

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

Cwmffrwdoer Primary School is situated in the community of Pontnewynydd on the outskirts of Pontypool in Torfaen.

The school serves a mixed area of private housing and rented accommodation. There are currently 145 full time pupils from four to eleven years old on roll. The school is organised into five classes; one reception single aged class of 30 children and four mixed age classes. One of the classes is taught by two teachers on a job-share basis. The school has seven teachers including the headteacher. There are six full time learning support assistants.

English is the predominant language for all pupils. There are currently no children receiving support for English as an additional language and very few from an ethnic minority background. There are no pupils who speak Welsh as a first language. Twenty-seven pupils (18.6%) are registered for free school meals, which is below the Welsh average of about 20%. Thirty-two pupils (22%) are identified as having additional learning needs. No pupils have been permanently or temporarily excluded in the last three years.

The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and is accredited Healthy School Phase 3.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010. The deputy headteacher has recently taken the post of additional learning needs co-ordinator. In addition to the headteacher and deputy headteacher, two other members of the teaching staff, with responsibilities for standards and wellbeing, make up the senior leadership team.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Cwmffrwdoer Primary School is £3,375, which compares with a maximum of £8,471 and a minimum of £2,792 for primary schools in Torfaen. The school has the 14th highest budget per pupil out of the 32 primary schools in Torfaen.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- pupils' attainments in the National Curriculum teacher assessment have shown a general upward trend over the last four years and are now above the average for similar schools in both key stages;
- the school has a fully inclusive ethos;
- the behaviour of pupils is good and they generally display pride and confidence in their work;
- all pupils access a broad, balanced curriculum and the provision for skills is good; and
- the majority of teachers use an effective range of teaching approaches and ensure that pupils are motivated and engaged in their learning.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement of the school are good because:

- the headteacher works well with the senior leadership team to develop a clear sense of direction and to establish a culture that strives for improvement;
- the governing body has a good understanding of how the school performs in comparison with similar schools;
- the school has developed appropriate self-evaluation procedures that focus on pupils' standards;
- the school has made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection; and
- parents and carers are valued as partners, contribute to the school's improvement processes and are increasingly engaged in supporting their children's progress and achievement.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school needs to:

- R1 ensure that teaching is sufficiently differentiated to better match the needs of all pupils, including the more able;
- R2 implement appropriate monitoring procedures that provide robust first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning;
- R3 fully evaluate the ongoing actions in the school's improvement plans; and
- R4 develop a consistent approach for the teaching of Welsh as a second language and further develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of their Welsh heritage.

What happens next?

Cwmffrwdoer school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Pupils' attainments in the National Curriculum teacher assessments in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 have shown a general upward trend over the last four years.

In key stage 1, the school's performance in 2010 in terms of the core subject indicator (percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English, mathematics and science in combination) was above the average for its family of schools. The school also performed above its family average for English, mathematics and science individually in 2010. When compared with schools with similar numbers of free school meals the school was in the top 25% for the core subject indicator and for all three core subjects in 2010. However, performance for the core subject indicator and the core subjects was generally in the bottom 50% of schools for the preceding three years. The proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels (level 3+) has generally been below the average for the family and the national average for the last four years.

In key stage 2, the school's performance in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English, mathematics and science in combination has been above the average for its family of schools, and above the national average, for the last three years. In English and mathematics, pupils' attainment has shown an upward trend over this time and has generally been above the average for the school's family and above national averages. In science, attainment has shown a downward trend and has generally been below the family and national average. The proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels (level 5+) has generally been near to or above the family and national averages in mathematics and science for the last three years. However, attainment at the higher levels in English has generally been lower than the family and national averages over the same period. With very few exceptions over the past four years, the school's performance has been in neither the highest 25% nor the lowest 25% of that for schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals.

The achievements and progress of pupils in lessons is generally appropriate for their age and abilities and in relation to their starting points. In key stage 1, the relative performance of boys and girls was similar to the average for Welsh schools in 2010. However, girls had significantly outperformed boys in English and mathematics in the previous two years and in science in 2009. In key stage 2, boys have outperformed girls in science in three of the last four years, which is contrary to national trends.

Pupils who receive free school meals make steady progress in relation to their ability and stage of development and their attainment at both key stages has been above the average for the family of schools and above the national average. Pupils with additional learning needs do well during their time in school, making good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

The communication skills of most pupils are developing well. They listen attentively, speak clearly and read with confidence. Most pupils respond well to teachers' questioning and can recall previous learning. By the end of key stage 2, most read fluently, with good expression and understanding. Pupils' extended and creative writing skills are also developing appropriately

Most pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 are enthusiastic about learning Welsh. However, their language skills are not well developed and their ability to understand and respond to simple questions and instructions is limited.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and diet. They contributed to developing the school's anti-bullying policy and feel very safe in the school. Most pupils have a good awareness of how to keep safe in their daily life, for example when using the internet. The behaviour of pupils is good and they generally display pride and confidence in their work. Pupils' attendance has improved over the last two years but remains below national averages.

Pupils show respect and concern for others. Nearly all pupils show empathy, tolerance and understanding for each other and for those less fortunate than themselves. The majority of pupils can co-operate, solve problems and use thinking skills effectively to support their learning. However, a few have not developed sufficiently as independent learners. They do not always manage to sustain concentration and engage effectively with their tasks when they work individually or in groups.

Members of the school council are enthusiastic and understand their role. They consult well with fellow pupils and take matters forward appropriately. For example, they have helped to develop the quiet area and the outdoor learning area. The council influenced the rewards and sanctions in the school behaviour programme. This has led to an improvement in behaviour.

All of the pupils participate effectively in the mini-enterprise week to create profits to benefit their class.

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

Generally, teachers provide a good range of stimulating learning experiences which generate pupils' interest and meet their needs. Lessons are planned well. All pupils access a broad, balanced curriculum and the provision for skills is good. Staff make effective use of visits, special events and visitors to support pupils' learning. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities.

The recent development of including key skills in the weekly planning is having a positive impact on the achievements of all pupils. However, planning for progression from Foundation Phase to key stage 2 and joint planning for split year groups is not yet sufficiently developed.

Provision and planning for Welsh language development is generally good. The school has a bilingual policy which is implemented in all classes. The use of incidental Welsh by teachers and support staff is developing appropriately. However, insufficient emphasis is given to promoting pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales.

The school succeeds well in promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship. It has been awarded the Green Flag for the second time as a result of the Eco committee successfully promoting schemes such as recycling, energy conservation and healthy eating. Effective use is made of the school grounds, with the Foundation Phase developing its own garden to grow vegetables and flowers. A proportion of the money from school fundraising activities is donated to an orphanage in Uganda, giving the pupils a greater understanding of their place in the wider world. A significant involvement in Fair Trade has promoted pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship.

Teaching: Adequate

A majority of teachers use an effective range of teaching approaches and ensure that pupils are motivated and engaged in their learning. Teachers generally manage pupils' behaviour well.

Where teaching is good, work is planned appropriately so that all pupils build on their previous learning. Lessons are well structured, pace is good and teachers provide a high level of challenge that stimulates pupils, developing and extending their thinking skills. Support staff are used effectively. In the minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, there is a lack of pace and there is little evidence of differentiation or use of paired/group work. Pupils are not always sufficiently engaged in their learning tasks and this affects their progress.

A tracking system monitors individual pupil progress based on regular assessment. This information is used effectively to make sure that pupils meet individual targets. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are given appropriate opportunities to set their own success criteria. Teachers' marking of pupils' work and assessment for learning strategies are not consistent across the school. As a result, pupils do not always know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Reports to parents and carers are clear. Parents feel well informed about their children's achievements and progress and are satisfied with the guidance and information the school provides during the year.

Care, support and guidance: Good

A variety of experiences are provided to promote healthy living and pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing. Pupils' involvement, through the school council, in the promotion of positive behaviour helps them feel safe and enjoy the life of the school. The school actively monitors levels of attendance and a first day response system has been established. This has had a positive impact on the number of unauthorised absences. Assemblies and activities based on the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme promote discussion on all aspects of school life and have had a positive impact on developing pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem.

The school engages effectively with many outside agencies on a regular basis. The work with the police liaison officer provides valuable guidance to pupils, parents and carers on issues of personal safety and helps reduce the risk of harm to pupils. Effective joint working with the school nurse strengthens transition and induction arrangements from the pre-school nursery to the school.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Pupils with additional learning needs have good support and guidance both within the school and from external agencies. There is well-planned provision for pupils with additional learning needs, and support is co-ordinated effectively. Staff identify learning difficulties at an early stage and place pupils on targeted intervention programmes. Individual educational plans are appropriate and are regularly evaluated and updated in consultation with parents. As a result, pupils make the progress expected towards achieving the targets set for them.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a fully inclusive ethos and takes full account of the diversity of pupils' backgrounds. It promotes a caring and supportive environment which offers equal access to the curriculum to all pupils.

School policies and procedures promote good race relations. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme and the school's behaviour programme have a positive impact on the development of tolerant attitudes amongst pupils. Levels of resourcing are good and well matched to pupils' needs. Attractive and extensive displays in classrooms and communal areas celebrate pupils' achievements.

The school building is well maintained. Effective use is made of outside learning areas for Foundation Phase pupils. The school grounds are used well for a wide range of activities that enrich pupils' learning experiences.

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

The headteacher works well with the senior management team to develop a clear sense of direction and to establish a culture that strives for improvement. Data is analysed well and forms a sound basis for monitoring performance across the school. Weekly senior management team and staff meetings focus on the school's priorities for development. This helps staff develop a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the school's strategies and plans. However, individual responsibilities for first-hand monitoring of all aspects of quality of provision are not yet sufficiently developed.

Performance management procedures for teaching and support staff have been recently reviewed and lead to targets for individual members of staff. These relate effectively to whole-school priorities, pupil standards and individual development needs.

The governing body has a good understanding of how the school performs in comparison with similar schools. It is provided with informative analysis of data and is aware of the issues arising from it. Regular meetings between the chair of governors and headteacher raise the governing body's awareness of standards and organisational issues. This is enhanced by the governors' involvement in learning walks. Plans are in place to develop the governing body's role as a critical friend and in providing a sense of direction for the work of the school, but these have yet to be fully implemented. The school has appropriate policies and procedures for dealing with complaints and these are published in school documentation.

School development planning takes account of local and national priorities and incorporates them in appropriate strategies. For example, plans to integrate Year 2 fully into the Foundation Phase from September 2011 are well developed. The continuing development of the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework is included in the school improvement plan.

Improving quality: Adequate

The school has developed appropriate self-evaluation procedures that focus on pupils' standards. These procedures include thorough analysis of performance data and review all aspects of the school's work. The views of pupils and parents are taken into account and the work draws significantly upon relevant reviews by the local authority.

The school accurately assesses most of its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the percentage attaining above expected levels at the end of both key stages and improving the teaching and learning of Welsh as a second language have both been identified as areas for improvement and are being addressed appropriately in improvement plans. Many members of staff contribute effectively to these arrangements. However, monitoring is not sufficiently embedded in the school's procedures and first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning is not yet sufficiently robust.

Improvement plans include a broad range of relevant actions and identify members of staff with responsibility for their delivery. They also include success criteria and well-defined timescales for evaluation and completion. However, significant aspects of this work are ongoing and their impact on securing improvement has not yet been fully evaluated. The school has made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection.

Nearly all teachers are involved in professional learning communities within and beyond the school. These networks have contributed well to developing classroom practice and, where relevant, contributed effectively to the development of leadership and management skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has established a good range of partnerships with parents and carers, other schools and local community groups.

Parents and carers are valued as partners, contribute to the school's improvement processes and are increasingly engaged in supporting their children's progress and achievement. For example, parents gave opinions during the development of the behaviour policy and they contribute to learning opportunities linked to business enterprise. This extends the activities available to the pupils and has benefits for their standards and wellbeing.

The school works effectively with the local authority's education services and has benefited from the challenge and support of a joint review of Welsh as a second language and an external review of the Foundation Phase by the advisory service. The school has good partnerships with a wide range of external organisations such as the police and health agencies. It works effectively with these agencies to support and advise pupils and their families.

Transition arrangements with the local pre-school settings and secondary school are particularly effective and ensure continuity in pupils' learning and wellbeing. These include effective joint working with the secondary school to ease the transition of vulnerable pupils. Effective cluster moderation allows for agreed standards across the cluster and supports the school moderation process.

Resource management: Good

The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good. Teaching and support staff are suitably qualified and are deployed effectively across the school. In general, teachers' time for preparation, planning and assessment is used effectively and the school has appropriate arrangements to meet statutory requirements relating to workload. The school has an established performance management system where improvement targets are set, monitored and evaluated. This contributes to improving the quality of teaching.

Budgets are allocated and monitored effectively. The school gives good value for money in terms of pupils' outcomes and in its use of funding.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

All pupils feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. Nearly all pupils say the school teaches them how to keep healthy and all believe that there are lots of opportunities for them to get regular exercise. Most pupils feel they are doing well at school and all say that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress. Most pupils also say that other children behave well and that they can get their work done. Nearly all state that children behave well at playtime and lunch time and that the school deals well with any instances of bullying.

Seventeen parent questionnaires were returned. Of these, all say that they are satisfied with the school and that it is well run. They note that their children like the school and all feel that the children are safe there. Most parents say that they are well informed about the progress their children make at the school. All say that pupils are well behaved and most believe that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. All parents feel that they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem and that their child was helped to settle in well when they first started school. A few say that the homework that is given does not build well on what their child learns in school.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Iwan Roberts HMI | Reporting Inspector |
| Eleri Hurley AI | Team Inspector |
| Julie Price | Lay Inspector |
| Kathryn Thomas | Peer Inspector |
| Richard Brunsdon | 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:

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|-------------|---------------------|
| 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 |