

A report on
Cwmdar County Primary School
The Square
Cwmdar
Aberdare
CF44 8UA

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by

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Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn

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

Cwmdar Primary School is situated in the Cwmdar area of Aberdare in Rhondda Cynon Taf. There are 246 pupils on roll including 33 of nursery age who attend on a full-time basis. They come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. On the whole, most are from homes which are not significantly economically or socially disadvantaged. Many live in the local area, although around a quarter come from further afield.

Eighteen per cent of pupils are considered eligible for free school meals, which is below the local and close to the national average. All but one pupil has English as a first language. No pupil has Welsh as the language of the home or receives support in English as an additional language.

About 10% of pupils are considered to have additional learning needs; this is a below average figure. One pupil is looked after by the local authority. No pupil was excluded in the previous school year.

The school was last inspected in the spring term 2006.

During the inspection the deputy headteacher was absent having taken maternity leave. Her class teaching duties were taken on by a temporary teacher.

The individual school budget per pupil for Cwmdar County Primary School in 2011/2012 means that the budget is £2,915 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,499 and the minimum £2,788. Cwmdar is the 93rd out of the 119 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf 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 is good because:

- standards in key skills are high;
- standards in nearly all areas of the national teacher assessments are above most similar schools;
- the curriculum is rich and very well organised;
- assessment procedures are well developed and used effectively; and
- pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because of:

- strong leadership;
- very effective links between assessment and planning for improvement;
- accurate, detailed and well-used self-evaluation processes and procedures;
- good progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection report;
- very positive attitudes amongst all staff to continuous improvement; and
- all staff work together as a mutually supportive team

Recommendations

In order to improve further, Cwmdar Primary School needs to:

- R1 pursue current initiatives to develop and extend more able pupils;
- R2 raise standards in oracy in the national teacher assessments for eleven year olds; and
- R3 give greater emphasis to the spiritual dimension in assemblies and in the everyday life of the school.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

Starting from an average base on entry, nearly all pupils develop good speaking and listening skills and use them confidently. In the Foundation Phase, nearly all read accurately and at an appropriate level for their age and ability. By the end of key stage 2 most pupils are confident, fluent and expressive readers.

Across the school the written work of nearly all pupils is of a high standard. They write independently and for a range of purposes and audiences, using a wide choice of vocabulary. They spell the majority of words accurately and use appropriate punctuation. Most have good presentation and handwriting skills.

The numeracy skills of most pupils are good and develop appropriately, as do their information and communications technology and problem-solving skills. Nearly all pupils across the school develop well as independent learners. Nearly all have a strong sense of their Welsh identity.

Almost all pupils develop good Welsh language skills. By the end of key stage 2 they enjoy learning Welsh and use a wide range of sentence patterns accurately and effectively; nearly all read accurately in Welsh with expression and write short passages and dialogues confidently.

At the expected levels performance in the national teacher assessments for seven and eleven year olds has been above most schools locally and nationally. It has also been above nearly all in its family of schools across Wales. However, while overall results in English have been high, the performance of eleven year olds in oracy has fallen sharply and in 2011 was well below local, national and family averages.

Currently the results of seven and eleven year olds at the higher levels are lower than most schools in the family. At seven years of age, boys often do not perform as well as girls. At eleven the reverse is sometimes true, but there is no consistent pattern. Free school meals pupils do not perform as well as their peers, although the difference is small. Generally there is a positive trend of improvement and most pupils reach or exceed the targets set for them.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel very safe within the school and they are particularly pleased with the way staff deal with any instances of physical or verbal abuse. They are also very clear as to how they can develop a healthy lifestyle and are appreciative of the school's efforts to encourage them to eat healthily and to take regular exercise.

Attendance has been improving steadily and is, currently, in line with that for similar schools. The taking of holidays during term time however, remains a concern.

A report on Cwmdar County Primary School
March 2012

Nearly all pupils arrive punctually at the beginning of the school day. Nearly all enjoy school, are enthusiastic learners and behave well.

The school council is very active in promoting the views of pupils on matters affecting their life in school and is usually successful in obtaining a desired result. Pupils' opinions are also sought on various aspects of how and what they learn. Across the school pupils are invariably polite and show care and concern for each other. They have very constructive relationships with their teachers and wish to do well. By the age of eleven many evaluate their own work and that of others realistically. They know what to do to improve and how to be successful learners.

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

Planning for the curriculum and skills is an outstanding feature. Teachers' plans are constantly reviewed, reflected upon and adjusted in order to ensure that standards are challenged and raised. Complementary planning between the two key stages has resulted in the very smooth transition between phases.

Learning experiences are challenging and enjoyable through the very effective use of project work and innovation weeks. There is a very strong commitment to ensuring that the planning leads the learning and is based on pupils' needs and interests. The school's effective practice has been successfully shared with others.

Teachers make sure that key skills are embedded across the curriculum thus ensuring that every pupil has the necessary learning tools to access the curriculum. They provide very good opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills, as evidenced in the high standards achieved by the end of key stage 2. Skills progression is well planned across both phases.

A good range of interesting and challenging activities are also planned to develop pupils' information and communication technology, numeracy and thinking skills.

Opportunities for the development of the Welsh Language are also included in planning. Incidental Welsh is well used across the school. All pupils are encouraged to speak Welsh when opportunities arise and their oracy skills are celebrated in various ways.

The school promotes a strong sense of Welsh identity through various activities and across the curriculum.

Pupils are very supportive of the range of initiatives with which the school promotes environmental sustainability; education for sustainable development and global citizenship is well established. There is good provision for pupils to learn about the needs of the world and the importance of protecting it.

Teaching: Good

Across the school teaching is often of a high standard, particularly within the Foundation Phase and towards the end of key stage 2.

In the best lessons, teachers have a very good understanding of their subjects and how to make them interesting, so that all pupils work conscientiously and have enquiring minds. They encourage pupils to think for themselves and to be aware of the skills they will need to complete tasks to a high standard. They have high expectations of what can be achieved and warmly recognise success. They review what has been learnt vigorously and share future objectives with their pupils so that all understand what they will need to do next.

Learning support assistants are well used to extend and enhance learning.

Teachers in the Foundation Phase, in particular, plan very carefully and consistently to ensure that all pupils receive many worthwhile and enjoyable experiences to learn at first hand.

Assessment procedures are very strong features. There are comprehensive and clear procedures in place to track and evaluate pupils' standards and progress accurately. These are well understood and used by all staff in order to judge standards and to plan ahead.

Assessments for learning procedures are very well established. Effective use is made in lessons of a wide variety of strategies, which positively impact on pupils' learning. Individual targets are set consistently across the school and their impact on learning is carefully tracked.

All teachers give detailed feedback to individual pupils, which helps them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to continue to make progress. This is a particular strength of the school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a very calm and orderly community with a friendly and supportive atmosphere that ensures pupils feel safe and secure. There is a strong emphasis on wellbeing and all pupils, staff and other stakeholders are valued as individuals.

The moral and cultural development of pupils is very well promoted, but opportunities to develop spirituality are not always utilised fully during assemblies and the daily life of the school.

Provision for personal and social education is a positive feature and effectively supports pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing. The school's detailed behaviour and anti-bullying policy is consistently applied. Pupils are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour and achievements and to use their initiative. Good attendance is also effectively promoted.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

A report on Cwmdar County Primary School
March 2012

The school has good arrangements for the identification and monitoring of pupils with additional learning needs. Teachers clearly identify pupils who require extra support and planning is of a consistently high standard to meet their needs. Their progress is carefully tracked and recorded. Effective programmes are in place that involve withdrawal and in-class support. Individual learning plans are detailed and appropriately address the pupils' needs. They are regularly shared with parents.

Staff work very effectively with a number of outside agencies to identify, support and review pupils' learning needs.

Learning environment: Good

The school successfully promotes tolerant attitudes to ensure all are free from harassment and oppressive behaviour. All staff are vigilant in identifying and dealing with issues immediately as they arise and clear policies and procedures are in place.

All pupils experience equal access to all areas of the school's provision and opportunities based on an inclusive ethos.

Diversity is respected and celebrated through the curriculum and the study of other countries and cultures. Pupils show care and concern for everyone in the school, the community and the wider world.

Although the exterior condition of parts of the buildings reflect their age, the school is well maintained and meets the needs of its pupils well. The interior décor, combined with the high standard of wall displays showcasing pupils' work, provides a very stimulating learning environment. The development of the school field as an outdoor classroom is a particularly exciting development.

Overall, there is a good supply of quality learning resources, which is much appreciated by pupils.

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

The school is well led. The headteacher is highly committed to ensuring that the school provides very well for all of its pupils. He has high expectations of himself and of all who work at the school.

This commitment is shared by the senior management team and by all staff who work closely together. Subject co-ordinators play an influential role in reviewing standards and progress and in addressing areas of development.

Performance management procedures are very well established and include all members of staff. Targets relate directly to school improvement priorities.

A report on Cwmdar County Primary School
March 2012

The governing body is well led and works closely with the school. Governors are well informed about standards and many are regular visitors. They constructively hold the professional leadership to account and have a clear view of the long-term strategic needs of the school, which they plan thoroughly to address.

The school has made good progress in responding to national priorities and local initiatives. A particular strength is the very successful way in which pupils have been encouraged to develop the necessary skills to become lifelong learners.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation programme is based around clearly defined procedures and roles and all staff are effectively involved. The self-evaluation report is of good quality and accurately reflects the school's current strengths and areas for development.

The systematic evaluation of relevant aspects of the school's work illustrates its strong commitment to promoting improvement and raising standards. This includes a thorough analysis of data, systematic reviews by subject leaders and classroom observation. The school frequently seeks and considers the views of parents and pupils.

The process is also closely linked to addressing local and national priorities. Improvement plans include a broad range of actions, timescales and indicate lines of responsibility. The inclusion of measurable targets, where appropriate, ensures that outcomes can be effectively evaluated.

The developing work of professional learning communities within and beyond the school has contributed very significantly to improving classroom practice.

Partnership working: Good

There is a well-developed partnership with parents, who value the school's open door policy. The school also works closely with the local authority and local services.

Curriculum leaders monitor individual subjects rigorously to ensure that on-going cluster moderation exercises continue to strengthen judgements.

There are effective links with other schools, including the secondary schools to which pupils transfer, to agree standards and to ensure a successful transition process.

Resource management: Good

The school is appropriately staffed and resourced. Arrangements for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment are in line with the workforce agreement, meets statutory requirements and is well used to raise standards.

Financial resources are appropriately distributed according to school improvement priorities. Due to the nature of the building, internal accommodation continues to be a limiting factor, especially in the Foundation Phase, but good use is made of grants

A report on Cwmdar County Primary School
March 2012

and fundraising events to provide better facilities in the outside area. The work on improving the school field is ongoing.

All spending programmes are costed and support the implementation of the school improvement plan. Resources are allocated to ensure the school's initiatives are successful and have a positive effect on both standards and wellbeing. The school gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Pupils begin school with levels of basic skills and maturity which are in line with those expected and found amongst children of this age. In the last five years in the national teacher assessments of seven year olds, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level 2 in English, mathematics and science has been above local and national averages and close to the average for schools in its family. Results over time at the higher level 3 have been above in English and mathematics and similar in science. When compared to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, results in 2011 were above most of these schools.

In these assessments at the end of key stage 1 girls performed better than boys. Those who are not entitled to free school meals attained slightly better than those who are entitled to them.

In the last five years overall results in the national teacher assessments of eleven year olds have been generally above local and national averages and in line with most schools in the family. In English results at the expected level have improved in the last two years in reading and writing and are above the family, local and national averages. In oracy they have fallen. The results in English at the higher level 5 have been generally below local, national and family averages.

In mathematics, results at the expected level have in the last five years been broadly in line with most schools in the family and above local and national averages. At the higher level results have fluctuated between above and below these averages. In 2011 results at the higher level were below the family average and above local and national averages.

In science at the expected level results have been, with one exception in 2009, above local and national averages and close to the family average. Results at the higher level have fallen from above in 2010 to below the family and just above local and national averages.

When compared to schools considered to have a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, in 2011 the school performed above nearly all of these schools in English and above most of them in mathematics and science. The combined results were high.

In the assessments at eleven years of age, boys outperformed girls. Those not entitled to free school meals performed better than those who are entitled to them.

Nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress and reach the standards expected of them.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty parents completed the questionnaire. Nearly all had positive opinions and all were satisfied with the school and felt that their children liked being there. All felt that their children were making good progress and were well behaved. They received good teaching and teachers had high expectations of their children to work hard and do their best.

All believed that their children were treated fairly and shown respect. All were happy with arrangements to encourage regular exercise and to promote healthy lifestyles. They felt their children were safe in school and that parents were well informed of progress. All believed that the school helped their children to be more mature, to take on responsibilities and were well prepared for the next phase of their education. They all thought that the school was well run.

A very few parents felt that their children were not helped to settle in well when they began school, that homework was unhelpful in improving learning and that children did not receive appropriate additional support. A very few felt uncomfortable about approaching the school and that there was an insufficient range of activities, trips or visits provided. A few parents said that they did not understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred and four pupils completed the questionnaire and the team also talked to younger and older pupils. Nearly all had positive views of the school. They felt safe in school and believed that the school dealt with bullying well. All knew who to talk to if they were worried or upset, thought they were positively encouraged to do well and knew what to do if they found the work hard.

Nearly all believed that the school taught them how to be healthy and that there were lots of chances for regular exercise. Nearly all thought that they were doing well at school. They believed they had enough equipment, computers and books. Nearly all said that children behaved well at play time and lunchtime. A few pupils did not think homework was helpful. A minority said that other children did not behave well and interfered with their work. However, from observation and in discussion with pupils, there was no evidence to support these views. Good behaviour in classes was a strength of the school.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Mr Peter Mathias	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Margaret Owenna Davies	Team Inspector
Mr Ted Tipper	Lay Inspector
Ms Sarah Loydon	Peer Inspector
Mr Paul 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.