



*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**

**Bedlinog Community Primary School  
Hylton Terrace  
Bedlinog  
Treharris  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF46 6RE**

**Date of inspection: May 2013**

**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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**Publication date: 24/07/2013**

## Context

Bedlinog Community Primary School is in the village of Bedlinog, in the south of the county borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Nearly all pupils come from the village itself. The school is in a rural area with predominantly owner-occupied terraced housing. Bedlinog is a communities first ward and is in the 10% of wards in Wales that are considered the most deprived. The school has a spacious two-storey building that has recently been completely refurbished and modernised.

Currently, there are 116 pupils on roll, including 13 children of nursery age. The number on roll has fallen since the last inspection in 2007. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 21%, which is slightly below the average for Wales. The school has identified approximately 35% of pupils with additional needs, which is higher than the all-Wales average of 20%. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home and no pupils speak English as an additional language.

The headteacher was appointed in 2000.

The individual school budget per pupil for Bedlinog Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,798 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil is £4,007 and the minimum is £3,165. Bedlinog Primary School is fourth out of the 23 primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate because:

- many pupils in the Foundation Phase make good progress in relation to their starting points;
- the school provides good care, support and guidance;
- pupils' attendance is good; and
- the learning environment supports pupils' learning well.

However:

- in the past four years, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has not compared well with that of similar schools;
- pupils in key stage 2 do not apply their literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills well enough in work across the curriculum; and
- lessons are not well enough adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate. This is because:

- all staff have common values and share the headteacher's vision and aims;
- recent curriculum initiatives are beginning to raise standards in English;
- the Foundation Phase is firmly established and pupils' attainment compares well with that of pupils in similar schools; and
- the school has responded positively to national priorities.

However:

- the school does not have a record of bringing about school improvement in recent years;
- duties and responsibilities are disproportionately distributed, and the effectiveness of the leadership team is inconsistent as a result;
- the school improvement plan is not fully effective because it overlooks key areas for improvement; and
- the governing body's role as a critical friend is not well developed.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Raise standards in writing across the curriculum in key stage 2
- R2 Provide further opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to apply their independent learning and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Ensure that learning experiences are adapted appropriately to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- R4 Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership by distributing responsibilities among senior leaders and managers more appropriately
- R5 Improve the effectiveness of monitoring of pupils' work in all curricular areas

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

## Main findings

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

Adequate

#### Standards: Adequate

Most pupils enter the school with skills below those expected of pupils of a similar age. By the end of Year 6, most have made appropriate progress in English and mathematics. However, standards of achievement throughout the school are inconsistent.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils have very good listening skills and pay close attention to what their teachers say. They make good progress in developing social skills and listen well when other pupils are speaking. In key stage 2, many pupils listen well to their teachers and speak clearly and confidently when asked to do so. When working in pairs and small groups, most pupils contribute sensibly to discussions and listen carefully to the ideas of others.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils enjoy reading and make good progress in learning how to build words phonically. Many develop a good range of reading strategies that enable them to read with developing fluency understanding. In key stage 2, many pupils build well on their knowledge of word structures and recognise prefixes and suffixes as meaningful parts of words. By the end of key stage 2, many read fluently and with expression. Many older pupils use non-fiction books well when researching, for example, Isaac Newton. However, their ability to use more advanced techniques, such as skimming and scanning for information, is limited.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing handwriting skills. In the Foundation Phase, many learn to write well. They hold a pencil correctly and form letters and space words carefully. In key stage 2 English lessons, pupils write competently in a variety of styles that are appropriate to their purpose and their intended audience. In their poetry and descriptive writing, the majority of pupils use adjectives and similes effectively. However, they take insufficient care in presenting their work neatly.

The ability of many pupils in key stage 2 to apply the skills they learn in writing and numeracy in their work in science, history or other areas of the curriculum is underdeveloped. In addition, their ability to work independently and to solve problems is limited. By Year 6, many pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) competently.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase make good progress in learning Welsh. However, this progress is not maintained as pupils move through the school.

Overall, pupils with additional learning needs achieve well and make good progress in relation to the targets set in their individual education plans.

In 2012, most pupils in the Foundation Phase achieved the expected outcome 5 in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and in

personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. This compares well with similar schools and those in its family grouping. However, unlike in similar schools, no more-able pupils achieved the higher than expected outcome 6. In all areas of learning, boys achieved more highly than girls did.

Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science in key stage 2 has fluctuated in the past four years. When compared with attainment in other schools in the same family, pupils in Bedlinog Community School generally attain more highly than in the majority of other schools in all three subjects. However, when compared to similar schools, attainment in all three subjects places the school consistently in the lowest 25%.

### **Wellbeing: Adequate**

Nearly all pupils in the Foundation Phase, and the majority in key stage 2, behave well and show positive attitudes towards their learning. Most pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily, drink plenty of water and take regular exercise. The majority of pupils feel safe in school and nearly all have confidence in the school's ability to deal with any instances of bullying appropriately.

Attendance levels are good, averaging just above the all Wales average. In the autumn term 2012 and the spring term 2013, attendance averaged approximately 95%. Most pupils arrive punctually. There have been no exclusions in the last five years.

Although school council members are elected annually, councillors are unclear as to their role and have limited opportunity to influence the decision-making process. For example, they have no say in the management of behaviour and bullying. The school does however consider pupils' views through a wellbeing questionnaire, and has improved lunchtime arrangements and developed the outside area as a consequence.

Generally, pupils show care and concern for each other. They are polite towards adults and each other and are happy in school.

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

In the Foundation Phase, pupils enjoy a wide range of learning experiences that engage them successfully and meet their needs well. The curriculum in key stage 2 meets statutory requirements and engages most pupils. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by visits to the local area and beyond. Visitors from the local community and the nearby rock climbing centre also broaden pupils' experiences.

In key stage 2, teachers plan appropriately to ensure that pupils learn skills in a progressive way. However, the activities they provide do not consistently allow pupils to develop the use of communication and numeracy skills in a range of contexts. Tasks set do not fully meet the needs of all pupils, including the more able and those with additional learning needs.

Provision for promoting the Welsh language and for teaching pupils about the history and culture of Wales is good.

Pupils are increasingly aware of the wider world through their lessons about Russia, and through the school's links with a large school in India. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about sustainable development, both through the curriculum and through the 'Green Club'. They speak knowledgeably about the need to conserve resources such as fuel and paper, and the importance of keeping the atmosphere free from pollution.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Teachers ensure that most pupils are motivated and engaged in lessons. In the Foundation Phase, they plan stimulating and effective lessons that build on pupils' previous work. All staff establish positive relationships with their pupils, and teachers and support staff collaborate well. Where teaching is good, teachers model appropriate language well, ask probing questions and demonstrate up-to-date subject knowledge. However, in key stage 2, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Tasks set fail to develop effectively pupils' literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills in work across the curriculum.

Pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their own progress, although in key stage 2 teachers do not consistently make the intended outcome of the lesson clear. Teachers' marking is generally consistent and, in the best examples, informs pupils how they can improve their learning further. However, pupils' individual improvement targets tend to be too general and do not significantly influence their learning.

The school's recently introduced computerised system allows teachers to track pupil progress systematically. Senior managers use this information effectively to identify pupils in need of additional support, but teachers do not yet fully use the information to plan appropriately for all pupils' learning. Detailed end-of-year reports ensure that parents are well informed about their children's achievements.

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

The school has appropriate arrangements to encourage pupils to eat healthily, take sufficient exercise and take care of their teeth.

A wide range of specialist services from the local authority, the police and social services provide valuable support for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable. There are appropriate policies in place dealing with all aspects of health and safety. Strategies to manage attendance are good.

Learning experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development successfully. Visiting clergymen and charity workers give acts of collective worship a spiritual dimension in which pupils can be reflective. The well-structured programme of personal and social education helps pupils' social and moral development. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is reinforced by visits from teachers from the partner school in Rajasthan.



The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The support for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Teachers write good quality individual education plans that include clear targets that the pupils understand. Staff review pupil progress regularly against these targets. Support staff are effective in providing programmes that help pupils with additional learning needs.

### **Learning environment: Good**

School is calm, well ordered and inclusive. Boys and girls are treated equally, although boys' games tend to predominate at lunchtime. Nearly all pupils understand and follow school rules. There is a strong sense of community within the school.

The accommodation is good. The school provides a clean and pleasant environment, conducive to pupils' learning. Decoration is good. The school makes effective use of the outdoors to encourage pupils to take exercise and to support learning, particularly about biodiversity.

All classrooms have colourful displays, but these do not always show pupils' work off to best advantage. The school is generally well resourced with sufficient, networked computers, and an interactive whiteboard in all but one class. However, teachers do not often make full use of these resources to support teaching and learning.

Good use is made of available resources in the local community.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff and governors. He leads a committed team of staff in trying to raise standards and move the school forward. However, duties and responsibilities are disproportionately distributed, and the effectiveness of the leadership team is inconsistent as a result.

Members of the governing body support the work of the school and carry out their duties diligently. The headteacher keeps them fully informed and ensures that governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas in which it needs to improve. However, recent changes to the composition of the governing body mean their role as a critical friend is not fully developed.

The school has responded well to national priorities, such as the implementation of the Foundation Phase and the promotion of literacy throughout the school through the use of a commercial scheme. Both of these are beginning to have a positive impact on the standards achieved by most pupils. The school has also recently introduced a project that enables parents to help their children learn and further develops the links with the local community.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

There is a programme of self-evaluation in place, which draws on information provided from a range of stakeholders. The school gathers first-hand evidence through lesson observations and monitoring of pupils' books. However, monitoring lacks focus on key stage 2 pupils' skill development in literacy, numeracy and independent learning in their work across the curriculum.

The school improvement plan is based on evaluation of school data and local issues identified through the school's self-evaluation process. The detailed plan is made up of a number of targets, which are sub divided into smaller tasks. The plan is not fully effective as a tool for bringing about school improvement because it is too wide-ranging and overlooks key areas for improvement. There are appropriate systems in place for the performance management of teachers and support staff. These are having a positive impact on standards in certain areas. For example, improvements in the delivery of a literacy scheme have brought about measurable improvements.

The school has been involved in a number of professional learning communities and its approach to assessing pupils' work has improved as a result. Other professional learning communities have focused on reading and further improving standards of teaching. These initiatives are also beginning to having an impact on the standards that pupils achieve.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has developed effective partnerships with a range of agencies and organisations, including the local authority and the community. The school values its partnership with parents and they, in turn, appreciate the way in which the school listens to their views and opinions. The school provides many opportunities for parents to meet for initiatives that help them to support their children's learning. The families and schools project, the play and learn sessions and the school's reading café are valued by parents.

Transition arrangements are good. There are close links between the school and the local playgroup that help children settle quickly into the nursery class, and also with the local secondary school.

The school works closely with neighbouring primary schools in jointly developing teachers' skills and in standardising teacher assessments at the end of key stage 2.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

The school has enough qualified and experienced staff to teach and deliver the full range of National Curriculum subjects and areas of learning. It deploys teaching assistants efficiently and they contribute positively to pupils' learning and wellbeing. Performance management arrangements for all staff identify training opportunities, which enable them to support the school's priorities.

The headteacher and governors monitor spending decisions carefully. These are aligned with the school's improvement plan priorities. The level of budget reserves at the end of the last financial year is slightly below recommended limits.

In view of the standards attained by the majority of pupils and the absence of an improving trend, the school provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

Over the past four years, the number of pupils in each year group has been small and varied considerably from year to year. Therefore, data outcomes need to be treated cautiously.

Most pupils enter the nursery class with skills that are below the average for the local authority. Most make appropriate progress by the time they leave the school.

Although overall pupil performance has improved in the past two years, standards are below those of similar schools, when judged on the basis of the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Overall pupils' attainment is broadly similar to that of pupils within the school's family, but below the average for Wales as a whole.

At the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012, pupils achieved well in comparison with other schools in its family. At the expected outcome 5, pupils' language, literacy and communication skills were the highest in the family of schools and placed the school within the upper 50% of similar schools. This is higher than the national average. In mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity, pupils achieved well above the average for the family. The school's performance placed it in the lower 50% of similar schools. Boys achieved better than girls in all areas of learning.

No more able pupils achieved the higher outcome 6 in language, literacy and communication skills or mathematical development, which does not compare well with other schools in the family and across Wales. Girls score more highly than boys in personal and social development, but their attainment is below the family average and well below the figure for Wales.

Recent trends at key stage 2 show an improvement in English, mathematics, science and the combination of all three subjects. In 2012, all pupils attained the expected level 4 in science. Although achieving more highly in all subjects than most schools in its family, and broadly in line with schools across Wales, Bedlinog Community School is consistently in the lowest 25% of similar schools. In key stage 2, girls perform better than boys in English, but boys perform better than girls in mathematics and science.

Performance at the higher level 5 in all subjects is significantly lower than the averages for other schools in the family and for Wales as a whole.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Response to parent/carer questionnaires

Nineteen parents/carers responded to the questionnaire.

All say that:

- the school helps their children to become more mature and take on responsibility; and
- their children are well prepared for moving on to the next school.

Most say that:

- their children like school, feel safe and are making good progress;
- their child was helped to settle in on starting at the school;
- teaching is good and staff expect children to work hard and do their best;
- children are encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise; and
- their children receive appropriate support related to their individual needs.

Many parents say that:

- overall, they are satisfied with the school and think it is well run;
- pupils behave well in school;
- there is a good range of activities and trips;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- the homework given helps to build on what pupils do at school;
- they are kept well informed about their children's progress;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems; and
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

The responses are broadly similar to those in other schools in Wales.

#### Responses to pupil questionnaire

Fifty-eight pupils responded to the questionnaire.

All, or very nearly all, pupils think that:

- they feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they feel worried or upset;
- the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress, and they are doing well at school;
- they know what to do and whom to ask if they find work difficult;
- homework helps them to understand and improve their school work; and
- the school teaches them how to keep healthy and provides lots of chances to take regular exercise.

Most pupils think that the school deals well with any bullying.

Many pupils say that other children behave well at playtime and lunchtime. Although a majority say that other children behave well and they can get their work done, many more girls than boys believe this to be the case. This differs from the situation in Wales as a whole, where many children feel able to get their work done without distraction.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Christopher Dolby	Reporting Inspector
Mary Dyas	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Stuart Plunkett	Peer Inspector
Tony Soanes	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

## **Glossary of terms – Primary**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language;
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language;
- mathematics; and
- science.

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.



The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.