



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

**Mount Street Junior School
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7LU**

Date of inspection: 21 - 23 June 2011

by

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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

Mount Street Junior School is situated in the market town of Brecon. The majority of pupils are from the immediate area. A wide range of social and economic circumstances are represented, including the professional, business and farming communities. A significant percentage of pupils are from the army base and their stay at the school is often for short periods. This includes children from the Gurkha regiment from Nepal. Approximately 37 per cent of the present Year 6 did not start school in Year 3. The school has a specialist support centre for the area catering for 12 pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorders and emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. One pupil was excluded from the school in 2010.

There are currently 143 pupils on roll aged seven to 11. Around 15% are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. The local authority (LA) looks after two pupils. Approximately 35% of the pupils have additional learning needs (ALN) and four have statements of special educational need. English is the home language of the majority of pupils and none is fluent in Welsh. Around 25% of pupils are of Asian origin and 37 pupils speak English as an additional language.

Since the school's last inspection in June 2005, the number on roll has fallen and a new headteacher has been appointed, who is currently supporting another school on a part-time basis.

The 2010–2011 individual school budget per pupil for Mount Street Junior School is £3,062, which compares with a maximum of £11,812 and a minimum of £2,891 for primary schools in Powys. The school has the 95th highest budget per pupil out of the 101 primary schools in Powys.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the provider is good because:

- pupils are making good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school;
- pupils' wellbeing is good and their behaviour is often very good;
- the school provides pupils with a worthwhile range of learning experiences;
- teaching and learning are consistently good;
- there are good levels of care, support and guidance for all groups of pupils; and
- leadership and management are good and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

Prospects for improvement

The school has good prospects for improvement because:

- the senior management team has a clear picture of the school's performance, its strengths and areas for development;
- there is a strong commitment to improvement at all levels;
- the school's development plans are well focused and clearly set out aspects that need development ;
- effective use is made of assessment information to set targets for improvement and to identify groups of pupils that are underperforming;
- the actions taken by the school to raise standards have led to measurable improvement; and
- standards have risen significantly since the school's last inspection.

Recommendations

In order to further improve provision and raise standards, the school should:

- R1 improve the quality and consistency of assessment by ensuring that marking always provides pupils with a clear indication of how well they have completed tasks and what they need to do to improve further; and
- R2 improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT) by ensuring there are sufficient good quality resources in classes for all pupils.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

In 2010, the school's assessments of standards in English, mathematics and science show that pupils performed below all comparators. Compared to schools with similar free school meals, the school was in the lowest 25% for English and science and the lowest 50% for mathematics and all three subjects combined. Standards have declined in all three core subjects over the last three years.

The school's published figures, however, include the pupils from the specialist support centre, all of whom have significant learning difficulties. In addition, about 40% of pupils join or leave the school during key stage 2. These factors give a distorted picture of the school's performance. Standards from observations are good overall and pupils make good progress throughout the school from low starting points in Year 3.

Nearly all pupils use their speaking and reading skills well in lessons when, for example, presenting arguments or reading imaginary letters. Most apply their writing skills well to write persuasive letters; standards of handwriting and presentation are often very good. Nearly all pupils apply their numeracy skills well and they have good data handling abilities and interpret tables and graphs competently. Although most have good ICT skills, the lack of up-to-date equipment means that they cannot always carry out work to the standard of which they are capable.

Many pupils have well developed thinking skills and this is having a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve. They apply these well in a range of situations and they are well equipped for the next phase of their education. Most make good progress in the use of Welsh. They build a wide vocabulary which they use well in conversation and when writing. They read with increasing fluency and good pronunciation.

Most pupils with ALN, including those who attend the specialist support centre, make good progress when compared against their prior attainment. Nearly all who speak English as an additional language also make good progress and communicate effectively both in speaking and writing. Although historically boys have outperformed girls in mathematics and science, this gap has now narrowed significantly. Those who have been targeted as underperforming in reading and numeracy have made very significant gains in their learning.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe and well cared for. All are well behaved, polite and friendly. In nearly all lessons, most have good attitudes. They engage effectively with their learning, co-operate, share and take turns well. All are aware of the importance of keeping safe and healthy. Most enjoy physical activity and understand its health benefits. The majority choose healthy foods in the tuck

shop and dining room. Instances of bullying are very rare and all pupils are confident that the school will deal with problems should they arise. The attendance rate is average when compared with similar schools and all Wales.

The school council is well established and members clearly explain their roles and the democratic procedures by which they were elected. They proudly explain some of the changes in the school that have occurred at their instigation. The school is a very sociable community because of the mutual concern and respect pupils show for each other. The majority make good progress in developing the skills they need to improve their own learning.

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

The school meets the needs of nearly all pupils well, including those in the specialist support centre. It provides a curriculum that is broad, balanced and coherent, based on the National Curriculum. Lessons are planned to include a range of tasks that provide a good level of challenge for all abilities. All pupils benefit from good learning experiences and a worthwhile range of extra-curricular activities enhances their learning. Care is taken to include the culture, language and traditions of the Nepali community.

The development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is planned well to ensure a clear progression throughout the school. Teachers explain clearly in most lessons which skills will be taught and how pupils may know that they have achieved them. Where pupils have difficulties, relevant intervention programmes are in place to address the issues promptly and effectively. This includes pupils from the specialist support centre, who are integrated into lessons in the afternoon. Challenging tasks for more able and talented pupils ensure that these individuals often achieve an exceptional standard at key stage 2.

The school makes good provision for promoting the Welsh language. Teachers are good role models and use Welsh throughout their lessons. The cultural, economic, environmental and historical characteristics of Wales are promoted well through an extensive range of curricular activities and visits.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is a clear feature of each curriculum topic. The eco committee is proactive in promoting a wide range of initiatives, including conservation of energy and water and litter picking. Its members take their responsibilities seriously. Global citizenship is developed well through the topics pupils study.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching in the school is consistently good. All teachers plan lessons effectively to ensure the development of pupils' skills, understanding and knowledge. They organise a wide range of interesting tasks to secure pupils' engagement in their learning. The pace of lessons is brisk and sessions are well structured to provide

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opportunities for individual, paired and group activities. Behaviour management is secure and ensures that all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Working relationships between teaching and support staff and pupils are good. Learning resources are varied and interesting, but there is some variation in the effective use of ICT. Teachers use stimulating questioning well in introductory and plenary sessions and this develops, extends and reviews pupils' learning effectively. Teaching assistants work together with teachers well and make a valuable contribution to all pupils' development.

The school has effective policies and procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress and for reporting to parents. Pupils' assessment of their own work and others' is well established and assessment for learning strategies are used consistently in most lessons. Teachers and pupils work together to set realistic and ambitious targets for improvement. Teachers use the results of standardised tests to plan their lessons effectively.

In the best examples, marking makes good use of constructive comments to help pupils understand how to improve their work. However, there is some inconsistency in marking and in a few books it merely consists of ticks and supportive comments. Annual reports to parents give clear judgements about their children's achievements and include the opportunity for a meeting with their respective teacher.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. There is an appropriate programme of personal and social education and teachers and teaching assistants promote pupils' health and wellbeing by encouraging them to enjoy exercising. School rules emphasise the safe, caring and supportive environment. All pupils know the rules and have a clear understanding of what is right, fair and honest.

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted well. Through consideration of Christian values and those espoused by the Nepali community, pupils are helped towards increasingly mature notions of their lives, beliefs and their place in the world. Instances of disharmony are rare; the school has put in place a number of activities, such as the Smile Group, Circle of Friends and social story sessions, which promote pupils' self-esteem and social skills. The school celebrates its culturally diverse character effectively. Displays around the school record pupils' achievements in arts, sports and Welsh and Nepali cultural activities.

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

There are very effective arrangements for supporting pupils with ALN, both in mainstream classes and the specialist support centre. As a result, most pupils make good progress. There are effective arrangements for supporting groups of pupils with differing additional needs and there is a thorough programme of assistance. Support from a good range of external agencies is targeted efficiently. The effectiveness of teaching assistants in supporting pupils, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, is noteworthy. Arrangements comply with the Code of Practice for special educational needs.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a fully inclusive community. This is clearly reflected in the school's mission statement and there is positive emphasis on recognising and respecting diversity. Equal rights and human rights are expected and promoted extensively. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Bullying, sexism and racism are not tolerated and clear guidance is given to all staff and governors as to how to combat any incidents.

There are sufficient resources in the school, although computers are more than five years old and are approaching the end of their useful life. Resources in the local community and beyond are regularly used to enhance learning and improve physical fitness. The accommodation is good and is fully accessible to wheelchair users. It is very well maintained and a particular feature is the very good quality of displays throughout the school.

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

The headteacher gives clear strategic leadership and management to the school, successfully imparts high expectations amongst the staff and promotes a positive ethos where pupils and staff feel valued. She is supported well by the deputy and other managers, who give effective leadership when the headteacher is away supporting another school. Leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and staff fulfil them appropriately in accordance with school priorities and strategic aims.

Leaders evaluate the performance of both teaching and support staff effectively in order to identify training needs and help them improve their practice. Individual targets for staff and their training needs are agreed in accordance with the school development plan. Everyone involved strives to ensure high quality in standards and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Governors are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and fulfil their role of supporting and challenging the school effectively and efficiently. The headteacher and staff ensure that policies and initiatives meet local and national priorities and are implemented effectively. These include improving self-evaluation, standards in writing and bilingualism, promoting sustainable development and giving a strong focus to the principles embodied in the School Effectiveness Framework.

Improving quality: Good

The school has a focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and has made good progress since the last inspection. The self-evaluation report provides direction and identifies targets, and the headteacher and the senior management team make effective use of data in order to measure and evaluate the school's performance. This information forms an integral part of the self-evaluation process in order to prioritise targets in the school's development plan.

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The school works effectively in order to share professional skills and knowledge. The senior management team and subject leaders manage their designated areas well and work closely as a team around clearly shared aims and objectives.

Pupils, parents and carers are encouraged to share their views and to raise relevant issues. Governors play an active part in the self-evaluation process and they receive presentations and performance reports from the headteacher, regarding the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. All this information is included in the self-evaluation process effectively.

The school has involvement with networks of professional practice. This includes internal developments linked to a reading, spelling and key skills professional learning community, behaviour management strategies and working with more able and talented pupils. In each case these developments have had a positive effect on standards.

Partnership working: Good

The school has many and very effective links with schools in the area and LA education services. Teachers share best practice and where appropriate schools share resources, which strengthens the school's capacity for continuous improvement.

The partnerships the school has with parents/carers and the community are strong and effective. It has formed strong and successful links with the feeder infants school, other local primary schools and the high school. This collaborative working helps ensure teachers' assessments are moderated accurately and allows pupils to make a successful transition to secondary education.

The school works with a number of well-established LA initiatives which include continued professional development, assessment for learning and imaginative writing. There are also very close working links with the Nepali support worker in order to ensure the successful integration and development of the significant number of pupils of Nepali origin.

Resource management: Good

The school is staffed with well-qualified teachers. Class sizes are small and this has a positive effect on standards and progress. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support individuals and small groups; they handle particularly challenging pupils very well. Staff training is identified to ensure that all experiences benefit pupils' learning and address a wide variety of needs. Good use is made of time for planning, preparation and assessment and the school meets the requirements of the workforce remodelling agreement.

The headteacher and the governors work closely together to ensure that the budget is used cost-effectively and in accordance with the school's self-evaluation report and development plan. Spending decisions are reviewed to ensure value for money. In view of the good use made of resources, effective management and good learning outcomes, the school gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty parents/carers returned questionnaires. They all agreed that their children like school and that teaching is good. They also all agreed that their children were helped to settle in when they started school and that behaviour is good. All parents/carers agreed that their children make good progress. A few parents/carers disagreed homework is appropriate or that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Nearly all parents/carers agreed that the school is well run.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred and three questionnaires were returned by pupils. Nearly all agreed that they feel safe in school. They all agreed that the school teaches them to keep healthy and that there are plenty of opportunities to take regular exercise. All agreed that their teachers help them make progress and they know who to ask if they find work difficult. A few pupils disagreed that behaviour in the school is good and that they can get on with their work in class. A small minority also said they thought homework does not help improve their work at school or that they have sufficient computers to help them improve their ICT skills.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mr S Dennett	Reporting Inspector
Mr C Dolby	Team Inspector
Mrs R Boardman	Lay Inspector
Mr C Evans	Peer Inspector
Mrs B Adams	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

