



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

**Cwmaman Infants School
Fforchaman Road
Cwmaman
Aberdare
Mid Glamorgan
CF44 6NS**

Date of inspection: November 2010

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

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

Cwmaman Infant School is situated in the village of Cwmaman on the outskirts of Aberdare. The school caters for 119 pupils from the ages of three to seven years. Most of the pupils live in the village.

Cwmaman is a designated 'Community First' area and is recognised as being both socially and economically disadvantaged. Forty-seven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals (FSM) which is significantly higher than the all-Wales average of just under 20%. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs (ALN).

English is the predominant home language of pupils. The school has no pupils who come from Welsh-speaking homes. A very small percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.

The school has a range of awards such as the ICT Becta award and the Eco Schools green flag.

The individual school budget per pupil for Cwmaman Infant School is £3,479, which compares with a maximum of £9,064 and a minimum of £2,553 for primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school has the 34th highest budget per pupil out of the 116 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The current headteacher has been in post since January 2007.

Summary

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

Current performance

The overall judgement for current performance is good because:

- most children make good progress by the end of Year 2;
- teaching overall is good and there is an interesting and varied curriculum;
- there are very strong links with the local community and parents; and
- there is a warm and caring ethos in which all pupils feel safe and secure.

Prospects for improvement

The overall judgement for prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher provides very effective leadership;
- the recently formed leadership team work well together and have a clear vision for improvement;
- all staff are involved in and understand the importance of self-evaluation; and
- targets for improvement are linked to self-evaluation evidence and are well-planned, prioritised and monitored effectively.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, Cwmaman Infants School needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' standards in listening and writing;
- R2 improve pupils' independent learning skills;
- R3 share the existing good practice in teaching across the school; and
- R4 continue to develop the role of the governing body as a critical friend to the school.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan which will show how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The performance of pupils at seven years of age at the end of key stage 1 over the last three years is good in English, mathematics and science. Trends in key stage 1 show improvements in all three subjects. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 at the end of key stage 1 also compares favourably with the family of schools.

Pupils' performance in 2010 at the end of key stage 1 is in the top 50% of that for schools for English and in the top 25% for mathematics and science when compared to the performance of schools in the same free school meal group. The proportion of pupils who achieve the core subject indicator (CSI), the expected level in all three core subjects, places the school in the top 25% of schools. In 2010, the performance of boys relative to girls shows a significant difference in English and science when compared to the family of schools, the local authority and Wales. However, this is particular to 2010 and not a trend over the past three years.

Pupils enter school in nursery and reception classes with a low level of skills for their age. By the end of key stage 1, most pupils make good progress, in relation to their ability, interests and previous performance. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) achieve well in relation to their abilities. A majority of more able pupils make good progress and are sufficiently challenged.

Many pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in their reading and speaking skills. However, listening and writing skills are less well-developed. A significant minority of pupils have poor presentation skills and do not write enough independently. Many pupils use their numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills well in a range of contexts.

Most pupils make good progress in gaining Welsh language skills. Most understand and respond well to a range of simple questions and instructions and, by Year 2, they read and write simple texts with increasing confidence and accuracy and have good pronunciation.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and confidently ask adults for help when they need it. Many pupils have a good understanding of how to keep active and healthy. Nearly all pupils show respect, care and concern for each other. Pupils' behaviour is good. Most pupils enjoy learning and display good attitudes. Pupils are beginning to learn independently and make choices about what they learn.

The school council effectively represents the views of pupils in the school and is involved in decision-making. For example, pupils on the school council and eco committee decided that a 'buddy system' would support good relationships on the

playground. As a result of this decision, a friendship stop has been put in place on the yard. Pupils visit this stop if they need a 'buddy' to play with during break and lunchtimes.

There are effective procedures and policies in place to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. As a result, attendance has steadily improved over the last three years but is still below the national average. Pupils understand why it is important to come to school.

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

All staff work well together in order to provide an appropriate curriculum which is based on the principles of the Foundation Phase. Through careful planning, staff ensure that all pupils have access to a range of exciting learning activities. Extra support for pupils in need of additional help with speaking, reading and mathematics is effective and has a positive impact on pupils' standards.

Provision for oracy, reading, numeracy and ICT is well-planned and has a positive impact on standards of learning in all areas of the curriculum. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes both within their literacy lessons and across the curriculum. Opportunities for independent learning and for pupils to have a say in what they learn are also limited. The school's recent focus on thinking skills is effective in encouraging pupils to ask more questions and to try to work things out for themselves.

The school effectively promotes pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship and provides good opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of local and global issues. Many pupils are stimulated by 'Wacky Wednesday' activities where they have the opportunity to visit the local community.

Provision and planning for Welsh language development is good and the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is well-embedded across all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils have a good awareness of what it means to live in Wales and to be Welsh. A variety of enrichment opportunities is provided throughout the school to support and extend pupils' learning experiences. For example, the weekly Welsh assembly gives pupils the opportunity to enjoy Welsh through singing, listening to appropriate stories and making up their own prayers.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is good overall. In most classes, teachers ensure that pupils are motivated and enthusiastic about learning. In these classes, there is a range of well-planned activities, teachers ask searching questions, and pupils are encouraged to work things out for themselves. However, in a few classes, pupils are required to listen for too long and there are not enough opportunities for them to work independently.

Teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge and many use a variety of teaching approaches to engage pupils and support their learning. Throughout the

school, all staff make very good use of resources to enhance learning opportunities, particularly the use of ICT. Through well-planned, appropriate interventions, support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

All staff provide clear and helpful oral feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to move their learning forward. However, there is not a consistent enough approach to the marking of pupils' work in all classes. The school effectively tracks pupils' progress. As a result, teachers and support staff plan lessons which meet the needs of learners well.

Reports to parents are detailed and informative. Parents and carers are well-informed about their children's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school successfully promotes pupils' health and wellbeing. For example, the school is currently running a well-attended after-school cookery club for parents and pupils. Parents believe this is helping their children to eat more healthily. Assemblies and the wide range of planned social experiences help pupils to demonstrate care, responsibility and respect for others.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils are confident that staff will deal quickly with any incidents or problems. Pupils are involved in making class rules and whole school 'golden rules' are understood by all pupils. The school has appropriate anti-bullying procedures. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school has effective systems for identifying, supporting and monitoring pupils who have additional learning needs (ALN). Most additional support is provided effectively in classes or in withdrawal groups. Teachers and support assistants liaise well with each other to provide a range of appropriate strategies to help pupils to make good progress.

Individual education plans for pupils with ALN are suitable to the needs of each child and are reviewed regularly. The plans are adapted appropriately to suit younger pupils and parents, and pupils are involved in setting their own targets. As a result, most pupils make good progress towards meeting these. The school works well with external agencies including educational psychologists and speech and language therapists to provide effective support to pupils.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a very warm and inclusive community. All pupils are treated equally and fairly. Through the use of role play and 'circle time', teachers effectively challenge stereotypes in pupils' attitudes. The annual Caribbean carnival enables pupils to recognise and celebrate diversity and other cultures.

The school uses all available space well. Classrooms are attractive and shared internal areas are bright and well-maintained. The school has very successfully developed its grounds and this has positively affected pupils' physical and social development. There is an ample supply of high quality resources and these are used appropriately to support pupils' learning.

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

The aims and values of the school are shared with all staff and are suitably focused on the needs of all pupils. The leadership team work together well to create a positive school ethos where teamwork is encouraged and valued. The headteacher communicates high expectations to all staff and has a clear vision for improving standards for pupils. The school has effective performance management arrangements which identify suitable staff development needs, and this contributes well to school improvement.

The governing body is kept well-informed about school developments. Governors are beginning to develop a good understanding of how the school is performing through detailed headteacher reports on the performance of pupils and on the quality of teaching and learning. Governors are very supportive of the school. They are developing strategies, such as governor links to areas of learning, to improve their roles in monitoring and evaluating standards and provision. However, the role of the governing body as a critical friend is at a very early stage of development.

The school meets national and local priorities well. The Foundation Phase is being developed well in Nursery, Reception and Year 1. Policies that support pupils' wellbeing and healthy eating have been implemented effectively. The school is making good progress in addressing the national priority of improving boys' standards in reading.

Improving quality: Good

The headteacher has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' performance is analysed rigorously and used to inform target setting and school improvement planning.

Self-evaluation procedures are developing well and the school uses an appropriate range of evidence to support this process. Listening to the views of parents and pupils are useful recent initiatives. These views help to determine strengths and areas for improvement.

The school development plan (SDP) is well-written, based on priorities from the self-evaluation report and monitored against clear targets. For example, the action plan focusing on developing pupils' reading skills has led to improved standards in the provision for reading and the outcomes achieved by pupils.

The school provides many opportunities for all staff to take part in professional development activities. The school has well-established networks of professional

practice with a range of other schools through its small schools and cluster groups. For example, the joint work on developing a forest school has improved the learning experiences for all pupils. Professional learning communities within the school are in the early stages of being developed.

Partnership working: Good

The school has very strong and positive partnerships with parents who are actively encouraged to become involved in their children's learning. An effective partnership with the local junior school ensures smooth transition for pupils to their next stage of learning. Links with other neighbouring schools effectively support joint working practices and curriculum development.

There are very good links with the local community. For example, an environmental project involves pupils in garden and wood sculpture in the neighbourhood and the school Harvest festival is held in the local church. The school liaises well with a range of outside agencies and these provide advice and support for pupils who have additional learning needs.

A wide range of resources has been accessed through partnerships with various networks and agencies which have helped to further develop school provision such as the outdoor learning area.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its finances efficiently and effectively. Despite the age and design of the building, an ongoing programme of improvement has resulted in the accommodation being very well-maintained and welcoming to visitors. There are an appropriate number of adults employed in the school. Teachers and support staff are effectively deployed. Teachers make effective use of their planning, preparation and assessment time and arrangements for this are well-managed.

Spending is appropriately allocated to school improvement priorities. The school has systematic arrangements for managing and monitoring the budget.

In view of the good use the school makes of its funding and the good outcomes achieved by the majority of pupils, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Just under a quarter of parents responded to the parent questionnaire. All of these parents are satisfied with the school and think it is well-run. All believe that the teaching is good, and that their child is expected to work hard and is making good progress. Nearly all parents think that pupils behave well in school and that the homework given builds on what their child learns in school. All parents believe that their child is safe and happy in school. A few parents do not understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Liz Miles	Reporting Inspector
Mike Farrell	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Paul Samuel	Peer Inspector
Lesley Rees (headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 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	R	Y1	Y2	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:

Key stage 1	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