



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

**Y Pant Comprehensive School
Cowbridge Road
Talbot Green
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF72 8YQ**

Date of inspection: October 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:

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

Y Pant Comprehensive School is an English medium 11-18 mixed comprehensive school, maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. It serves the areas of Pontyclun, Talbot Green, Llantrisant and Llanharry. It has 1,256 pupils on roll, of whom 231 are in the sixth form. Around 20% of the school's intake is from primary schools beyond the traditional Y Pant cluster.

Twelve per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 17.4%. Nearly 15% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

The school receives pupils from the full range of ability. One per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is below the national average of 2.7%. A further 12% have special educational needs but no statement, which is below the national average of 17.6%. Very few pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. Very few pupils come from a minority ethnic background.

The current headteacher was appointed in 2006.

The individual school budget per pupil for Y Pant Comprehensive School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,770 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £4,511 and the minimum is £3,634. Y Pant Comprehensive School is 18th out of the 19 secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

Y Pant is an excellent school because:

- pupils of all abilities achieve significantly above the expected level;
- pupils make outstanding progress in their lessons and they have excellent skills to improve their own learning;
- pupils' attitude to learning and their behaviour are exceptional; and
- teaching in the school is very effective and has a significant impact on the high standards pupils achieve.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- the headteacher and a highly effective senior management team provide very strong leadership;
- the school has robust, accurate and systematic procedures for self-evaluation, which lead to well-planned actions and strategies that have had an outstanding impact on improving standards and quality;
- the school uses data very effectively at whole-school and subject department levels. This has a considerable impact on raising standards;
- the school has an excellent track record in making improvements; and
- the school has established successfully a very strong culture as a learning community.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop opportunities for pupils to contribute to the development of school policies and plans and to evaluate how and what they learn
- R2 Refine pupils' individual education plans so that pupils are more involved in setting their own targets
- R3 Strengthen the provision of education for global citizenship

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

Performance at key stage 3 has been well above the average for the family of schools over the last four years and is much better than the expected level when compared with the performance of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In English, mathematics and science, a very high proportion of pupils achieve level 7. This is an outstanding feature.

Performance at key stage 4 in those indicators that include English and mathematics has shown very good improvement over the last four years, with a sharp rise in 2010. In 2010, performance was well above the expected level for similar schools. Unverified data for 2011 shows a further significant improvement. Attainment levels in GCSE at A* and A grades are very high.

In the sixth form, pupils perform well and a very high percentage gained the level 3 threshold (equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E).

At the end of key stage 4, a very high number of pupils remain in full-time education, either in the school or elsewhere. In 2010, no pupil left school without a qualification. Four per cent of pupils who left in summer 2010 are not in education, training or employment, which is much better than the national average.

Boys generally perform better than in other schools in the family. However, in English and mathematics at key stage 3 and key stage 4, girls perform better than boys, and at key stage 4 the gap is a little wider than the national average.

Pupils who are entitled to free school meals perform significantly better than the Wales average.

Pupils make very good progress. They develop well the skills and knowledge they need to move on to the next stage of their learning. Pupils with additional learning needs achieve at least as well as expected. More able pupils achieve very well and this is a significant strength of the school.

Pupils of all abilities make very good progress in their literacy skills. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally good. In many lessons, pupils adapt their writing for different purposes appropriately and organise their ideas coherently. Pupils listen very well. In speaking, they communicate clearly. They select and use specialist vocabulary accurately to explain their ideas, and respond confidently to teachers' questions. Pupils who have support to develop their literacy make very good progress.

Pupils achieve good standards in numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

In lessons, pupils make effective connections to their previous learning and assimilate new knowledge very well. They use a wide range of problem-solving approaches to deepen their understanding. Many pupils are thoughtful and reflective. They develop a broad range of strategies to assess their own work and show persistence to improve their skills and understanding. This is a particular strength of the school. Pupils work very well both independently and in groups. They are respectful of one another's ideas and collaborate successfully to extend their learning.

In Welsh second language at key stage 3, results have improved and are now in the top half of those for similar schools. At key stage 4, there has been a steady increase in the number of pupils who study Welsh to GCSE and the proportion is now similar to the Wales average. Performance at level 2 is very good and has been well above family and national averages for three years.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe in school and that the school deals well with matters that are important to their health and safety, such as discipline, behaviour and bullying. Many pupils have a good understanding of how they can lead a healthy lifestyle. They know how to eat healthily and many participate in a wide range of sports activities in school.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They arrive in class punctually and participate very well. Pupils' attendance when compared to that of similar schools is at the expected level.

Pupils' behaviour is very good in class and around the school. There were no permanent exclusions in 2009-2010, while temporary exclusions are very low. Nearly all pupils participate in a very wide range of extra-curricular activities that include supporting local community groups and the extensive after-school hours learning programme.

The school council is highly motivated and committed to its responsibilities. It has contributed to the development of the personal and social education programme and has initiated the introduction of a prefect system and influenced the development of the school grounds. However, pupils do not yet play a full role in contributing to the development of key school policies and plans.

Pupils work well with their peers and show respect for others. They are polite and welcoming to visitors to the school. Older pupils benefit from their work with younger pupils, such as helping them in class and organising social activities for them.

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

The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and the planning of learning experiences is successful in engaging pupils of all abilities. The school has a good range of options at key stage 4 that meet pupils' needs and challenge stereotypes.

There is a good range of vocational pathways on offer. The Certificate of Personal Education programme (CoPE) allows pupils to attain the level 2 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C) whilst developing skills and experiences to help equip them for lifelong learning and the world of work.

The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities through the extensive after school E3+ programme.

Opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are in place across the curriculum and have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. A well-designed programme to develop pupils' thinking skills ('LearnSmart') and wider key skills lessons complement this provision. The provision for pupils who need additional support to develop their literacy skills is well structured and effective.

The school promotes the Welsh dimension and the Welsh language well and is developing this provision effectively. Younger students are rewarded for speaking Welsh around the school and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the Welsh language.

Provision for the education of sustainable development and global citizenship is good. This is especially in relation to the sustainable development aspects, which are well embedded throughout the curriculum. Although the school has developed useful links to schools in other parts of the world, education for global citizenship is less well developed.

Teaching: Excellent

Teaching in the school is very effective and has a significant impact on the standards that pupils achieve. Nearly all teachers have very high expectations. They engage and motivate all pupils through a range of well-planned, enjoyable and stimulating activities. They develop skills effectively through demanding tasks and probing questioning, which maintains learners' concentration, effort and interest. Teachers provide a high level of challenge for all pupils, including those with additional learning needs and the more able. All teachers foster very good relationships with pupils and have high expectations of behaviour.

Nearly all teachers plan and deliver lessons skilfully. They ensure that pupils understand the key learning objectives and they check pupils' progress rigorously at the end of the lesson. Teachers and support staff work very well together to support individual pupils' needs. In a few lessons, the lack of challenge, slow pace, and closed questioning results in learners not making sufficient progress.

All books are marked regularly and most teachers provide detailed written feedback on progress and set out clear targets for improvement. They offer pupils a good range of opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. However, a few teachers do not give enough written guidance to pupils on how to improve.

An outstanding feature of the school is the way staff use pupil attainment data effectively and rigorously. This has a considerable impact on raising and maintaining high standards. The school has a clear, detailed and manageable system for

collecting and storing assessment information. All teachers undertake formal assessments of pupils' work regularly and they track pupil progress meticulously. The school tackles pupils' underperformance robustly through an effective range of mentoring and support strategies.

Reports to parents are clear and informative. All pupils have individual interviews to review their report and set targets for improvement.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school gives pupils a high level of care. It has an effective support structure that contributes successfully to pupils' care, support and guidance.

The school promotes pupils' health and wellbeing, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The personal and social education programme is well planned and covers a wide range of topics appropriate to the needs of pupils. Outside speakers, visits and opportunities for pupils to participate in voluntary and community work, together with daily registration periods and assemblies, ensure that pupils have good opportunities to broaden their experiences, personal development and understanding.

The school has a very strong focus on promoting pupils' good behaviour and encouraging a positive attitude to school. The school's 'behaviour for learning' policy is understood well by pupils and helps them to appreciate the conduct that the school expects. This has a very positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour and work.

Arrangements for identifying and addressing pupils' personal and learning support needs are very effective. The school makes use of a wide range of intervention strategies to help pupils improve and succeed at school. These include mentors, learning coaches, sixth form 'buddies' and specialist literacy and numeracy programmes. The school works very well in partnership with a wide range of external support agencies and specialist services. This ensures that all pupils receive support appropriate to their needs. This well-targeted support helps pupils to progress and improves their attitudes to learning.

Pupils' individual educational plans identify appropriate targets for pupils so that they improve and these are discussed regularly with parents and carers. However, pupils are not fully involved in identifying their personal targets. The style and language in the individual educational plans do not make it easy for all pupils to understand their targets fully.

Pupils receive appropriate information, guidance and support when moving from one key stage to another.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive and mutually supportive community that is committed to giving equality of opportunity to all its pupils. It successfully challenges stereotypes

in pupils' choice of subjects. The school has high expectations of behaviour and has good policies in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour and to promote respect. There are effective arrangements for ensuring that pupils with physical disabilities are not disadvantaged in any way.

The school is well maintained and, overall, meets the needs of its pupils. However, the fabric of the main building is in need of considerable improvement and around 25% of the classrooms are temporary structures. A majority of the toilets are only adequate and there are limited facilities specifically for the sixth form. However, the school works very well within these constraints to provide an effective learning environment. All teaching spaces are fit for purpose and there is a wide range of good quality learning resources. A particularly strong feature of the school is the display of pupils' work, especially of their art, to greatly enhance the environment.

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

The headteacher and a highly effective senior management team provide very strong leadership and successfully communicate a vision for the school. Lines of accountability and individual roles and responsibilities are clear. Senior leaders promote a culture of very high expectations, which filters through all aspects of school life. This has a marked impact in raising standards of achievement.

The school's strategic priorities focus strongly on improving outcomes for all pupils. The school sets very challenging targets for pupils based on a detailed analysis of data. Leaders of year teams and most subject leaders use this data effectively to monitor progress and to inform teaching and learning. These activities have a clear and highly beneficial impact on standards.

Middle leaders are fully accountable for the work of their areas of responsibility and nearly all lead their teams well. Senior leaders are well informed about the work of departments and year groups and provide very good support and challenge. They tackle instances of underperformance robustly.

The school uses well-established and comprehensive procedures to manage teachers' performance. Targets for staff focus appropriately on teaching and learning. The system effectively identifies staff development needs and caters for them very well in a wide ranging and targeted professional development programme. The school develops teachers' leadership skills purposefully.

Governors take an active and enthusiastic part in school life and are very well informed about the school's performance. Governors actively hold the school accountable for the standards it achieves, check that policies are implemented and are appropriately involved in strategic decisions about curriculum developments. There are good links between the governing body and subject departments.

The school takes very good account of local and national priorities to inform school development.

Improving quality: Excellent

The school has robust, accurate and systematic procedures for self-evaluation, which provide it with a very clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. This leads to well-planned actions and strategies that have had an outstanding impact on improving standards and quality. Departments and staff identified as underperforming have been subject to a planned, rigorous and effective improvement process. This has resulted in a significant improvement in examination results over recent years. The recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed effectively.

Self-evaluation is firmly based on a very detailed and thorough analysis of performance data at the level of the whole school, departments and individual pupils. This is supplemented by first-hand evidence through regular observations, including those from external specialists. Pupils' books are scrutinised within departments, but this is not done consistently enough. There are suitable arrangements to collect the views of pupils and parents on many aspects of school life. Pupils are increasingly given opportunities to share their views and raise issues, but they do not yet make a full enough contribution to the evaluation of teaching and learning.

The findings of the whole-school self-evaluation activities are expressed succinctly in an annual report. Departments also produce annual self-evaluation reports, which contain a thorough analysis of data. Most departmental reports are detailed, comprehensive and based on a wide range of evidence. Many identify the specific matters that need to improve, but a few are too positive and not evaluative enough.

The findings of the self-evaluation activities are addressed appropriately through both whole-school and departmental development plans. The whole-school plan provides a clear sense of direction, with the annual plan being set within a three-year strategic plan. The annual plan contains suitable actions and challenging targets, which are quantitative where appropriate. Most departmental development plans address issues identified through self-evaluation in a systematic way, but a few do not and the targets they identify are too vague.

The school has established successfully a very strong culture as a learning community. All staff are involved in an exceptional range of professional development activities that provide opportunities to develop leadership and improve staff knowledge, understanding and skills. The comprehensive programme includes groups focusing on key strategic priorities and on innovation in order to explore new approaches to teaching and learning. A substantial programme of peer observations and staff-led training seminars further helps to develop teaching and learning approaches.

The school is extensively engaged in a number of collaborative activities with other schools and providers, both in the locality and from the family of schools. This has had a very beneficial impact on improving standards and the quality of teaching.

Partnership working: Good

The school has developed effective partnerships with a wide range of organisations and other key partners. The partnerships contribute successfully to improving

wellbeing, extending learning experiences and widening the options available to pupils. The school collaborates well with a local comprehensive school to offer a joint post-16 curriculum, which has led to more cost-effective provision and an increase in the range and number of courses. Members of the leadership team from each school have successfully developed joint working practices, including effective quality assurance of the collaborative courses.

The school works well with its partner primary schools to ensure smooth transition, and has helped organise successful joint activities such as a three-day residential course for Year 6 pupils.

There are good relationships with parents.

The school has well-developed partnerships with a wide range of groups within the local community, including specialist services and voluntary agencies. The school works successfully with the Cluster Youth Operations Group to ensure that the provision of support meets the needs of pupils.

Resource management: Excellent

The school manages its resources extremely well. Expenditure is closely monitored and prioritised in order to seek the highest possible impact on pupils' achievement. There is an appropriate balance between the responsibilities undertaken by governors and those delegated to the headteacher and finance manager.

The school is very well staffed to teach the curriculum. Teaching and ancillary staff are deployed effectively to make best use of their expertise. There are successful arrangements to identify and meet the training needs of all staff. The school has developed highly efficient and effective staff training programmes that contribute significantly to the high quality of teaching. This is an outstanding feature of the school.

The school makes very good use of in-house expertise to maintain the standards of classroom accommodation within the constraints of the budget.

The rigour of self-evaluation allows the school to make excellent use of its staff and resources and this has led to a significant improvement in teaching and standards. In view of the outstanding outcomes, the school provides excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

At key stage 3 over the last four years, achievement of the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science in combination) has shown improvement and performance has been consistently above the family average.

Performance in English, mathematics and science as separate subjects has been above the family average for the last four years and has shown significant improvement over the same period. English, mathematics and science are now in the top quarter of comparative results for similar schools.

In 2011, in English, mathematics and science, pupils' performance at level 6 or above was much better than the family average and, in all three subjects, a very good proportion of pupils achieved level 7 or above.

In 2011, performance in most non-core subjects was in the first or second quarter of that for similar schools. Around half show a good improvement over the last four years.

Pupils' progress from the previous key stage for 2010 was good in mathematics and science and very good in English and the core subject indicator.

At key stage 4, achievement of the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics has improved over the last three years. In 2010, achievement levels were the highest in the school's family. Attainment of the core subject indicator shows a similar pattern. Unverified data for 2011 shows a further significant improvement in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics and the core subject indicator. In 2010, performance was well above the expected level for similar schools.

The school's performance in the level 2 threshold has also improved over the last three years and is now equal to the family average. Unverified data for 2011 shows a further rise. Achievement of the level 1 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G) was in the top half of that for similar schools in 2010. Unverified data for 2011 shows that the school has maintained this performance. The school's performance in the average wider points score (comprising all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the age of 16) shows an improvement in line with the family and slightly above family averages. Unverified data for 2011 shows a similar picture.

In 2010, 91% of pupils remained in full-time education at the end of key stage 4, either in the school or elsewhere, which is significantly above the national average. Four per cent of pupils who left in summer 2010 are not in education, training or employment, which is much better than the national average. In 2010, no pupil left school without a qualification

In the sixth form, students perform well with the level 3 threshold (equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E) which is above local and national averages. The average wider points score (comprising all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the age of 18) is equal to the Welsh average.

Thirty-eight per cent of pupils who are eligible for free school meals achieved the level 2 threshold plus English or Welsh and mathematics and the core subject indicator in 2010, which is much better than the Wales average. Over the last three years the gap between the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not has narrowed.

Overall, at key stage 3 and key stage 4 girls perform better than boys. At key stage 4, the gap in performance between girls and boys at level 2 and in the CSI is a little wider than the family and Wales averages.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Response to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 257 pupils, selected at random across all year groups. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and many feel that they have someone to talk to if they are worried. Most pupils believe that the school deals well with any bullying and many think that pupils behave well. These responses compare very favourably with the views of pupils in other secondary schools.

Most pupils feel that they are encouraged to take on responsibility and to do things for themselves. Nearly all pupils feel that they are doing well and that teachers help them to progress and prepare for their future. They have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Many pupils say that the school teaches them to be healthy and that they have plenty of opportunities at school to get regular exercise.

Response to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 100 completed questionnaires from parents or carers.

Of those that responded, many parents gave a positive or very positive response to most questions. Nearly all parents are pleased with the school and most think that their children are doing well. Nearly all parents feel that their children are safe in school and that pupils behave well. This proportion is higher than the average for other secondary schools.

All parents believe that their children are expected to work hard and nearly all think that teaching is good. Most say that there is a good range of activities and visits and that homework helps their children to make progress. Most parents feel that the school is well led. Many parents understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints and feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have any questions or concerns.

Most parents think that the school helps their children to mature and take on responsibility. Many parents believe that their children receive the right level of additional support for their learning and that their children are well prepared to move on to their next stage of education or employment. A majority of parents feel that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Sarah Lewis	Reporting Inspector
Christine Hooper	Team Inspector
Ann Jones	Team Inspector
Ceri Jones	Team Inspector
Nigel Vaughan	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Jennifer Ford	Peer Inspector
Mark Powell (Deputy Headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

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