



*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**

**Pontygwaith Primary School  
Graig Street  
Pontygwaith  
Ferndale  
Mid Glamorgan  
CF43 3LY**

**Date of inspection: March 2011**

**by**

**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:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	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

Pontygwaith Primary School is a community school for boys and girls from three to 11 years of age. Almost all of the 130 pupils come from the village of Pontygwaith near Porth in the Rhondda Fach valley. The locality is a designated Communities First Area. Around 41% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above local and national averages.

Almost all of the pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Thirty-two per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Pontygwaith Primary School is £3,295, 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 70th highest budget per pupil out of the 116 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, stage 3 of the Healthy Schools Scheme and the Eco School Bronze Award.

The last school inspection was in January 2005. The headteacher has been in post since September 2010.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The school is good because:

- most pupils make effective progress and achieve good standards;
- most pupils' behaviour and motivation for learning are good;
- the quality of teaching and assessment is good;
- there is a good range of exciting learning experiences; and
- there is an inclusive school ethos.

### Prospects for improvement

The school has strong prospects for improvement because the recently appointed headteacher provides very effective leadership and vision for improvement. The school's comprehensive self-evaluation process leads to accurate judgements about performance. Plans for improvement focus well on key priorities. Recent work by staff has already brought about improvements in pupils' oracy skills and behaviour.

## **Recommendations**

In order to improve further, Pontygwaith Primary School needs to:

R1 raise standards for more able and talented pupils;

R2 improve attendance and punctuality; and

R3 ensure that marking regularly includes constructive comments to help pupils make progress.

### **What happens next?**

Pontygwaith Primary School will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

Many children enter school with skills below those normally expected for children of their age. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils achieve good standards. Most pupils with special educational needs make good and occasionally very good progress in relation to their targets. However, pupils who are more able and talented do not always achieve as well as they could. The relative performance of boys and girls has varied over the past four years. Generally, girls do better than boys in key stage 1 and boys often do better than girls in key stage 2.

In key stage 1, pupils' performance has been good for two of the last three years. Standards were above family, local and national averages for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school was in the top 25% of similar schools for the core subjects. In 2010, pupils' performance in English and mathematics was lower than in previous years. Performance was above the average for the family of schools in English, science and the core subject indicator (expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science in combination) and close to the family average in mathematics.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance has been in the top 25% of that for similar schools for two of the last three years and above family, local and national averages. In 2010, pupils' performance in key stage 2 fell significantly, placing the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools in English and science and in the lower 50% of schools in mathematics. A majority of pupils in this cohort had special educational needs and a few were persistent poor attenders, which affected their learning. Nevertheless, most of these pupils made the expected progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2. When compared to the family of schools for this year, performance was above the family average in English, mathematics and the core subject indicator and slightly below in science.

Most pupils gain good reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology skills and generally apply these well in their work across the curriculum. Pupils' oracy skills are developing well. Most pupils make good progress in listening carefully, acquiring a widening vocabulary and speaking clearly and confidently.

The majority of pupils make progress in gaining oral and reading skills in the Welsh language. Pupils' writing skills in Welsh are progressing well. Pupils have achieved success in competitions at the recent National Urdd Eisteddfod, which is a notable achievement.

#### Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils are well motivated, enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. They engage readily in their work and show good levels of concentration and

perseverance. These good skills contribute very effectively to their participation in and enjoyment of learning. Pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve is developing well.

Most pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. These pupils are considerate and courteous and relate well to each other and adults, showing care and concern for others. A few pupils display challenging behaviour. Pupils report that the incidences of poor behaviour and harassment in the school have reduced significantly over the past year. They have confidence in adults to support and care for them. Most pupils' understanding of the importance of being healthy and active is good.

The school council takes an active part in the life school and is increasingly taking on a range of responsibilities. These responsibilities do not include a direct influence on areas such as teaching and learning. Most pupils contribute to, and benefit from involvement in a range of activities within the local community.

The attendance rate of 91% has shown little improvement since the last inspection. This rate is in line with that of similar schools. Across the school, the low attendance rate of a very few pupils has an impact on their learning. While many pupils arrive promptly in the mornings, a minority are regularly late, which disturbs their learning and occasionally that of others. The school is implementing strategies to improve attendance and punctuality, which are evident in the recent slight improvements to rates of attendance.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Good**

Throughout the school, the well-planned curriculum provides pupils with a good range of exciting learning experiences. There is effective continuity and progression in the work as pupils move from Foundation Phase to key stage 2. The school's strong focus on the development of pupils' literacy skills has a beneficial effect on standards, particularly pupils' oracy skills. Although the curriculum meets the needs of most pupils well, work is not always demanding enough of pupils who are more able.

Planning for the development of pupils' skills is good. Staff integrate communication, numeracy and information and communication technology skills into the experience of pupils across subjects and areas of learning. This work includes good provision for the development of thinking skills.

Provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is good and there is a strong Welsh ethos throughout the school.

There is good provision to enable pupils to learn about sustainability and develop an understanding of the role they and others play in society and in the world. Projects such as work to improve the local environment at Graig Park and recently established links with Bangladesh contribute well to pupils' understanding of the local and wider world.

The good range of extra-curricular activities, led by teaching, non-teaching staff and parents, enriches pupils' learning experiences.

### **Teaching: Good**

The overall quality of teaching is good. Staff explain clearly the objectives of sessions and use a variety of teaching strategies, which engage and sustain the interests of pupils well. Teachers and other adults have good subject knowledge and work well together to support pupils. While staff plan well to meet most pupils' needs, there is not always enough challenge in the work for more able pupils.

Staff have good relationships with pupils. They manage behaviour well through clear expectations of what is appropriate and an emphasis on rewarding good behaviour. There is good support for pupils identified as having behaviour problems.

Pupils' progress and wellbeing are monitored effectively across the school. Staff use a good range of assessment methods and maintain detailed pupil records. Assessment for learning is developing well throughout the school. Staff provide clear oral feedback to pupils on their progress and achievement. Pupils are developing skills in assessing their own and others' progress. Overall, staff use assessment information well to inform the planning of new work. However, while marking is undertaken regularly, it does not always include constructive comments to show pupils what they must do to improve. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's achievements through annual reports and parents' evenings.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

There are effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. These arrangements contribute well to pupils' development and learning. Despite the limitations of the outdoor environment, provision for promoting healthy lifestyles, including pupils' physical development, is effective.

Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school liaises very well with specialist agencies for the benefit of pupils and provides good individual support on educational and other issues. The school's procedures for dealing with behavioural issues and harassment meet requirements.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Child-friendly individual education plans provide pupils in need of additional support with clear targets to improve their learning. The very effective range of intervention strategies help these pupils to make good progress. In particular, most pupils involved in the reading intervention programme have made particularly good progress. Clearly targeted support for groups of vulnerable pupils has resulted in significant improvement in their behaviour and achievement.

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

## **Learning environment: Good**

The school has an inclusive ethos. Pupils receive equal access to all areas of provision. There is a good emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

The school has plenty of good-quality resources, which staff and pupils use well. The spacious Victorian school buildings are very well maintained and used. Very attractive and creative displays transform the austere interior into a vibrant teaching and learning environment. While most of the playground areas of the school are on a slope, the site has been adapted effectively to provide suitable areas for play and learning, including an outdoor area for the Foundation Phase. The arrangements for pupils with a physical disability are exemplary.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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## **Leadership: Good**

The recently appointed headteacher provides very effective leadership and direction for the school. In partnership with the deputy headteacher and the Foundation Phase leader, she has been successful in developing a shared vision for the school based on providing pupils with the best opportunities for learning.

There is a strong team spirit within the school. Staff feel valued and all have specific responsibilities for developing a range of initiatives to raise pupils' self-esteem and bring about whole school improvement. This work has a positive impact on the school as a learning community. Performance management arrangements are sound and the targets set for staff reflect school priorities for improvement.

The governors share the headteacher's sense of direction for the school. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and help provide a strong steer for the school. They know about the performance of the pupils and the initiatives the school is developing. Governors are developing a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide appropriate challenge to the school for the standards and quality it achieves.

The school meets national and local priorities successfully. Staff give high priority to tackling social disadvantage and ensuring pupils' wellbeing. The introduction of the Foundation Phase is progressing well.

## **Improving quality: Good**

School leaders have a very good knowledge and understanding of how well pupils are doing and a clear focus on raising standards. The self-evaluation process identifies accurately the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. The findings are based on a comprehensive review of standards and provision, including a good range of first hand evidence of standards and the views of pupils and parents. There are effective arrangements to review all aspects of the school's work systematically.

The self-evaluation outcomes inform priorities for school improvement planning. These plans are clear and supported by the careful allocation of resources. However, plans do not always include quantifiable success criteria in order to measure the impact of work on areas such as pupils' achievements. Most of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been met but the rate of attendance remains low and a minority of pupils continue to be late for school.

The school is a strong learning community. Staff share teaching and learning strategies effectively within the school and the cluster, and through local authority events. This work has been particularly successful in ensuring continuity for pupils' learning between the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 through, for example, the development of role-play areas in key stage 2 to maintain the focus on developing pupils' oracy skills.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has a wide range of very effective partnerships. There is good liaison and communication with parents to support them as partners in the life and work of the school. Parents and visitors from the community make a positive contribution to enriching and extending pupils' experiences.

Family Learning classes and the pre-school 'Language and Play' course support parents in helping their child with learning and development. Good partnerships exist with the pre-school playgroup situated on the school site. These help to ensure that younger children are prepared well for admission to the nursery class.

There are effective partnerships with a range of outside agencies to meet the particular needs of individuals and groups of pupils. This work is particularly successful in providing support for pupils with additional learning needs and behavioural difficulties. School staff also work closely with the families of vulnerable pupils. These partnerships help to secure good outcomes for pupils' wellbeing and learning. The school's work with the 'Community First' group has contributed well to the role of the school in the community.

Transition plans agreed with the Porth cluster of schools enable older pupils to prepare appropriately for the next stage of their education. This partnership provides very good curricular and pastoral links that are highly regarded by parents. The cluster of schools has effective procedures for accurately moderating and standardising pupils' work in the National Curriculum core subjects.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school employs a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff who are deployed effectively. The school identifies and meets the training needs of staff well through regular appraisal and performance management procedures. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment time effectively.

The school accommodation is spacious and very well maintained. There are a good range of resources for learning and teaching.

The school manages its budget appropriately through regular monitoring of expenditure. The 'Raise attainment and individual standards in education' (RAISE) grant has been used effectively to focus on improving the oracy and literacy skills of pupils. This has had a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement.

In view of the outcomes achieved by most pupils and the appropriate management of the budget, the school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

Twelve parents attended the parents' meeting and twenty-four parents completed the questionnaires. Overall, most of these parents express positive views about the school. They state that their child is happy and settled and they are satisfied with their child's progress and achievement. Many parents report that their child feels safe in school and that staff are approachable if parents have concerns or questions. A small minority of parents consider that the school does not deal well with pupils' behaviour or bullying and a very few parents do not find staff responsive to their concerns. Parents feel well informed about their children's achievements through termly meetings with teachers and end-of-year reports.

Forty pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Inspectors also talked to individuals and representative groups of pupils across the school. Overall, pupils say that they are happy and enjoy school and know to whom they can talk if they are worried or upset. Many pupils report that instances of poor behaviour and bullying have reduced significantly over the last year. While they believe that a few pupils misbehave and do not treat others with respect, pupils say that they feel safe and that staff deal well with issues. Pupils report good opportunities for keeping healthy and fit.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Wendy Young	Reporting Inspector
Lynda Newton	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Ydwena Jones	Peer Inspector
Mrs C Davies (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