



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

**Cwmaber Junior School
Brynhafod Road
Abertridwr
Caerphilly
CF83 4BH**

Date of inspection: May 2012

by

Dr. P. David Ellis

for

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

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

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Cwmaber Junior School was opened in January 1989 after the original school burnt down. It is now accommodated in a modern building on a pleasantly landscaped site. It is situated in the village of Abertridwr about two miles north of Caerphilly and serves the village and the immediate locality, which reflects considerable economic decline and deprivation; it is designated as a Communities First neighbourhood. Around 38% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, which is well above the local authority and national averages.

There are currently 136 pupils on roll between the ages of seven and 11, taught in four single-age classes and one mixed-age class. The number on roll has continued to decline since the last inspection. There are six full-time teachers, including the headteacher. Around 21% of pupils are registered as requiring additional learning needs support, which is similar to the national average; six have a statement. No pupils come from an ethnic minority background, use Welsh as their first language or are looked after by the local authority.

The school was last inspected in May 2006, when all the current teachers were on the staff; the deputy headteacher was subsequently promoted to another school and not replaced. The headteacher has been in post since 1993.

The individual school budget per pupil for Cwmaber Junior School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3197 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Caerphilly is £6779 and the minimum is £2494. Cwmaber Junior School is 21st out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The school's performance is good because:

- nearly all pupils achieve good standards in key skills;
- National Curriculum results have been steadily improving in recent years;
- the school's results compare well to similar schools;
- all pupils feel safe, happy and secure in school and behaviour is excellent; and
- teaching is consistently good across the school with some excellent features.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher leads the school very effectively and is well supported by all staff;
- distributed leadership is well embedded across the school and team work is a clear strength;
- governors are highly supportive of the school, kept well informed and undertake their responsibilities effectively;
- there is a dedicated and consistent drive to improve standards across the school; and
- well-established internal and external professional learning communities reflect excellent practice.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 raise the attainment of pupils on free school meals;
- R2 ensure pupils' handwriting and presentation are more consistent across the school; and
- R3 improve pupils' punctuality at the start of the school day.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Results in 2011 in literacy show an improvement over the last few years, especially in oracy. Across the school nearly all pupils achieve good speaking and listening skills. A majority read above their chronological age and by the time they leave the school they read with confidence. Nearly all are able to write independently at length in a wide range of genres. They achieve good standards of numeracy and develop effective research techniques and thinking skills. Their information and communication technology skills are excellent. However, presentation of work and handwriting are inconsistent.

Nearly all pupils show a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards learning Welsh and achieve good oracy skills in the language. Their awareness of Welsh culture and heritage develops well.

Results at the expected level four and above have been steadily improving over the last few years. In 2011 they continued to rise in English and mathematics, although overall they remained below the family, local authority and Wales averages; three of the 29 pupils assessed had statements of special educational need.

In 2011 results at the higher level 5 in English and mathematics were better than the previous three years, but in science they were lower. In English and science performance remained below the family, local authority and Wales averages, but in mathematics it was above the family and similar to the local authority.

In comparison to similar schools the 2011 results place the school in the best 25% for English and the higher 50% for mathematics and science at level 4 and above and in the higher 50% for all three subjects at level 5.

There is no identifiable trend in the performance of boys in comparison to girls, but pupils on free school meals consistently achieve less well than their peers.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils feel safe, happy and secure in school. Nearly all understand the need to develop a healthy lifestyle by selecting appropriate food and undertaking physical activity and regular exercise.

All pupils' behaviour is excellent and nearly all show care, consideration and respect for adults and peers. This is evident in their orderly movement around the school and during lessons, assemblies and playtimes. There have been no permanent exclusions for many years.

Attendance is improving. Although at 91.8% for 2010-2011 it is below the family, local authority and Wales averages, it is better than the majority of similar schools

and in the autumn term 2011 it reached 93.2%. Unauthorised absence is relatively low. A few pupils regularly arrive late in the morning and miss all or part of their daily Welsh lesson.

All pupils contribute well to what and how they learn and they know how to improve their work. They clearly enjoy school and have a very positive attitude to learning.

Pupils offer many suggestions to improve their school. The school council makes an important contribution and is developing its roles and responsibilities.

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

A broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Through detailed and imaginative planning teachers provide interesting and stimulating learning experiences that build effectively on previous knowledge. There is a consistency of approach in all classes.

The organisation of classes into ability sets for English and mathematics and the provision of differentiated tasks within lessons ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged.

Provision for the development of skills in literacy and numeracy and in the Welsh language is good; in information and communication technology it is excellent. Intervention programmes and strategies are constantly updated to ensure that all pupils acquire the appropriate skills across the curriculum.

Extra-curricular activities and visits and visitors successfully enhance the learning opportunities provided by the school.

Education for sustainable development is given a high priority. Pupils are very well informed about environmental issues and are responsible for recycling much of the school's waste. Through various initiatives they gain a good understanding of global citizenship.

Teaching: Good

Teaching is consistently good across the school with some excellent features. In the best lessons, teachers prepare very thoroughly, have high expectations and possess secure background knowledge. An outstanding feature of all lessons is the attention given to matching work to pupils' ability levels.

All teachers promote independent and collaborative learning effectively and use questioning techniques and information and communication technology very well. They employ a range of methods, structure lessons appropriately and clearly identify learning intentions and success criteria.

The quality of relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils is excellent. Teachers frequently inspire pupils to achieve highly through their caring and supportive manner, use of praise and encouragement and sense of humour.

Statutory requirements for assessment, recording and reporting are fulfilled. Record keeping is focused and effective. The school's well-established whole-school tracking system and the results of standardised tests very effectively monitor pupils' progress and help to set realistic and challenging targets that inform future planning.

Assessment for learning strategies are embedded in classroom practice across the school. In partnership with teachers, pupils set their own individual targets and they are regularly involved in evaluating their own learning and that of their peers.

All work is marked thoroughly and conscientiously and positive verbal and written feedback is provided, although this does not always point the way forward. Pupils are encouraged to read and respond to the comments made.

Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through termly consultation evenings, when a pupil profile forms the basis for discussion. Annual pupil reports are very comprehensive and informative; they are skills-based and include targets for improvement in the core subjects.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has very effective policies and arrangements for promoting healthy living and pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing. This is evident in the supportive ethos within the school and the positive attitude of pupils to all aspects of school life.

Pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is addressed appropriately; collective worship meets statutory requirements.

The school is very proactive in monitoring behaviour and attendance and works effectively with the welfare service to improve levels of absence. All data is analysed thoroughly and records are very well maintained.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding and all necessary health and safety measures are in place.

External agencies and specialist services work in effective partnership with the school, ensuring that pupils' needs are met.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Well-established systems ensure that staff identify pupils' needs promptly, develop detailed education plans and provide appropriate interventions which impact positively on progress.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a fully inclusive community and all pupils and staff are valued and treated equally; this is a strong feature. The school actively promotes equal

opportunities and all pupils have the same access to the curriculum and extra-curricular provision. All necessary policies and procedures are in place.

The school has very few incidents of bullying, racism, discrimination or other forms of harassment and any identified issues are promptly addressed. Nearly all pupils feel the school deals effectively with any bullying and every parent considers their child is treated fairly and with respect. All pupils know who to go to if they feel upset.

Diversity is recognised and celebrated, with the result that nearly all pupils develop a very good understanding of, and compassion for, other people and different cultures.

The school makes provision for pupils and staff with any disability and implements reasonable adjustments when necessary.

A recent internal restructuring programme, involving reconfiguration of rooms, has ensured the accommodation is fit for purpose and of very good quality. Displays considerably enhance the learning environment.

The grounds are well equipped enabling pupils to play and exercise in pleasant surroundings.

The school is well resourced in relation to materials and facilities.

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

The school's vision and aims effectively underpin its ethos. All members of the school community are valued and share a common purpose.

The headteacher leads the school very efficiently and maintains a good overview of its strategic direction and day-to-day administration. He is well supported by two teaching and learning responsibility post holders, who undertake their responsibilities very conscientiously and model good classroom practice.

Distributed leadership is well embedded across the school and staff roles are clearly defined and well developed. All teachers are subject leaders and monitor their areas of responsibility very thoroughly.

All staff have high aspirations for pupils and work collaboratively and cohesively together. Team work is a clear strength of the school.

Performance management procedures meet statutory requirements and targets for both teachers and support staff are linked to the school development plan and local and national priorities.

Governors are highly supportive of the school; they are kept well informed and undertake their responsibilities effectively. They have a clear understanding of their role and the school's performance and make an effective contribution to its strategic direction.

One governor is designated as a critical friend and visits the school frequently. Various other governors are also involved in the day-to-day work of the school.

All statutory policies are in place and there is a rolling programme of policy review. Parents are made aware of the complaints procedure. The prospectus and governing body's annual report to parents meet the new requirements.

School initiatives to address local and national priorities are very successful and impact positively on pupil outcomes.

Improving quality: Good

The self-evaluation process is fully embedded across the school, based on a consistent drive to improve standards.

Subject leaders are involved in reviewing targets, monitoring standards and allocating resources. They give staff effective feedback that instigates the development of appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

The school actively seeks the views of parents, pupils, governors and members of the community and all teachers are involved in thoroughly analysing performance data and producing detailed subject reviews.

The self-evaluation process focuses on a rigorous assessment of standards and provision. It is used effectively to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement and to generate appropriately challenging targets for the school development plan.

The school has addressed all recommendations from the previous inspection.

Well-established internal and external professional learning communities enable all staff to develop pupils' independent learning and research skills; this reflects excellent practice.

Partnership working: Good

There is a good range of strategic partnerships that help to enrich and support pupils' learning and wellbeing.

The partnership with parents is strong; nearly all are very supportive of the school and are very happy with the provision and the progress their children make. Homework is used effectively to support learning.

Good links exist with a range of local community groups; the school is an integral part of the life of the village.

The school works cohesively with other schools in its cluster. Transition plans with the feeder infant school and the local receiving secondary school include appropriate curricular and pastoral links. These are valuable in helping pupils to prepare for the next stage in their learning.

The school participates in moderation and standardisation activities within its local cluster, which has a significant impact on the accuracy of its assessment judgements.

The school works well with the local authority.

Resource management: Good

The school has a full complement of well-qualified and very experienced teachers and support staff, all of whom are effectively deployed and have clear job descriptions.

Professional development is given a high priority and is supported by focused in-service training activities and professional learning community work. All staff have attended relevant courses recently in relation to their particular role. In-house training also occurs regularly, often in association with the local cluster.

All requirements of the national workload agreement are met. Teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time is effectively organised through the employment of a qualified teacher.

Resources are very well managed, so that the school has a welcoming and orderly appearance. The provision of information and communication technology equipment is particularly impressive and staff have high levels of technical competence.

The school site is very secure, well maintained and used to best advantage.

The budget is effectively managed and efficiently monitored on a day-to-day basis by the headteacher and clerk, although, due to falling rolls, the school is currently operating with an agreed deficit, having previously been in surplus.

Financial decisions are based on the developmental needs of the school to ensure best value for money. The school has a history of successfully exploiting funding opportunities to supplement its budget. Successive audit reports have identified that the school has effective financial controls.

Consistently good outcomes ensure the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2011 results overall at the expected level 4 and above were a little lower than the previous two years, but up to 2010 they had been steadily improving. In 2011 they were below the family, local authority and Wales averages, although three of the 29 pupils assessed had statements of special educational need.

In English and mathematics results in 2011 at level 4 and above were better than or similar to the previous four years and show a trend of improvement between 2008 and 2010. In English performance was similar to the family, local authority and Wales averages, whereas in mathematics it was slightly below these three comparators. In science results in 2011 were better than most previous years and also show a trend of improvement until 2010, but remained below the three comparators.

In 2011 results at the higher level 5 in English and mathematics were better than the previous three years, having been relatively static previously, but in science they were lower, having declined since 2009. In English and science performance remained below the family, local authority and Wales averages, but in mathematics it was above the family and similar to the local authority.

Results in 2011 in literacy show an improvement over the last few years, especially in oracy, with a levelling out recently in reading and writing. However, in oracy performance remained below the family, local authority and Wales, whereas in reading and writing it was similar to all three comparators. Across the school a majority of pupils read above their chronological age.

In comparison to similar schools the 2011 results place the school in the best 25% for English and the higher 50% for mathematics and science at level 4 and above and in the higher 50% for all three subjects at level 5.

There is no identifiable trend in the performance of boys in comparison to girls, but pupils on free school meals consistently underachieve relative to their potential.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fifty-four parents completed the questionnaire, 19 of whom added written comments, nearly all of which were positive. All responses were above national norms.

All parents believe:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child likes school, was helped to settle in well and makes good progress;
- pupils behave well in school;
- teaching is good;
- staff expect pupils to work hard and to do their best;
- staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect;
- their child is safe in school and encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- appropriate additional support is provided, if necessary;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with any suggestions or problems;
- their child is helped to become more mature and responsible and is well prepared for moving on to the next stage of his/her education;
- there is a good range of activities provided; and
- the school is well run.

Nearly all parents consider:

- homework builds well on what is learnt in school;
- they are kept well informed; and
- they understand the procedures for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred and one pupils completed the questionnaire. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive and well above the national norms.

All pupils say they:

- feel safe in school;
- know who to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;
- are doing well at school;
- are helped to learn and to make progress;
- know who to ask if they find work hard;
- have enough books and equipment; and
- think nearly all pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time.

Nearly all pupils think:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- they learn how to keep healthy;
- homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school; and
- pupils behave well in class so they can get their work done.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Dr. P. David Ellis	Reporting Inspector
Mrs. Ruth Ferrier	Team Inspector
Mrs. Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Ms. Susan O'Halloran	Peer Inspector
Mr. Dyfed Davies	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.