



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

**Maesycwmmmer Primary School
Tabor Road
Maesycwmmmer
Hengoed
Caerphilly
CF82 7PU**

Date of inspection: February 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

Maesycwmmmer Primary School is in the village of Maesycwmmmer, which is in the Caerphilly local authority. The school describes much of the area it serves as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged.

There are 167 pupils aged three to eleven years in the school. Pupils are organised into five classes, some of which contain pupils of mixed ages. The majority of pupils come from the village, but a small number attend the school from outside the catchment area. The school is on a split site with separate buildings for Foundation Phase and junior pupils.

About 16% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the local authority and the all-Wales average. A very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. The school has identified 18% of pupils with additional learning needs including two pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There have been no exclusions in the last 12 months.

Since the last inspection in 2006, the senior leadership of the school has changed. A newly-appointed headteacher and deputy-headteacher took up their posts in September 2011.

The individual school budget per pupil for Maesycwmmmer Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £2,970 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Caerphilly is £6,779 and the minimum is £2,494. Maesycwmmmer Primary School is 36th 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 current performance of the school is good because:

- most pupils make good progress from their starting points;
- nearly all pupils behave well in classes and around the school;
- the level of care, support and guidance provided to pupils is good;
- the curriculum is stimulating; and
- the quality of teaching is consistently good.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- it is well led by senior staff and governors;
- the new headteacher has achieved a great deal since his recent appointment;
- there is a sound process for self-evaluation;
- targets for school improvement focus appropriately on raising standards and improving quality; and
- it has made good progress in relation to the recommendations of the last inspection.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 improve standards and provision for more able pupils, particularly in reading in key stage 2;
- R2 increase pupils' involvement in the decision making processes about school life;
and
- R3 improve pupils' attendance.

What happens next?

Maesycwmmmer Primary School will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most pupils make good progress throughout the school in relation to their starting points. They have positive attitudes towards reading and read both for pleasure and for information. Most make good progress in reading and read a range of material confidently in line with their age and ability. In the Foundation Phase, pupils' ability to write independently develops well and most older pupils have a secure grasp of basic punctuation. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils write well across the curriculum and for a range of purposes and audiences. Most also spell with increasing accuracy. Most pupils also have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their writing.

Pupils' progress and achievement in lessons in all classes are good and their work shows appropriate improvement over time. Most pupils apply their previous knowledge, skills and understanding well to new situations. The listening skills of nearly all pupils are good and young pupils, in particular, are very attentive listeners. Pupils generally have good information and communication technology skills, and older junior pupils use these skills well to support their learning across a wide range of contexts.

Generally, pupils' standards of spoken Welsh are good, but are less well developed in reading and writing. There are a few occasions when older pupils lack confidence in using Welsh in informal settings. Pupils' attitudes to Wales and learning Welsh are positive.

There is no significant difference between the achievements of pupils who are entitled to receive free school meals and other pupils of a similar age. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs make good progress and achieve well in relation to their ability. They take a full part in lessons and, with suitable support, produce work of an appropriate standard. More able pupils, particularly in key stage 2, do not always achieve as well as they are capable.

In key stage 1, pupils' performance in English and science was above average when compared with that of similar schools, but slightly below in mathematics. Pupils' performance at the higher than expected level (level 3) was above the average, except in writing, when compared with that of similar schools.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science has shown an upward trend over the last three years. In English, pupils' performance was about average when compared with that of similar schools, but slightly below average in mathematics and science. Pupils' performance at the higher than expected level (level 5) has improved significantly, but is still below the average for the family of similar schools.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils feel safe within the school. Nearly all understand the need to develop a healthy lifestyle and how they can achieve this by what they choose to eat and the physical activity and regular exercise they undertake.

Over the last three years, there has been a gradual downward trend in pupils' attendance. While the overall rate of attendance is still below average compared with that of similar schools, it is improving and the school is on course to exceed this year's attendance target of 92.5%. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually, but a very few are regularly late.

The majority of pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as the weekly games club and cookery session. Many pupils take part in community activities, and regular visits to places of interest enhances pupils' enjoyment of their work. Most pupils take pride in their work and nearly all work enthusiastically, conscientiously and collaboratively in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and nearly all pupils show care, consideration and respect for adults and other pupils.

The contribution the school council makes to the life of the school is not yet firmly established. Meetings are not held frequently enough and there are too few opportunities for the council to present its views to governors. Many of the council's suggestions are still in the early stages of development. However, members feel that their suggestions and decisions are beginning to make a positive contribution to school developments such as the improvements made to the playground.

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

The school provides a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum. This is very well organised and provides continuity, progression and clarity at all levels. Staff work well together to plan imaginative learning experiences that engage pupils. However, provision and challenge for more able pupils is currently underdeveloped.

Teachers plan their teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well and incorporate them skilfully into topics. This ensures continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school and prepares them well for the next stage in their learning. The school has good support in place for those pupils who lack appropriate literacy skills.

There is a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities of good quality and many pupils take part in them. For example, the gardening club provides good opportunities for pupils to develop a variety of key skills. The school arranges a wide range of stimulating visits to places of interest and visitors to the school. For example, the visit to Aberthaw Power Station supports work in science effectively. Staff use the school grounds very well to provide enjoyable and innovative learning experiences for pupils.

The development of the Welsh language is given prominence throughout the school and this has raised pupils' standards. The school also reflects and celebrates Welsh culture well. Teachers and other adults enrich pupils' experiences by using incidental Welsh at every appropriate opportunity. For example, the weekly Welsh assembly gives pupils the opportunity to enjoy Welsh through music, singing and listening to stories.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good in all classes. Teachers have an up-to-date knowledge of appropriate teaching methods and they produce very detailed plans covering the full range of curriculum subjects and skills. As a result, they provide well-managed and interesting lessons for pupils. Adults focus support very well and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning, particularly in literacy sessions. All staff manage pupils' behaviour very well.

Assessment for learning is well developed in each class. Oral and written feedback to pupils is particularly good. This provides them with a firm knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Pupils regularly review their own progress and set their own learning targets with their teacher.

The school provides clear, manageable and useful records on each pupil. Staff use these to track pupils' progress effectively in a variety of areas. They use pupils' records to identify any areas of concern and to intervene, if necessary. Reports to parents are clear, informative and identify areas for improvement. All junior pupils have the opportunity to reflect on their learning by creating their own reports, which they give to their parents.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are good arrangements for the promotion of pupils' healthy living and wellbeing. Pupils and parents indicate a high degree of satisfaction with these arrangements. The school's efforts to promote good behaviour and attendance are also proving effective. Learning experiences successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school works very well with other key support agencies to improve outcomes for pupils. In particular, there are very effective partnerships with the Educational Psychology Service and the Speech and Language Therapy Department.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

The school has good arrangements for the early identification and monitoring of pupils with additional learning needs. Targeted literacy support for individuals and groups has resulted in pupils achieving good standards. Support staff make a valuable contribution to improving pupils' work. Sensitive, targeted support for groups of vulnerable pupils through the Student Assist Programme has improved pupils' attitudes, confidence, and relationships very well.

Learning environment: Good

The school makes sure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to take part in everything it provides including its varied range of extra-curricular activities.

The school provides an effective and stimulating learning environment which meets the needs of pupils well. It has many bright, appealing, relevant displays. The classrooms are of appropriate sizes for the numbers of pupils in them and the information and communication technology suite and resource room provide pupils with good space to undertake research activities.

The school grounds provide an interesting learning environment for pupils and include a pond/wildlife area, trim trail and allotments. Staff use these effectively to support learning and teaching.

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

The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school and has achieved a great deal in a relatively short space of time. The headteacher and the new deputy-headteacher have high expectations and work together well to secure improvements in provision and standards. The school has a clear focus on raising standards. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities for staff and a sound performance management structure is in place.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations well. Under the leadership of a long-serving and conscientious chairperson, the governors share the headteacher's vision for the school. They support the school very well and know in detail about the initiatives the school is developing. Governors have a detailed understanding of the performance of the pupils and how this compares with that of pupils in similar schools. There is a clear protocol for link governor visits to the school when they discuss issues with teachers and observe lessons. This strategy is successful in further developing governors' knowledge of the school.

The school is making appropriate progress in introducing initiatives that meet local and national priorities, such as the Foundation Phase, assessment for learning and the development of reading. These are having a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and managers use a wide range of first-hand evidence effectively to identify the school's main strengths and areas for development. This evidence includes the performance of pupils, classroom observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of pupils and parents. As a result of seeking parents' views, the school sent a full analysis of them to all parents and addressed successfully several issues that they raised.

The school uses the outcomes of the self-evaluation process to determine appropriate priorities for improvement. Implementation of the school development plan is generally having a positive impact on provision and standards. The school has made good progress in relation to the recommendations of the last inspection.

The school is developing as an effective learning community with a positive culture of collaboration and strong teamwork. There are a number of professional learning communities within and outside the school that are having a positive impact on standards and quality. For example, the focus on learning and teaching enables teachers to share good practice effectively with each other across the school. A particularly successful initiative has involved all teachers undertaking joint observations in order to identify effective teaching strategies. This has contributed well to the consistency of learning, teaching and assessment between classes.

Partnership working: Good

There are a good range of partnerships that help to enrich and support pupils' learning and wellbeing and help build the school's capacity for improvement. They include partnerships with parents, the local authority education service and the wider community, including local businesses, the village partnership, the police and the local authority groundwork division.

The partnership with parents is strong and they are happy with the provision at the school. Communication with parents has improved and they appreciate the ease with which they can approach the school. Recent home-school 'learning logs' and the regular participation of parents of young pupils in school life have strengthened the partnership between the school and parents by involving them more directly in their children's learning.

A particularly effective partnership exists with the local further education college in relation to the quality of its training for students who wish to become classroom assistants.

Appropriate transition plans with the local secondary schools include curricular and pastoral links. These are effective in helping older pupils to prepare for the next stage in their learning. There are good opportunities for teachers to work together across the phases in the subject areas of English, mathematics and science.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its budget well and adjusts spending efficiently in response to changes in circumstances. There are sufficient qualified teachers and support staff and these are deployed effectively. All staff understand and respond positively to the school's performance management procedures. There are sound arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and these enable teachers to work well together on planning issues.

The school identifies and allocates resources appropriately in line with the priorities identified in its school development plan. There is generally a very good range of learning resources that are managed and used well. Recent spending on improving

the school accommodation, the outside environment and information and communication technology equipment is having a very positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The information and communication technology suite and resource room are two good examples of very effective use of surplus space.

In view of the outcomes achieved by most of the pupils, the standard of care, support and guidance provided, and the efficient management of the budget, the school overall provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Maesycwmmer Primary School is the most challenged in its family of schools (a group of schools with similar characteristics).

In key stage 1, 87% of pupils in 2011 achieved the core subject indicator (the expected level in English, mathematics and science). Pupils' performance in English and science was above the family of schools, local authority and all-Wales averages, but slightly below these in mathematics.

In oracy and reading, pupils' performance at the higher level 3 was above the average for the family of schools. However, in writing, fewer pupils achieved the higher level. In mathematics, the performance of pupils was generally below the average for the family of schools, but significantly more pupils achieved at the higher level. In science, pupils' performance was above the average for the family of schools at the expected and higher levels.

In key stage 2, 83% of pupils in 2011 achieved the expected level in English, mathematics and science. When compared with that of other similar schools, the overall performance of pupils is above the average for the family of schools. In addition, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science has shown an upward trend over the last three years. In English, this performance is about the same as the family of schools, local authority and all-Wales averages, but slightly below these in mathematics and science.

Although pupils' performance at the higher level 5 has improved significantly over the last three years in English and mathematics, it is still below the average for the family of schools. In reading, fewer pupils achieve the higher level 5 than in any other aspect of English.

In key stage 1, boys perform less well than girls in all subjects, but this is reversed in key stage 2 and the performance of boys is above the performance of girls. However there were very small numbers of boys involved.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaires

Eighty-one pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire fully.

All pupils think that teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress and they know whom to talk to if they find their work hard. In addition, nearly all pupils know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. As a result, all pupils state that they feel safe in school and most feel that they are doing well.

All pupils feel the school teaches them how to keep healthy and they have lots of opportunities to get regular exercise. Nearly all pupils feel that they have enough books and equipment and most state that homework helps them to improve their work in school.

Many pupils feel that the school deals well with bullying and that pupils behave well at break and lunchtimes. A minority of pupils feel that the behaviour of others interferes with their work in class.

Overall, many of these views are in line with or slightly better than the views of pupils in other schools across Wales. However, pupils in Maesycwmmer Primary School are not as positive about the way the school deals with bullying or about the behaviour of other pupils.

Parent questionnaires

Twenty-one parents completed the questionnaires.

Overall, all parents feel the school is well run and they express a great deal of satisfaction with the school.

All parents state that their children were helped to settle into school when they first started. All feel that their children like school and are happy and safe there. All parents feel that teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard. As a result, all feel that their children are making good progress. All parents feel their children are becoming more mature, are taking on responsibilities, and are encouraged to be healthy. All parents feel that there is a good range of activities in school and that homework given is appropriate. Many also feel that their children are treated fairly and all parents consider that children receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs. As a result, all parents state that pupils are well prepared to move on to their next school.

All parents state that school staff are approachable if they have concerns or questions and most feel they are well informed about their children's progress. Nearly all parents feel that pupils behave well in school. All parents are clear about what to do if they need to raise issues with the school or to make a complaint.

Many of these views are more positive than the views of parents in other schools across Wales. Parents in Maesycwmmmer Primary School are more positive about how well the school is run, the homework given, additional support for pupils and how well prepared pupils are for moving on to the next school. However, parents are not as positive about the fairness with which pupils are treated in the school.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Mike Maguire	Reporting Inspector
David Kenneth Davies	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Kevin Hart	Peer Inspector
Mr Harris (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. 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.