



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

**Blaenhonddan Primary School
Main Road
Bryncoch
Neath
SA10 7PE**

Date of inspection: July 2012

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Blaenhonddan Primary School is in Bryncoch, a suburb of Neath. This is in an economically advantaged area with 7% of pupils entitled to free school meals. This is below the local authority and all-Wales average.

The school has a learning support centre for pupils with additional learning needs in key stage 2. These pupils are all from outside the school's catchment area and are placed there by the local authority. Across the school 18% of pupils have additional learning needs, including 4% who have statements of special educational needs. These are taught either in the specialist centre or in mainstream classes. The school has the highest percentage of pupils with additional learning needs in its family of schools.

There are 231 full time equivalent pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11 years. Children enter the nursery class on a part-time basis in the September following their third birthday. Pupils are organised into eight classes according to age, four in the Foundation Phase including a nursery and reception unit and four in key stage 2.

The majority of pupils come from families who speak English as a first language. Nine pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken at home. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity.

The individual school budget per pupil for Blaenhonddan Primary school in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,247 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Neath Port Talbot is £21,718 and the minimum is £2,648. Blaenhonddan is 51st out of the 71 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot in terms of its budget per pupil.

The headteacher has been in post since November 2008.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of Blaenhonddan is excellent because:

- over the past three years a high percentage of mainstream pupils have achieved above the expected level in all three core subjects at the end of key stages 2 when compared with levels in similar schools;
- pupils in the learning support classes are making excellent progress in relation to their individual learning targets;
- standards in Welsh second language are outstanding;
- the behaviour and attitudes to learning of nearly all pupils are excellent;
- the quality of learning experiences and teaching are good across the school; and
- assessment is very good.

Prospects for improvement

The schools prospect for improvement are excellent because:

- the headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has developed strong systems to support school improvement;
- all staff work well as a team to create a vibrant learning community;
- subject co-ordinators and other staff collect and use a wide range of data to track pupils' progress effectively and modify their teaching to better meet the needs of pupils;
- there are very strong self-evaluation procedures in place and staff have a professional, self-critical approach to their work;
- opportunities for the professional development of staff through the sharing of good practice with other schools are very good; and
- there is very effective planning for improvement.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 improve the percentage of pupils that attain at the higher levels at the end of the Foundation Phase;
- R2 ensure that teachers' assessment records are of a consistently high quality across the school;
- R3 incorporate long term objectives into the school development plan; and
- R4 ensure that the governing body provides challenge as well as support to the school where appropriate.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the recommendations are to be addressed. 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

When they start school, the basic skills levels of the majority of pupils, other than the relatively high percentage of those with additional learning needs, are higher than the local authority average. Most pupils achieve the expected outcomes for their age by the end of the Foundation Phase.

Pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 listen attentively. Their oral skills are very good across the school. Nearly all pupils answer questions well and discuss their work effectively.

Most pupils make very good progress in developing their reading skills. In the Foundation Phase, many pupils read expressively and accurately. They make good predictions of what they think will happen in a story and understand the role of the author. In key stage 2, pupils apply their reading skills effectively when researching topics for debate and many give well substantiated reasons for their opinions

The majority of pupils in most classes make extremely good progress in their writing skills across the curriculum. In the Foundation Phase, pupils' handwriting skills are well developed. Their understanding of adjectives and how to make interesting sentences is a very strong feature. Many can write a coherent descriptive sequence of sentences using appropriate punctuation.

In key stage 2, standards of writing are very high with outstanding features that include an extensive range of writing for different purposes. They use a rich vocabulary to create imaginative writing that greatly exceeds the expected norm. Pupils' work often reflects a very good understanding of grammar and punctuation and is well presented. They apply their literacy skills well across the curriculum to produce work that is often of a very high quality.

Standards in Welsh second language in both oral and written work are outstanding across the school. All pupils use Welsh frequently outside structured classroom activity and develop confidence through conveying messages or instructions to others. In key stage 2, the school is performing very significantly above the family and Wales averages in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level, level 4 or above, in Welsh second language.

In the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, pupils apply their information and technology skills effectively to research topics, play educational games and present their work.

In 2011, pupils in the Foundation Phase achieved slightly below the expected level (level 2) and the higher level (level 3) when compared with the relative performance levels in schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and to the family of schools. However, unverified school based tracking data for 2012 shows that most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress relative to their age and abilities.

In key stage 2, the performance of mainstream pupils in 2011 at the expected level (level 4) placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools in English, mathematics and science. The overall three-year trend indicates at least very good performance in English, mathematics and science when compared with that of schools with a similar proportion of free school meals.

In key stage 2, more able pupils' performance above the expected level (level 5) since 2008 is outstanding with approximately half of the pupils in Year 6 attaining at these higher levels in at least two of the core subjects. This is above the average for the family, local authority and Wales. Unverified data for 2012 shows a further improvement with nearly half the pupils attaining at these higher levels in all three core subjects of English mathematics and science.

In 2011, the achievement of boys and girls at the expected level is similar in the Foundation Phase. In key stage 2, more girls attained the expected level in all three core subjects.

In the Foundation Phase, pupils entitled to free school meals attain at a higher level than those who are not, but this pattern is reversed in key stage 2.

All pupils with additional learning needs achieve exceptionally well against prior attainment and personal targets. They make outstanding progress relative to their ability.

Wellbeing: Excellent

All pupils have very positive attitudes towards healthy eating and exercise. Pupils in the Foundation Phase and learning support class are engaged in an effective dental health programme that includes brushing their teeth regularly in school and they have gained a gold standard award.

All pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and all pupils across the school take part in a rich variety of extra-curricular activities to improve their fitness. The high percentage of pupils engaged in these activities is an outstanding feature.

All pupils feel safe in school and are very proud of their school. They enjoy their lessons and are very well motivated. The behaviour of all pupils is excellent across the school. They are polite and courteous and display an obvious respect for both staff and each other.

The school council and eco-committee, 'Y Llais', represent the views of all other pupils very well. The school council demonstrates a mature and highly effective understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are responsible for a budget and accept their responsibilities with confidence. This effective group has contributed to very good improvements to the school including, the school garden and provision of extensive play equipment and the supply of water bottles and fountains. The work of this group is outstanding and influences school policy and development planning.

Across the school pupils' understanding of sustainable development is very good, but they are less knowledgeable about global citizenship.

Attendance is almost 94% and though in the bottom half of that for schools with a similar percentage of pupils with free school meals, has improved recently. Nearly all pupils are punctual at the start of the school day.

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

The school provides a wide range of learning experiences that meet statutory requirements and the needs of all pupils well. Schemes of work are detailed and show how subjects and skills are developed progressively across the school.

Teachers' weekly curriculum planning sheets ensure that pupils can develop their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively. Reflection sheets completed by teachers record how they evaluate their work. They use these to adjust their planning to better meet the needs of pupils.

The personalised individual learning plans of pupils are monitored closely and incorporated well into curriculum and lesson plans. Pupils have many motivating opportunities to learn about their locality and to raise their awareness of the history and culture of Wales.

Teachers and learning support assistants organise a wide range of stimulating activities. These include a large number of well-attended clubs, organised during the lunch hour or after school, to provide pupils with very good learning events. Very good use is made of the high quality school grounds to promote pupils' understanding of environmental issues and develop their physical fitness. The school actively promotes sustainable development in both the curriculum and in daily routines. Very good use is made of the grounds and the school has been very successful in gaining national awards for sustainable development. The school's eco-committee ensures that environmental issues are firmly rooted in school life. However, provision for global citizenship is not such a strong feature.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good overall. Lesson plans are detailed and provide an effective structure for teachers to use a variety of interesting approaches to motivate pupils. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils and high expectations in most classes. Classroom management is efficient, with a clear sense of order and well established routines throughout the school. Most lessons are taught at a good pace, with effective use of questioning to ensure pupils' understanding.

Systems and procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress are very effective. In every class, staff provide useful oral feedback for pupils. In most cases teachers' marking is thorough with helpful written comments for pupils on how they can improve their work. Assessment for learning is well established as part of classroom routines.

In many classes, staff work with pupils to identify agreed targets on how to improve their work, but in a very few cases teachers do not record when these have been met. The tracking files of teachers are of very good quality in most, but not all, cases and provide a very good overview of pupil progress across the school. The detailed and effective assessment of pupils with additional learning needs is a very strong feature.

Subject leaders keep high quality files of pupils work to use when moderating both within the school and with other local schools. This sharing of good practice helps to ensure that assessment is valid, rigorous and reliable. The analysis of data on pupil achievement is thorough and effective.

Annual reports to parents follow a standard format, are informative and meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The provision of care, support and guidance for pupils is outstanding. This enables all pupils to flourish and make significant progress in their learning. Pupils' wellbeing is monitored carefully and the school identifies at a very early stage when a pupil needs support. There are very strong links between the school and a range of multi-disciplinary agencies to support the needs of pupils and their families well.

The management of behaviour by staff is highly effective. This helps to ensure a calm atmosphere with a clear sense of order and very high levels of mutual respect. All pupils know and understand how to be responsible members of a vibrant learning community.

There are appropriate policies and effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing. The benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle are well promoted. The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Pupils' moral and spiritual development is promoted very effectively, through whole school assemblies, a highly effective religious education programme and the use of the 'school church' in the Foundation Phase.

The support for pupils with additional educational needs is outstanding and is a further strength of the school. Successful early intervention schemes and the attention and care with which personalised support programmes are prepared, delivered, and monitored, are exemplary notable features. Arrangements for the use and regular review of easily understood individual education plans are highly effective. There are extremely strong links with parents, who are kept fully informed of their child's work plans and progress. This is often on a daily basis. They are fully engaged with the school in developing and modifying individual education plans.

Pupils' progress against their individual targets is monitored well through regular scrutiny of their work by the special educational needs co-ordinator. These systems enable pupils to make very strong progress relative to their abilities, aptitudes and needs. All pupils with special educational needs take a full and active part in all aspects of school life.

The school has appropriately identified more able and talented pupils and makes good provision to address their needs.

Learning environment: Good

The school offers a safe and welcoming environment for all pupils. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils and they are encouraged to participate fully in all activities. The school respects and celebrates diversity within a community where all pupils are valued. There are appropriate policies for dealing with oppressive behaviour, racial discrimination, disability and equal opportunities. These are clearly understood by parents, carers and pupils and are applied effectively.

The school's buildings are maintained to a generally good standard. All classrooms and corridor areas have stimulating displays that include examples of pupils' work. They provide a colourful and interesting learning environment. There is a good supply of appropriate learning resources.

The extensive high quality school grounds are made up of well-equipped play areas, a nature reserve, fitness trail and a large sports field. The outdoor resources in the Foundation Phase are very good. Very good use is made of the school to provide a range of activities for the local community.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and provides outstanding leadership and management. He has implemented detailed and well understood school improvement systems. These very effectively focus the efforts of pupils and staff to raise standards and attain excellence. He has very strong support in this from the senior leadership team and subject leaders.

The school has a wide range of effective policies and these are updated regularly. School initiatives to meet local and national priorities are well established. All staff give a very high priority to promoting equal opportunities, bilingualism, tackling social disadvantage and ensuring pupils' wellbeing.

There is a clear management structure within which roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood by all staff. All staff are very committed to school improvement and work extremely effectively as a team. Regular meetings for staff and management groups are minuted appropriately with action points for follow up. The impact of these actions are seen for example in the quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs and in the high percentage of pupils who attain at the higher levels in key stage 2.

Performance management arrangements are successful in supporting staff to meet personal and whole school priorities such as for example successfully improving standards in reading. These lead to the identification of good opportunities for all staff to attend in-service training.

The governing body fulfils its legal and regulatory duties effectively. Governors have a good knowledge of the school and are fully involved in school self- evaluation. They also contribute well to the school development plan and are effective in their financial oversight of the school. All governors attend appropriate courses. They are developing their role as critical friend to the school.

Improving quality: Excellent

The school has a well-established cycle of self-evaluation involving a wide range of stakeholders, including parents and a very strong evidence base. This includes detailed analysis of data on pupils' performance to identify targets for improvement. Pupils contribute effectively to self-evaluation and development planning through the completion of questionnaires, but mainly through the work of the school council.

There is an extensive and very well planned programme of lesson observations by the senior leadership team. Staff also readily self-evaluate their own performance and the progress of pupils, by completing weekly review forms that they then share with the headteacher. These are used very well to modify teaching and improve standards. They also demonstrate the effective and professionally self-critical approach of staff to their work.

The highly effective monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation of pupils' work at different levels across the school is an outstanding feature. Subject and phase leaders monitor their areas of responsibility rigorously to assure high standards and develop very high quality files to exemplify standards and share good practice. Designated school improvement weeks provide staff with very good opportunities to review their work by analysing data and using first-hand evidence about the quality of teaching and learning. This process contributes very well to identifying areas for improvement and raising standards.

The self-evaluation report is detailed and provides a thoroughly accurate overview of school performance. The outcomes of school self-evaluation are similar to inspection findings.

There is a very good link between self-evaluation and school development planning. The school development plan succinctly identifies priorities within an appropriate time frame and has a good allocation of resources. This plan includes success criteria and quantifiable targets. Although longer term aims are not recorded, these are identified elsewhere, for example in governing body minutes.

The school is actively involved in professional networks that are having a beneficial impact on standards. Whole school initiatives to improve bilingualism, healthy eating, physical development and education for sustainable development are very successful. Teachers work effectively to share their expertise with other schools particularly in assessment and moderation strategies.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has established a very effective range of partnerships. These are used very well to benefit all pupils. Parents and carers are well informed about school

activities through a combination of regular newsletters and innovative use of information technology via the school website, noticeboards and 'text-to-parents'.

They have a very good awareness of school events and a thorough understanding of their child's progress. They engage with the school on a number of successful activities, including eco-projects to further develop the school grounds and various healthy schools' initiatives. The engagement of parents in school life is an outstanding feature.

The school works very closely with the local authority in successfully sharing good practice with other schools particularly in effective assessment and provision for pupils with additional learning needs. There are very productive links with the local secondary school and transition arrangements are very good.

Links with outside agencies in relation to sustainable issues are excellent. This has had a very positive influence on pupils' wellbeing and their awareness of wider environmental issues. A range of visitors support pupils well in interesting and varied curricular and extra-curricular activities. The links between the school and the local initial teacher training institution and college are very good.

Resource management: Excellent

The school prioritises spending extremely effectively, according to needs identified in the school development plan. It reviews the impact of spending, such as the development of the outdoor areas, to ensure a strong impact on enriching pupils' experiences.

The school manages teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time very well. The two teachers who deliver lessons during this time enhance the development of pupils' cultural and spiritual awareness through a rich and varied timetable. Other teachers use this time well to carefully plan and reflect in detail on their teaching.

There are regular opportunities for staff to be involved in highly effective school improvement projects such as assessment, provision for pupils with additional learning needs and self-evaluation. This has a significant impact on whole school and performance management priorities and is outstanding practice. All classes are well resourced and the effective deployment of teaching assistants provides very good support for pupils. Teachers and support staff work well together to ensure the best possible outcomes for the pupils.

The school makes very good use of its funding, and provides a high level of care, support and guidance. Most pupils make excellent progress and the school provides excellent value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In key stage 2, performance data is skewed by the outcomes for the pupils in the learning support centre who have moderate to severe learning difficulties and who are included in the overall performance data for the school.

Looking at the performance outcomes for all pupils at the end of key stage 1, the proportion who achieved the expected level (level 2 or above) was above the average for the family of similar schools in science in 2011. In English and mathematics the performance of all pupils placed the school in the lower 50% of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. More able pupils' performance above the expected level (level 3) is lower than the family averages in English, mathematics and science.

In 2011, the performance outcomes for all pupils at the end of key stage 2 at the expected level (level 4 or above) were below the average for the family of similar schools. In English, mathematics and science, the performance of all pupils placed the school in the lower 50% of schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. However, looking at performance of mainstream pupils only, the school is doing extremely well compared with the family of similar schools. In English, mathematics and science, the performance of mainstream pupils placed it in the top 25% of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

More able pupils' performance above the expected level (level 5) at the end of key stage 2 is very good in every core subject. It is above the average achieved by schools with a similar percentage of free school meals and is higher than the local authority and Wales averages.

Unverified key stage 2 data for 2012 shows that nearly 50% of pupils in Year 6 have attained above the expected level (level 4) in all three core subjects. However, in the Foundation Phase, only 14% of pupils have attained at this higher level.

In 2011 in key stage 1, the achievement of boys and girls at the expected level was similar. However, in key stage 2, more girls attained the expected level in all three core subjects.

Overall pupils entitled to free school meals do better at the end of the Foundation Phase than those who are not, but this pattern is reversed in key stage 2.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils attained or exceeded the expected level in Welsh second language, (level 4) was 83%. This is much higher than the family of schools and Wales averages.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Most of the pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. All pupils feel safe in the school. They consider that they are doing well and that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress. All pupils believe that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and that there are lots of opportunities for regular exercise. Most pupils feel that they are doing well and that homework helps them to understand and improve their work. They know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. Most believe that other children behave well and enable them to get on with their work. Most pupils believe that they have enough books equipment and computers to do their work. Nearly all think that children behave well at playtimes and lunchtimes and they say that the school deals well with any bullying.

Parent questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by 44 parents. Overall they expressed very positive views about the school. All parents confirmed that their child likes the school and confirm that their child is safe. They all believe that the school is well run and that staff have high expectations. They all believe that the school helps their child take on more responsibility and that their child is well prepared for moving on to their next school. They all believe that their child is encouraged to be healthy. Most agree that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs. Most believe that pupils behave well and they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions. Most parents agree that homework builds well on what their child learn in school and that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. Many parents understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Gareth Wyn Jones	Reporting Inspector
Buddug Bates	Team Inspector
Ivor Petherick	Lay Inspector
Sue Roberts	Peer Inspector
Chris Millis (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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	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

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.