



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

**Cwmbach Junior School
Llangorse Road
Cwmbach
Aberdare
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF44 0HS**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

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Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn

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

Cwmbach Junior School is situated in the Aberdare area of Rhondda Cynon Taff which is the local authority (LA). There are 123 pupils on roll who come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Of these 31% live in the 20th most deprived area in Wales. Twenty-four per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above local and national averages. The school has a unit for 10 pupils who are considered to have complex learning difficulties. Nearly all of these come from a wider area.

All but two pupils have English as a first language. No pupil has Welsh as the language of the home or receives support in English as an additional language.

Forty-two per cent of pupils are considered to have additional learning needs (ALN). These figures are well above the local and national averages. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Four pupils are 'looked after' by the LA.

The school was last inspected in the summer term 2005.

The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher following the retirement of the previous headteacher in July 2010 and pending the creation of Cwmbach Primary School in September 2012. During the inspection there was an acting deputy headteacher who was shortly due to begin maternity leave and two members of the permanent teaching staff were absent due to ill health. Their classes were taught by temporary teachers, one of whom began at the school three days prior to the start of the inspection.

The 2010/2011 individual school budget per pupil for Cwmbach Primary School is £3,679 which compares with a maximum of £9,064 and a minimum of £2,553 for primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taff. The school has the 40th highest budget per pupil out of the 116 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school is adequate because:

- whilst standards in literacy overall have improved significantly, particularly in writing, standards in reading, numeracy, information and communications technology (ICT) and Welsh language development show insufficient progress;
- the learning environment is good and there is a positive ethos , but the quality of teaching varies across the school; and
- provision for wellbeing is a strength of the school, but arrangements for pupils' involvement in assessing their own work are not implemented consistently across the school.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- trends in the national teacher assessments at the end of KS2 are improving;
- important initiatives begun by the acting headteacher are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning;
- plans for future improvement are robust and are being put into effect rigorously; and
- significant progress has been made recently in addressing nearly all of the recommendations of the last inspection.

Recommendations

In order to improve further Cwmbach Junior School needs to:

- R1 improve standards, planning and teaching in reading, numeracy, ICT and Welsh language development;
- R2 improve the performance of boys compared to girls in national teacher assessments at the end of KS2;
- R3 ensure good teaching is consistent across the school; and
- R4 improve opportunities for pupils to review their own learning and to set their own targets.

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

Many pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment and make at least the expected progress in their learning. Over the last three years pupils' performance at eleven years of age in the national teacher assessments has improved significantly, particularly in literacy.

In 2010 pupils' overall results at eleven years of age were just below local and national averages and close to half of the schools in the family of schools to which this school belongs. In English results were close to these averages, although performance in reading was below. In mathematics and science results were below.

When compared to schools with a similar proportion of free school meals, results were above in English, below in science and well below in mathematics. When the results of pupils from the special educational needs unit are discounted, the results improve but not significantly.

The proportion of pupils attaining above the expected level 5 was close to local and national averages. Over the last three years girls have consistently outperformed boys. The standards achieved by those with ALN are in line with their abilities. Those in the unit achieve well for them.

In the national teacher assessments in 2010 those with free school meals performed significantly below other pupils. The difference between the two groups was the largest in the family.

Standards and progress across the school in literacy, especially writing, is good overall, but in reading they are adequate. Standards in mathematics in lessons are generally good in younger classes, but there are areas for improvement at the end of the key stage. Pupils do not build sufficiently on their previous knowledge in ICT.

Overall, pupils' Welsh language skills are adequate. Most understand and respond to a range of simple questions and instructions, but their progress throughout the key stage is slow.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils are aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and are keen to engage in the many relevant pursuits provided. They benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which reinforce their sense of wellbeing.

The behaviour of nearly all pupils is good. All feel safe in school and feel confident in approaching adults with any concerns or worries. They are polite and eager to engage with visitors.

The positive behaviour of most pupils is reflected in their high motivation in class and their good level of engagement. They are enthusiastic learners who are keen to undertake challenging work. They have a good understanding of how they are doing and what they must do to improve. However, a minority of older pupils occasionally display challenging behaviour.

Nearly all pupils show genuine respect, care and concern for others and willingly take on responsibility for their actions and their work. They are all given the opportunity to voice their opinions on decisions about the life of their school. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

The school council plays an important and valued part in school life and has an effective voice. Members have a mature understanding of their role and their work has impacted positively on wellbeing in the school.

The school is active in the local community, for example by identifying hazards in the environment. Their suggestions for improvement have been acted upon by the local council. Pupils' positive contribution to their community has been reflected in the donation of an outdoor stage to the playground by a local company.

Pupil's attendance at around 93% has improved over the last three years and is good when compared to similar schools and national averages. Most pupils arrive punctually.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

Nearly all teachers provide a good range of stimulating and enriching learning experiences to meet the needs of all pupils. Lessons are well planned, using a range of interesting activities which meet national curriculum requirements and those of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education.

Planning and provision for developing pupils' skills have areas for improvement. Planning for pupils to extend their communications skills are good, but planning does not give enough opportunities to extend pupils' numeracy and ICT skills.

In planning and provision for Welsh language development there is insufficient challenge for pupils in Y5 and Y6. However, teachers' use of incidental Welsh is developing well across the school.

Provision for the Welsh dimension is good and is regularly identified in teachers' planning. It is seen as an important element in school life.

An enthusiastic eco-committee is successful at promoting sustainable development within the school and pupils recycle a wide variety of items. Many pupils take responsibility for their environment by acting as litter monitors and by identifying hazards in their community. They have a developing awareness of their role in the wider world through supporting charities and their study of other countries.

Teaching: Adequate

Generally, teachers have a good understanding of how to organise for the wide range of abilities and ages in their classes. They have a good range of strategies to make very clear what the objectives of the lessons are and what is expected of their pupils. They have good subject knowledge and positive relationships with their classes.

In the best lessons teachers' expectations are high and they take opportunities well to develop pupils' confidence.

In a small number of lessons teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils and the pace of learning is slow. Relationships in these lessons are less positive and pupils become restless and lose concentration.

Teachers use a good range of measures to check that pupils are making good progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science are assessed early in Y3. Subsequently, progress is tracked through a good range of reliable tests of literacy and numeracy skills.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and constructively. However, assessment for learning is underdeveloped, because the school has only recently implemented strategies to promote this. Pupils are only beginning to be involved in assessing their own progress and that of others. Reports to parents are informative and give parents a full picture of achievement.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy, safe and well-ordered environment which is effective in supporting pupils' wellbeing and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through a range of sporting activities and by encouraging a healthy diet. Parents are supportive of the provision and care offered by the school.

Learning experiences promote pupils' personal growth well, including their moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development is less well established, but collective worship sessions are held in an appropriate atmosphere of reverence and respect and are effective in helping to develop pupils' moral and social attitudes. The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Provision for pupils with ALN is good. Pupils within the special educational needs unit and in the mainstream classes receive good additional support from within the school and from a good range of specialist external agencies. This support is carefully targeted to meet particular needs. Consequently, most ALN pupils make good progress towards the targets set for them.

Learning environment: Good

The learning environment is positive. The school is an inclusive community where pupils receive equal access to all areas of provision. Policies and procedures promote good race relations and successfully encourage all pupils to be aware of

different cultures and beliefs and to have positive attitudes to them. The school actively promotes the prevention and elimination of oppressive behaviour.

The school building and outside areas are attractive, welcoming and well-maintained. They actively promote learning and respect for each other and the environment. Highly creative and stimulating displays throughout the school celebrate the work of the school and promote a positive ethos. The classrooms are light and spacious and well resourced.

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

The judgement for this key question differs from that made in Key Question 1 because the effect of the well-chosen initiatives introduced by the acting headteacher is very evident on the overall progress being made, even though this has not yet fully impacted on standards.

The acting headteacher leads the school very well and is very committed to moving the school forward. A particular success has been in raising standards in literacy and in promoting teachers' professional development.

Relationships between staff are constructive and the school has a positive ethos. The roles of subject leaders have been strengthened, so that they are now involved in raising standards in their subjects.

The governing body is committed to the school. The chair of governors is well informed and supports the leadership actively. Recent initiatives have strengthened the governors' role in reviewing the school's performance critically.

Currently, the school has made good progress in addressing most local and national priorities, for example environmental awareness and wellbeing.

Improving quality: Good

During a period of change, senior leaders have successfully begun to foster a culture of self-evaluation, which involves staff, pupils and governors. The acting headteacher has been pro-active in establishing rigorous procedures for evaluating the quality of the school's life and work. He has introduced a termly programme of monitoring of teaching and learning which ensures that areas for improvement are systematically addressed. Teachers are now evaluating standards in teaching and learning on a planned and regular basis.

The school improvement plan is a useful working document, has clear targets and success criteria and ensures that resources are allocated efficiently. For example, having identified that writing skills did not compare well with pupils in similar schools, an improvement programme was introduced, which has had a very positive impact on standards in that area. There are good arrangements for governors and parents to contribute to the process of self-evaluation. Their views are reflected in the self-evaluation report and in the school improvement plan.

There are good arrangements for staff to work in several joint initiatives with schools across Wales in order to effect school improvement. The headteacher and members of staff also share good practice with teachers in other schools, for example in raising standards in mathematics.

Partnership working: Good

The school has good partnerships with the community and a wide range of educational partners including school in Llanelli and Cardiff. These links are closely related to improvements the school is currently addressing, for example in literacy. However, links with the local secondary school and other schools in the area are limited, for example in developing pupils' skills to become effective learners.

Resource management: Adequate

The school is well staffed with teaching and support staff. Their deployment is closely linked to the needs of pupils and impacts well on learning. Staff have a good range of expertise and experience which is increasingly well used. There is a good range of resources in the school, which are well managed. They are now regularly reviewed and their impact on standards carefully considered.

Teachers make good use of their planning, preparation and assessment time. It has not been necessary to review the school's management structure in line with the national workload agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' as no teacher held a position to which this applied.

Based on the standards pupils attain and the costs involved, the school gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty-five parents completed the questionnaires. Overall, nearly all expressed positive views about the school and are satisfied with it. All feel that their children are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise. All consider their children are safe at school and are helped to settle in well when they start. They think that their children like school. Most believe that their children receive appropriate support, are well taught and make good progress. They think staff have high expectations of them. They feel well informed about their children's progress and are comfortable about approaching the school. Most say they know about the school's complaints procedures. They feel that their children are helped to be mature and to take on responsibilities and they are well prepared for moving on to the next school. Nearly all think that the school is well run. Many believe that homework is relevant and useful and staff treat their children fairly and with respect. Many feel that there is a good range of activities and visits. However, a minority are concerned about pupils' behaviour in school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred pupils completed the questionnaire. All feel safe in school and think that the school encourages them to be healthy. All consider that they are doing well. Most know who to talk to if they are worried or upset. Nearly all think that teachers and other adults help them to learn and to make progress. They know where to go if they find their work hard. Many are happy with the way the school deals with bullying and think that there are lots of opportunities to take regular exercise. Many feel that homework helps them to make progress in school. Most believe that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work. However, about half express concerns about other pupils' behaviour in classes, play times and lunchtime.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mr Peter Mathias	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Helen Smith	Team Inspector
Mrs Deidre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Mr Christopher Dolby	Additional Inspector
Mr Gareth Dacey	School Nominee