ensure care and support for all pupils in the school. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Collective worship contributes significantly to the caring and spiritual atmosphere.

Provision for personal and social education is planned appropriately in the classes. Pupils are given the opportunity to take responsibility for the health and wellbeing of their fellow pupils and they take pride in their roles. There are thorough procedures in place to eliminate any bullying

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

The systems that are in place for pupils with additional learning needs are effective. Pupils are identified early, and good additional support is provided by using a variety of stimulating programmes. The individual action plans are regularly reviewed and modified in consultation with parents. The school is beginning to use purposeful strategies to identify more able and talented pupils.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a welcoming and friendly one and the school's 4Cs, Cymreictod, Caredigrwydd, Cwrteisi a Cheiso Gorau Glas (Welshness, Kindness, Courtesy and Trying One's best) are incorporated in school activities. Everyone has the opportunity to be a part of the school community. There is an ethos of respect for others and pupils and staff show a willingness to help and support each other.

There are appropriate policies to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils, which promote equality and social diversity, and these are known to all.

The site is kept clean and tidy. Good work has been done to improve the indoor learning environment using various colourful displays of pupils' work and their activities in the various committees. Nevertheless, the school aims to improve various aspects of the building, including the toilets and the external environment.

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

The head teacher provides very effective leadership. He has a clear vision to develop the school further. His management is purposeful and inclusive and ensures the support of governors, staff, pupils and the community. He has led an inclusive process of change successfully and ensured the involvement of all stakeholders to improve provision and raise standards.

The head teacher and senior management team set clear objectives and targets in order to ensure the further development of the school and every member of staff and volunteers are aware of the priorities and values of the school.

The overall quality of co-ordinating areas of responsibility is good. As a result of the head teacher's inclusive style of leadership, subject co-ordinators take full responsibility for their areas, drawing up policies and appropriate action plans. Improvement plans have been strongly based on local and national priorities, and the way the head teacher has co-ordinated these priorities as a basis for his vision is an obvious strength. For example, high priority has been given to improving literacy and numeracy standards and ensuring that pupils acquire good information and communications technology skills.

The governing body is supportive of the school, knows the school well and has a good range of committees. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's performance and they contribute proactively to the school's self-evaluation. The governing body fully meets statutory requirements.

Improving quality: Good

There is a positive commitment to promoting improvement and the self-evaluation procedures identify well the strengths and the areas to improve. The self-evaluation arrangements include a detailed analysis of performance and incorporate a comprehensive programme to evaluate the work of the school over a specific cycle. There is a clear focus on improving standards.

The school is beginning to use an effective range of direct evidence, which includes subject leaders' evaluations, analysis of pupils' progress and questionnaires. Appropriate consideration is given to the local authority's recommendations and the school council's proposals have a priority in the school's development plans.

Members of staff contribute effectively to the development and implementation of improvement plans. The plans include a good range of relevant procedures, identify members of staff with specific responsibilities, include success indicators and clear timetables for their completion. Self-evaluation arrangements and improvement planning are well established in the life of the school and contribute well to improving standards and the quality of provision.

The school has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the last inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established a good range of partnerships with parents and carers, other educational providers and the local community. Many parents collaborate effectively with the school and a few have contributed well to developing the school garden and other aspects of the grounds. Day-to-day links, arrangements to contact parents and carers via circulars, the school website and texting ensure that parents receive appropriate and timely information about the life and work of the school.

The school has good links with the nursery in 'Y Gorlan' and the receiving secondary schools to which pupils will transfer. There is a good range of transition activities that promotes pupils' wellbeing and facilitates continuity in their work and experiences. There are effective links with colleges and initial teacher training providers and the school contributes regularly to the practical aspects of training students. The school benefits from its close collaboration with other schools in the local family of schools, and this now includes effective arrangements for standardizing and moderating pupils' work.

Resource management: Adequate

The school has enough well qualified teachers and support staff, and they are used purposefully. School resources were thoroughly reviewed and renewed recently. A good example of this is the successful investment in new laptops.

Performance management systems are well established in the school and training is clearly linked to school priorities and individual needs.

Provision for planning, preparation and assessment time has been arranged well and teachers use this time effectively. The school's expenditure is managed carefully by the head teacher with the support of the local authority officer and, as a result, the previous overspend has been successfully addressed.

Taking into account pupils' outcomes, the school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

End of key stage 1 outcomes for 2011 were not as good. Nevertheless, the school's outcomes between 2007 and 2011 were good overall when compared with the assessment results of similar schools with respect to the percentage of pupils who are entitled to receive free school meals. Between 2007 and 2011 the key stage 1 assessment outcomes placed the school either amongst the highest quartile or the upper half of similar schools with respect to the percentage of pupils who are entitled to receive free school meals. The school was amongst the upper quarter of schools with respect to the percentage of pupils attaining the key stage 1 core subject indicator (that is attaining level 2 or better in a combination of Welsh, mathematics and science) in 2007, 2009 and 2010.

The percentage of pupils attaining above the expected level, (level 3) has often fluctuated over the last five years and was lower than the family of school in Welsh in 2011. Overall, girls have performed better than boys over the last five years.

Pupils who receive free school meals do not achieve as well as pupils who pay for their meals.

In key stage 2, the performance in Welsh, English and mathematics has been higher than the family and Welsh averages over the last three years. The results in the core subject indicator during the last three years have been amongst the highest 50% of similar schools with respect to the numbers of free school meals pupils. In general, the numbers attaining the higher level (level 5) has fluctuated over the previous three years. Overall, girls performed better than boys over the previous three years.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

100 pupils responded to the questionnaire. Nearly all pupils feel safe in the school, believe that teachers and other adults help them to learn and to make progress and know what to do and with whom to speak if they find the work difficult. Most pupils say that the school deals well with any bullying and that they know with whom to speak if they are worried or upset. Nearly all pupils believe that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and many say that there are many opportunities for regular physical exercise in the school. Nearly all pupils are of the opinion that they are doing well in school. Many believe that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work and that homework helps them to understand and improve their school work. Many say that other pupils behave well and that they are able to do their work, but a third believes that not all children behave well during lunch and break times.

Responses to parent questionnaires

12 responses were received to the parent questionnaires. Overall, the responses are similar to responses across Wales. All were of the opinion that the teaching was good, that staff expected their children to work hard and to do their best, that their children are making good progress in school and that their children received help to settle when they joined the school. Most parents said that their children liked the school, that pupils behaved well in school and that their children were safe in school. Most also believe that the school helps their child to become more mature and to take on responsibility. Most also are satisfied with the school overall. Many believe that their children are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education. All were of the opinion that the staff treated every child fairly and with respect and that their children are encouraged to keep healthy and to take regular exercise. Most were of the opinion that the school is well run. All parents believe that there is a good variety of activities, including trips and visits. Most say that they received regular information about their children's progress. Approximately the same numbers feel comfortable in asking questions, making suggestions or noting a problem and understand the school arrangements for dealing with complaints. Many believe that their children receive appropriate additional support in relation to any individual need.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Dr David Gareth Evans	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Eleri Hurley	Team Inspector
Mr Enir Morgan	Team Inspector
Dr Glenda Jones	Lay Inspector
Mrs Amanda Lawrence	Peer Inspector
Mr Jonathan Cooper	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.