

A report on

**Porth Infant School
Mary Street
Porth
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF39 9UH**

Date of inspection: 28 - 29 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

Porth Infant School was built in the 1863 and is situated in the small town of Porth in the Rhondda Valley between the Community First wards of Ynyshir, Cymmer and Trealaw. It receives pupils from these areas as well as Porth itself. The school caters for 73 pupils between the ages of three to seven, including 19 full-time nursery pupils, taught in three classes, nursery, reception/Year 1 and Year 1/Year 2. The number on roll has increased by around 20% since the last inspection.

The area has many traditional terraced homes with a mixture of privately owned, housing association and rented residences. A number of families experience disadvantaged circumstances. Around 30% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national and local authority (LA) averages. Approximately 49% of pupils are identified as having additional learning needs (ALN), of whom around 29% have special educational needs; none has a statement. No pupils are from an ethnic minority background, use English as an additional language or come from Welsh-speaking families. Around 3% are looked after by the LA.

The school was last inspected in June 2005. Since then, there have been no changes in teaching staff, but a number of new support staff have been appointed and the headteacher and deputy headteacher have both been given permanent posts.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Porth Infant School is £3943 which compares with a maximum of £9064 and a minimum of £2553 for primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school has the 26th highest budget per pupil out of the 116 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school is good because:

- standards overall are good and better than similar schools;
- nearly all pupils make good value-added progress through the school;
- nearly all pupils are happy, enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning;
- learning experiences, the quality of teaching and the learning environment are all good; and
- it is well-led and effectively managed within a warm and caring ethos.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- standards in literacy are improving;
- levels of attendance have risen sharply over the last two years;
- the school's strategic direction is clearly evident and distributed leadership is well-embedded;
- there is a strong whole school ethos of teamwork, trust and co-operation; and
- much has been achieved since the last inspection.

Recommendations

In order to build on its current strengths, the school needs to:

R1 continue to implement strategies to raise standards in literacy, especially writing;
and

R2 continue to develop approaches to the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

What happens next?

Porth Infant School will create an action plan which shows how it will address these recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

All pupils assessed at the end of key stage 1 in 2010 attained at least level 2 in mathematics and science and those who did not reach this level in English were all on the special educational needs register. The results were better than the family in all three subjects and better than the LA and Wales in mathematics and science. At the higher level 3 attainment was below all three comparators in both English and science, but above in mathematics. The 2010 results place the school in the best 25% of similar schools for mathematics and science, but in the lower 50% for English.

Over the last four years cohorts have been relatively small and variable in composition. At level 2 or above trends in performance have consequently tended to vary in English and mathematics, although they have been consistently high in science. At level 3 the trend recently has been downward for all three subjects, although inspection evidence indicates there is currently an improvement in English.

Nearly all pupils, whatever their ability or background, including those with ALN and free school meals, make good value-added progress through the school, especially as many enter with below average basic skills. There is no discernible trend in performance in relation to gender.

Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills and by the end of key stage 1 all attain level 2 or above, although a few have restricted speech abilities and have difficulties in concentrating and listening for extended periods.

Standards in reading are improving and recent evidence indicates that many pupils are now attaining at least level 2 and around a third are reaching level 3. Most read enthusiastically and confidently and develop appropriate phonic skills, although many tend to read mechanically rather than for meaning.

Most pupils are making better progress in writing with many attaining level 2, although very few still reach level 3. Younger ones start to mark-make purposefully and those who are older and more able produce pieces of extended supported writing that is relatively accurate. Handwriting and presentation overall are good.

Most pupils begin to develop good numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills in a variety of contexts across the curriculum.

In Welsh nearly all pupils are enthusiastic learners and have a positive attitude to using the language in a range of contexts. They make good progress in speaking and listening and develop competent early reading and writing skills by the end of Year 2.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle, which involves healthy eating, physical exercise, caring for teeth and sun and road safety. They have positive attitudes to making healthy choices and keeping fit.

Nearly all pupils are happy, enjoy school and have a positive attitude to learning. They show interest in their work and develop appropriate thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills, commensurate with their age and ability. They are well-motivated and display pride and confidence in their achievements.

All pupils feel safe and secure and most demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Attendance and punctuality have improved considerably over recent years with the former, currently at 93.6%, being above the average nationally and for similar schools. All but a very few pupils arrive promptly in the mornings.

Pupils take an active part in the life and work of the school, led by an enthusiastic school council. Their views are continually taken into account.

Most pupils show respect, care and concern for each other. They work well together and are considerate and courteous to their peers, adults and visitors. Relationships between pupils and with staff are a strength of the school.

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

All pupils are given a range of opportunities to become actively involved in their learning through stimulating and challenging first-hand experiences. They are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum which successfully meets their individual needs and interests. The provision for outside learning is particularly good.

Effective co-operative planning ensures coverage of the statutory curriculum and identifies clear aims and objectives and opportunities for the development of key skills. Provision for learning Welsh and for Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is good. Regular evaluation of plans ensures that teaching builds progressively on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Provision is matched to pupils' stage of development rather than their age, so that the more and less able are suitably challenged. Flexible class organisation and small intervention groups in literacy, numeracy and thinking skills ensure pupils work at an appropriate level and can make relevant choices about their learning.

Pupils experience a good range of extra-curricular activities for their age group which broaden their learning in ways that are meaningful to them. The provision effectively complements the school curriculum and beneficially promotes self-esteem and social skills.

Positive links with local churches and community groups help pupils understand the role they play in society.

Pupils are given a good grounding in education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Members of the eco committee have a good basic understanding of the importance of sustainability and their responsibilities as part of a global community.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is consistently good. Lessons are well prepared and effectively organised with all necessary materials ready and available for pupils. Learning objectives and key skills are clearly specified.

Teachers and additional practitioners establish excellent relationships with pupils and have appropriate expectations. They use a good range of strategies to engage, stimulate and challenge pupils and they give positive encouragement and praise for work, behaviour and effort.

Teachers give clear directions and ask appropriate open-ended questions that allow pupils to extend their answers and to develop their thinking skills progressively.

Teachers and additional practitioners have an appropriate knowledge of the Foundation Phase and organise learning effectively by providing a range of focused activities and less structured continuous provision.

Nearly all staff offer a good language model for pupils in English and Welsh. They demonstrate enthusiasm for Welsh and are well supported by the subject leader and the 'Athrawes Fro'.

Effective assessment procedures are in place, which meet statutory requirements. Formative assessment, which includes incidental and planned observations, is ongoing and twice a year a summative overview of progress is undertaken. Assessment for learning strategies, including self and peer evaluation, are being successfully introduced.

Beneficial individual progress records are kept in basic skills and personal and social education. Pupils also have their own profiles, which contain annotated and dated assessed work. Towards the end of the academic year, this information is collated into a year group tracker. Each pupil also has a useful record of achievement.

In literacy, numeracy, ICT and personal and social education teachers and pupils agree targets, which are placed in the front of exercise books.

Nearly all work is marked and commented on to help pupils move forward with their learning; this is mainly done orally.

The end-of-year pupil reports are of good quality, containing all statutory requirements. They beneficially offer suggestions for further progress. Parents and pupils have the opportunity to add their own written comments, as well as during consultation evenings, which occur twice a year.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a warm and caring ethos. It promotes healthy living through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Staff systematically monitor and assess wellbeing and target children for support if required. A comprehensive health and safety policy is in place.

Staff place a high value on raising pupils' self-esteem and aspirations and recognising their achievements.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted. Staff actively foster the values of honesty, fairness and respect for truth to help pupils to distinguish right from wrong. There is a positive whole-school approach to behaviour management and any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with promptly.

The school has a very effective policy and procedures for attendance and punctuality. Good attendance is promoted by a range of incentives and systems are in place for identifying poor attenders and working with their parents.

The school is proactive in building on collaborative working with a range of other agencies. It is an active partner in a cluster multi-agency group.

Provision for pupils with ALN is good and their particular needs are identified and well catered for; all have an appropriate individual education or behaviour plan, which is reviewed regularly with parents. All receive valuable support which has a positive impact on their learning and progress.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. All necessary statutory arrangements are in place.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a very inclusive community where every individual is shown to be valued. All adults are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity.

The curriculum and all aspects of school life are fully accessible to all pupils regardless of their gender, race or background. Whatever their abilities, they are encouraged to participate fully.

There is a strong focus on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity. Pupils learn tolerance and respect for those who have different backgrounds and cultures

The school has a disability equality scheme and an accessibility plan and takes all reasonable steps to ensure access to the building caters for every individual's needs.

The well-maintained building meets the needs of pupils and displays enhance the learning environment. A considerable improvement in the outdoor provision has been achieved since the last inspection; the forest school and garden areas, in particular, are excellent features. Security is good.

The quality and quantity of resources are good. The school has appropriate ICT equipment and facilities, as well as an interactive whiteboard in each class.

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

The school has a clear vision and mission statement, which all staff know and support. Its strategic direction is clearly evident and distributed leadership is well embedded.

The school's leadership has been successful in creating a climate where staff feel valued and work as an effective unit. There is a strong whole-school ethos of teamwork, trust and co-operation to which all staff are committed.

The headteacher manages the school very efficiently, despite having a half-time teaching commitment. She has a continual visible presence around the school and has a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development. She has very good relationships with pupils, governors, parents and the local community.

The headteacher and her deputy work effectively together and share management responsibilities. In association with other teachers, they lead the seven areas of learning and religious education with support from additional practitioners. There is a weekly staff meeting to which all practitioners contribute.

The headteacher and teachers undergo performance management procedures that meet statutory requirements. Arrangements for additional practitioners to have an annual appraisal have recently been introduced.

Administrative procedures run very effectively and all required policies are in place and up-to-date; they are reviewed regularly on a rolling programme basis. There is a relevant complaints procedure.

The governing body meets at least once a term and fully meets its legal obligations. It is supportive and well-informed. The majority of members are active in the strategic direction of the school, although not normally in the initial stages of policy development. Most have a clear understanding of their role and come into the school regularly for various purposes.

The school gives good attention to national and local priorities and has introduced a number of initiatives to raise standards and to address specific issues.

Improving quality: Good

The self-evaluation report is based on a thorough review of standards and provision. All staff are involved in the process and the views of governors, parents and pupils are sought and incorporated. Data are analysed thoroughly and used effectively.

The school has an effective system for monitoring, which involves all teachers. There is a continuous process of reflection to identify strengths and areas for development.

A report on Porth Infant School
June 2011

The school development plan is derived from the findings of self-evaluation and responds to national and local priorities. It is a manageable working document with clear, prioritised targets and sound strategies for their achievement. Progress is regularly reviewed.

The school has responded very positively to the recommendations made in the last inspection report.

The headteacher has established an effective learning community within the school, involving all teachers, and an embedded culture of collaboration with practitioners from other schools and agencies in the local cluster and the LA, as well as further afield.

Partnership working: Good

The school has developed a number of beneficial strategic partnerships, which make a major contribution to pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Parents are very supportive; they are kept well-informed and fully participate in the life of the school and its family ethos. Their involvement in the home reading scheme, book club and parent workshops has a very positive impact.

The school has strong links with the community and a range of agencies in the locality through visits, visitors and workshops.

A transition policy and plan are in place. There are good links with other schools, local colleges and initial teacher training institutions, as well as with pre-school settings, one of which meets on site. There are good transition arrangements for transfer to the junior school.

Staff work as a team to moderate and level work and the Y2 teacher has been involved in moderation and standardisation with associated infant and junior schools in the cluster. There are cluster and school portfolios for descriptive writing.

The Small Schools' Network, which the headteacher leads, has utilised joint funding to purchase resources and activities and to produce shared online ICT resources.

Resource management: Good

All staff are suitably qualified and experienced; they are effectively managed and deployed to enhance teaching and learning.

Additional practitioners are very effective in their roles. They are included in planning and work flexibly across the school as part of a strong team.

All staff, including ancillary workers, undertake relevant professional development activities and teachers observe the work of colleagues and visit other schools.

Planning, preparation and assessment time is effectively organised. The statutory requirements of the workload agreement are met.

A report on Porth Infant School
June 2011

Resources and accommodation, both inside and outside the building, are very well managed. The caretaker, headteacher, eco leader and forest school leader meet regularly to discuss the management and development of the outdoor areas.

The school has efficient systems in place to manage the budget effectively. Spending decisions are informed by self-evaluation and strategic planning. The cost of activities is evaluated in view of the impact on success criteria and standards. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty-three parents completed the questionnaire, of whom nine added written comments, all of which were either factual or positive and supportive. All parents are satisfied with the school and feel it is well run, has a good range of activities and promotes healthy living. Without exception, they think their child settled in well, likes school and is helped to become more mature and responsible; they think teaching is good and pupils are well-behaved. All believe their child is safe, makes good progress and that they are kept well-informed. All, except for one who was unsure, consider pupils are expected to do their best, receive any necessary additional support and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education; they think staff treat pupils fairly and with respect and that homework is useful. All feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns, although a few were unsure about the procedures for dealing with complaints.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Dr. P. David Ellis	Reporting Inspector
Mrs. Branwen Llewelyn Jones	Team Inspector
Mr. Ted Tipper	Lay Inspector
Mrs. Helen Vernon	Peer Inspector
Mrs. Pam Morgan	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