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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Heolgerrig Community School
Heolgerrig Road
Heolgerrig
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1SB**

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.

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Context

Heolgerrig Primary School is in the village of Heolgerrig close to Merthyr Tydfil. It is in a new building that opened in June 2010.

There are 227 pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11, including 52 who attend the nursery part-time. There are seven classes in the school, including three mixed-age classes in key stage 2.

Most pupils come from the local community and about 7% are entitled to free school meals, which is much lower than the average for the local authority and Wales. The school has identified about 24% of pupils as having additional learning needs. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but one has a note in lieu of a statement and another is undergoing statutory assessment. There are two children 'looked after' by the local authority.

Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language and no pupil speaks Welsh as their first language. Four pupils receive support for English as an additional language.

The current acting headteacher was appointed in February 2011. Due to external factors, the school has suffered significant disruption to its staffing over the last 18 months. Currently, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the leader of the Foundation Phase are undertaking their roles in an acting capacity due to the absence of the substantive headteacher, deputy headteacher, and Year 1 teacher. At the time of the inspection, the acting deputy headteacher was absent and there were three teachers either on supply or on a temporary contract in charge of three of the seven classes.

The school was last inspected in November 2008.

The individual school budget per pupil for Heolgerrig Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,433 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil is £7,735 and the minimum is £328. Heolgerrig Primary School is 10th out of the 24 primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil in terms of its school budget per pupil. Over the last 18 months, the school has also received significant additional funding from the local authority.

Summary

The school's current performance	Adequate
The school's prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory

Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate because:

- pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 achieve at a level at or close to the average for the family of schools and above the average for the local authority;
- pupils develop their writing skills reasonably well as they progress through the school;
- many pupils develop accuracy in their reading, but most pupils in key stage 2 do not read widely or for pleasure enough;
- pupils behave well in most classes, but too many older pupils in key stage 2 misbehave;
- the quality of teaching is good in a few classes, but it varies too much across the school;
- pupils in a minority of classes have had too many supply teachers for too long;
- there is effective support for pupils that fall behind in the development of their literacy skills; and
- there is not enough detailed planning of the curriculum to ensure consistency and progression from one class to the next as pupils move through the school.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are unsatisfactory because:

- external factors and long-term investigations have had a negative impact on the ethos of the school and the ability of leaders and managers to take forward school improvement;
- there are no substantive senior managers in post and the acting members of the senior management team have been in place only since January 2012;
- basic systems that underpin improvement are not well established, for example scrutiny of pupils' books, regular lesson observations and monitoring and review of teachers' planning files;
- the arrangements for tracking the progress of mainstream pupils are weak and this limits the ability of leaders and managers to monitor pupils' progress and the impact of initiatives;
- there is very little internal moderation and standardisation of pupils' work to secure the accuracy and reliability of end-of-key-stage assessments; and
- there are few policies or schemes of work in place to guide the planning of the curriculum and the teaching of staff.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 improve standards in reading;
- R2 secure leadership to provide a more stable environment for pupils and teachers;
- R3 improve curriculum planning to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum and religious education;
- R4 improve planning for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum;
- R5 improve self-evaluation processes in all aspects of the school's work;
- R6 improve the quality and accuracy of assessment; and
- R7 provide better support for short-term, temporary members of staff to ensure continuity and progression in the curriculum for the pupils in their care.

What happens next?

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion, that special measures are required in relation to this school. 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 on a termly basis.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

On entry to the school, most pupils have skills which are average or above average for their age. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils achieve adequate standards, but more able pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well in nursery and reception classes and in the later stages of the Foundation Phase. The quality of the pupils' speaking and listening skills in key stage 2 is adequate overall, but varies too much from class to class.

Pupils' reading skills develop well in nursery and reception and through the Foundation Phase. They develop their understanding of phonics well and, by the end of the Foundation Phase, most read at an appropriate level for their age and ability. They enjoy class stories and develop confidence in reading, and most can read simple texts successfully. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils can read accurately and have a reasonable degree of fluency in their reading. However, few pupils, even those with strong reading skills, develop a love of reading or can draw on a wide experience of authors and genres. Pupils with weak reading skills who receive targeted support make good progress and improve their reading skills significantly over a relatively short period of time, although a minority continue to have reading ages below their chronological age..

Pupils' writing skills are generally good. Many pupils in the Foundation Phase can write simple sentences for a range of purposes. Handwriting skills are generally weak in the Foundation Phase and in the early part of key stage 2. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils have good writing skills in English and science. They use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures and they organise their extended writing into paragraphs effectively. However, pupils' writing skills across the wider curriculum are under-developed.

In the Foundation Phase, especially in nursery and reception, pupils develop enthusiasm for Welsh and respond well to opportunities to use the language. They follow basic instructions in Welsh. In a few classes in key stage 2, pupils speak simple sentences and respond to basic questions in Welsh reasonably well. However, pupils' skills in reading and writing in Welsh are weak overall.

It is difficult to verify the accuracy of teacher assessment as the systems to underpin accurate assessment are weak in the school; for example, little internal moderation or standardisation of pupils' work takes place.

Teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase suggest that the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level (level 2) in English, mathematics and science is slightly above the average for the family of similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher-than-expected level (level 3) is below the family average in English and science and close to the average for mathematics.

Compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 1 places the school in the top 25% of schools in English and science, and the upper 50% for mathematics.

The proportion of pupils who attain the expected level (level 4) at the end of key stage 2 is slightly below the family average in English and science, and close to the family average in mathematics. The proportion gaining the higher-than-expected level (level 5) is slightly above the family average in English, but below the average in science and mathematics.

Compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 places the school in the upper 50% of schools in English and science, but the lower 50% for mathematics.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Most pupils have a positive attitude towards healthy eating and exercise, but a few continue to bring unhealthy packed lunches to school. Most pupils say that they feel safe at school and feel comfortable about approaching staff with any concerns.

Many pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn, especially in most of the classes in the Foundation Phase. Where pupils have had the same class teacher for a long period of time, most pupils have good attitudes to work, display enthusiasm and engage well in learning activities. However, too many pupils at the end of key stage 2 are disruptive and do not show staff or each other enough respect. A significant minority of pupils express negative views about the behaviour of other pupils in the school, but many say this has got better over the last six months.

Members of the school council and eco committee are actively involved in making a few decisions to improve the life and work of the school, for example setting up a 'worry box' for pupils and meeting canteen staff to establish a salad bar. The school council has not met the governing body formally and does not manage a budget, but members have been involved in internal interviews for staff appointments.

Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities and experiences on offer, for example street dance, gardening club and the school and community choir.

Attendance rates have improved steadily over recent years. The attendance rate for the current academic year is good at just over 95%.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Unsatisfactory

The school provides a limited range of learning experiences and does not adequately cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The planning and provision in the Foundation Phase are adequate overall with good features within the nursery and reception classes. Since the appointment of the acting headteacher, the school has started to improve the planning and the provision of learning experiences, but there are very few policies and schemes of work to guide

and underpin teachers' planning of the curriculum. There are schemes of work to support planning in English and mathematics and the scheme for science is in development. However, there are no schemes of work or policies for the foundation subjects and religious education. The implementation of a curriculum to develop pupils' skills in key stage 2 is at an early stage of development.

The planning for pupils with additional learning needs meets their needs appropriately in relation to intervention programmes, but there is little systematic planning to meet the needs of more able pupils, who are not challenged enough in many classes.

There is a high level of long-term staff absence. This, alongside weak processes for planning the curriculum, has undermined the continuity of curriculum planning and provision from class to class.

Pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales and the Welsh language. There is a small amount of provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship, for example through recycling, energy conservation and healthy living, and through learning about other cultures in the Foundation Phase. However, there is little systematic planning to teach about these aspects of the curriculum in a progressively more demanding way as pupils move through the school. There is a suitable range of extra-curricular clubs, but relatively little evidence of the impact of educational visits in pupils' work.

Teaching: Adequate

Teachers have established good classroom routines in most classes, especially in nursery and reception. Many teachers use a suitable range of effective teaching strategies and organisational methods. However, teachers' planning of lessons is limited by the lack of systematic planning of the curriculum at a whole-school level. Most teachers plan a suitable range of individual, pair and group work and set out clear learning objectives at the start of sessions. However, weak management of behaviour in a few older classes has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive good support from learning assistants in all classes. Teachers and learning assistants support less able pupils well and the teaching of intervention programmes for many pupils is good. However, teachers and support staff do not challenge more able pupils enough.

Teachers undertake regular marking of pupils' work and they often provide helpful comments on pupils' achievements and how they can improve their work. However, the quality of marking varies too much between classes. Teachers are beginning to encourage pupils to assess their own work and the work of others using agreed criteria linked to the lesson's learning objectives.

Procedures to underpin the quality and accuracy of assessment are limited overall. The tracking of pupils' progress is good in relation to the support programmes for less able pupils, but they are at an early stage of implementation for most pupils. The internal arrangements for the moderation and standardisation of assessment are weak.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Collective acts of worship and assemblies promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development appropriately and they celebrate diversity well. The school promotes the benefits of healthy living, but a minority of pupils do not always respond appropriately, for example in relation to their food and drink choices at lunchtimes. A few pupils participate well in a few extra-curricular activities that focus on physical development, such as street dance. The school has a suitable framework for personal and social education. Teachers monitor pupils' wellbeing appropriately and offer suitable support when needed. The school has procedure and has an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

All pupils receive appropriate support when they start school. Effective transition arrangements are in place for Year 6 pupils when they transfer to the partner secondary school. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs through intervention programmes is good, but teachers do not always use individual education plans fully in planning their teaching. Since September 2011, the school has put in place well-organised systems and individual education plans to support pupils with additional learning needs. The plans are comprehensive and set out suitable targets for improvement over agreed timescales. They are effectively reviewed on a regular basis. The school has effective intervention programmes in literacy and mathematics for pupils who are struggling to keep up with their peers. A range of external agencies and specialist services visit the school to provide suitable support for pupils' needs.

Learning environment: Adequate

The school strives to live by its motto of 'Working together enjoying learning'. In most cases, pupils and staff collaborate well to establish a purposeful ethos in the school. However, a few older pupils do not behave well in class and they interfere with the work of others. Prolonged staff absences and long-term, on-going investigations have also had a negative impact on the ethos of the school.

The school takes good account of pupils' backgrounds to make sure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and to the opportunities offered by the school.

The school is in a new building, which provides accommodation of high quality for pupils and staff. The building collects, filters and reuses rainwater and benefits from solar panels. Monitors in the school's atrium allow pupils and staff to see the energy and the volume of rainwater and mains water used. Specialist areas, such as the music room, are particularly good features.

Displays in most classrooms and around the school are attractive, well presented and informative. They celebrate pupils' achievements, stimulate their interest and enhance learning. Learning resources are of a high quality and meet pupils' individual needs well.

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

Members of the recently-formed senior management team are beginning to share leadership responsibilities and to contribute to whole-school issues, such as the development of an appropriate scheme of work for English. However, the temporary nature of this management team, the lack of relevant job descriptions and significant staff absences mean that establishing and sustaining an ethos of continuous school improvement has proved difficult. Although there are leaders for all subjects, their role is underdeveloped. Many have not had the opportunity to develop schemes of work or to evaluate provision or standards. Staff and senior management meetings are held regularly and recent agendas have focused more clearly on key development priorities.

The chair and vice chair of the governing body are conscientious, understand their roles and responsibilities and are supportive of the work of the school. Despite their commitment, many governing body meetings over the past year have had to focus on personnel matters and this has prevented governors from improving their understanding of the school and the needs of its pupils. Governors do not contribute well enough to self-evaluation and planning for improvement. As a result, they cannot challenge the school enough in relation to the standards it achieves. The governing body's oversight of the financial arrangements of the school is not sufficiently robust.

The school pays adequate attention to a few national and local priorities, such as improving standards in literacy and numeracy. However, important initiatives, such as the full implementation of the Foundation Phase in Year 1 and Year 2, have suffered significant delays.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The self-evaluation report identifies the school's good features and areas for improvement based on the consideration and analysis of a limited range of information and discussions with staff. There are appropriate plans and a timetable in place to improve the school's self-evaluation processes during the next academic year. However, current processes to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school lack rigour. They do not draw on a wide enough range of first-hand evidence. For example, staff have not scrutinised pupils' work and there is no established and systematic monitoring of teaching or of pupils' progress and achievement in lessons.

The current school improvement plan highlights a few relevant targets for improvement, related to success criteria that focus appropriately on pupils' standards. Although the plan identifies methods of monitoring and the personnel responsible, staff do not evaluate the impact of the actions on pupil outcomes enough. The absence of post-inspection action plans and self-evaluation documents prior to September 2011 means that there is no evidence of a clear link between past self-evaluation and planning for improvement and the situation in the school now. Staff take part in moderation meetings with other primary schools and there has been a degree of involvement in a professional learning community relating to thinking skills. However, there is little evidence of the impact of these activities on improved standards and provision.

Partnership working: Adequate

The school has a growing range of relevant partnerships. Links with parents are developing appropriately through the newly-established Friends of Heolgerrig Association and improved communication with the school. The school responded appropriately to local authority support between November and March in relation to a few key areas, including classroom observation and improving the learning environment for Foundation Phase pupils. However, improvements since then have not continued with sufficient pace and rigour.

Productive links with several community organisations help to provide pupils with experiences that they may not otherwise access. This includes athletics sessions with students from Merthyr College of Further Education and a successful partnership with Bike Club and Sustrans. Both activities have broadened pupils' opportunities to take part in regular physical exercise in direct response to pupil questionnaires.

An appropriate range of work takes place with the local cluster of schools in relation to moderation and quality assurance of end-of-key-stage pupil assessments. However, senior staff have not extended this to develop good practice in standardisation and moderation within the school.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The acting headteacher and governors, supported by the local authority finance officer, have allocated the school's delegated budget appropriately under difficult circumstances. Due to the long-term absence of three staff, significant extra funding from the local authority has enabled the school to secure additional teaching and support staff, when necessary, and prevented staffing costs from having a seriously negative impact on the school's finances.

Permanent members of staff have relevant qualifications and experience and are deployed appropriately. However, the school does not always provide enough support to short-term, temporary members of staff to ensure continuity and progression in the curriculum for the pupils in their care. This has resulted in a significant minority of pupils not achieving as well as they should. Members of the senior management team do not receive enough non-contact time to discharge their duties appropriately. The organisation of the morning timetable in key stage 2 does not enable teachers to make the best use of the available teaching time. Performance management procedures are adequate, but their impact on the professional development of staff is limited overall.

Despite standards being generally adequate, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money due to the number of important shortcomings identified above.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

There are few established, systematic and whole-school procedures to support accurate teacher assessments at the end of key stages.

Teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase suggest that the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level (level 2) in English, mathematics and science is slightly above the average for the family of similar schools. Just over 96% of pupils achieved the core subject indicator (at least level 2 in English, mathematics and science) which was almost 10 percentage points higher than last year. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher-than-expected level (level 3) is below the family average in English and science and close to the average for mathematics. Overall, there is a downward trend in the achievement of level 3.

Compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 1 places the school in the top 25% of schools in English and science, and the upper 50% for mathematics.

The proportion of pupils who attain the expected level (level 4) at the end of key stage 2 is slightly below the family average in English and science, and close to the family average in mathematics. Just over 88% of pupils achieved the core subject indicator (at least level 4 in English, mathematics and science) which was significantly better than in the previous year. The proportion gaining the higher-than-expected level (level 5) is slightly above the family average in English, but below the average in science and mathematics. There is a slight downward trend in the achievement of level 5 in mathematics, but a slight upward trend in English.

Compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 places the school in the upper 50% of schools in English and science, but the lower 50% for mathematics.

Overall, there are few significant differences in the performance of boys and girls at the end of the Foundation Phase, although girls tend to do better than boys in writing. However, by the end of key stage 2, girls do better than boys in achieving at least level 4 (the expected level) in all aspects of English, mathematics and science, although more boys gain level 5 in mathematics and science than girls.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaires

Seventy-five pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire.

All, or almost all, pupils:

- feel safe in school;
- know who to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- believe teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress and give them useful homework;
- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- feel they are doing well at school;
- believe they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work;
- believe that the school provides lots of chances for them to get regular exercise; and
- feel that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Many pupils:

- believe that homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school; and
- think that the school deals well with any bullying.

Pupils' views are generally similar to or slightly more negative overall than the views of pupils in other schools across Wales.

However, just over two-fifths of the pupils who responded believe that other children do not behave well and stop them from getting their work done. A similar proportion indicate that children do not behave well at playtime and lunch time. These responses are much more negative than the average for primary schools in Wales.

Parent questionnaires

Twenty-four parents or carers completed the questionnaire.

All, or almost all, parents or carers feel that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child is safe in school and likes the school;
- the school helped their child settle well when they started at the school;
- pupils behave well;
- their child is making good progress
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- the school encourages their child to be healthy and to take regular exercise;

- teaching is good;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do their best;
- the homework that is given builds well on what their child learns in school;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular needs; and
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility.

Parents' views are generally less positive than the views of parents in other schools across Wales. Their views are far more negative than average in relation to:

- the way the school keeps them informed about their child's progress;
- how comfortable they feel about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a complaint;
- the range of activities for their children including trips and visits; and
- how well the school is run.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Barry Norris HMI	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Morgan HMI	Team Inspector
Julie Price	Lay Inspector
Deborah Rainer	Peer Inspector
Cath Jones	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. FPYear 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.