



*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**

**Oaklands Primary School  
Maes Y Deri  
Aberaman  
Aberdare  
CF44 6PF**

**Date of inspection: January 2013**

**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:

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

Oaklands Primary School is in the town of Aberaman in the Cynon Valley within the local authority of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The school is a community primary school with 219 pupils aged three to 11 years, including 35 nursery children. The school has four single-age classes, three mixed-age classes, and a nursery class. There is also a learning support class for pupils from across the local authority who have moderate or severe learning difficulties or behavioural difficulties. The school has identified about 20% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Most of these pupils are at School Action or School Action Plus. This is below the average for Wales. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

Almost 26% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is slightly below the average for the local authority and Wales. The school describes the area it serves as neither socially or economically advantaged nor disadvantaged. Most of the pupils are of white British ethnic origin and no pupil speaks Welsh as their first language.

The school was last inspected in March 2007 when it was judged to be in need of significant improvement. It undertook a follow-up inspection in June 2008 when it was removed from the list of schools in need of significant improvement.

There has been a significant change of staff since the last inspection, including the appointment of the headteacher in September 2009.

The individual school budget per pupil for Oaklands Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,462 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,197 and the minimum is £2,561. Oaklands Primary School is 58th out of the 113 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil. The school budget per pupil includes the provision for pupils in the learning support class.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- the headteacher and staff have high expectations of pupils and each other;
- most pupils make good progress in learning;
- nearly all pupils behave well;
- most pupils show a good level of engagement in lessons;
- teachers and support staff plan learning experiences effectively; and
- teachers use a systematic and thorough approach for developing pupils' skills.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher, deputy head and senior management team provide effective leadership;
- there is a proven track record of improvement in recent years;
- the school uses information from the self-evaluation process well to develop and prioritise improvement plans which have a clear focus on raising standards;
- curriculum teams work collaboratively and effectively; and
- the school manages its resources efficiently.

## Recommendations

- R1 Share the best practice in teaching across the school to ensure that all teachers set tasks which match the needs of all pupils
- R2 Develop the role of the governors in strategic planning and providing challenge based on pupil outcomes
- R3 Ensure that self-evaluation analyses the impact of specific initiatives on outcomes for groups of pupils

### What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

#### Standards: Good

The baseline assessment of pupils on entry to the school shows that most have knowledge, understanding and skills that are below average.

Almost all pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Most have literacy and numeracy skills that are appropriate for their age at the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. The pupils with additional learning needs, including those in the learning support class, make good progress in relation to the targets in their individual education plans. Pupils recognised as more able make good progress.

The speaking and listening skills of most pupils are good. They respond well to questions set by teachers and other adults, and engage readily with each other during discussions and tasks. Many are able to explain clearly what they are doing and can talk confidently about their previous work.

Pupils' reading skills are developing appropriately. In the Foundation Phase, many are able to read fluently and use appropriate strategies effectively to read unfamiliar words. They can express an opinion about their books and predict what will happen next. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read confidently and can select suitable texts from a variety of sources in order to enhance their knowledge across the curriculum. They can discuss different genres knowledgeably and give their opinions about their favourite books and authors.

The writing skills of most pupils are developing well as they move through the school. By the end of the Foundation Phase, most pupils can write short texts independently in a variety of genres. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils have a wide vocabulary and can write extended pieces of interesting work in a variety of contexts across the curriculum.

In Welsh as a second language, most pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 read at a level which is appropriate to their age and ability. Many older pupils are able to hold simple conversations and answer questions in Welsh. They write with increasing confidence as they progress through the school.

In the Foundation Phase in 2012, about 75% of pupils achieve the expected outcome in relation to the development of their language, mathematical and personal skills (the Foundation Phase indicator). This is slightly above the average for the family of similar schools. The proportion of pupils who achieve above the expected outcome is broadly in line with the average for the family of schools.

In relation to schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school performs in the lower 50% for the development of pupils' language skills. The school performs in the lower 25% for the development of pupils' mathematical and personal skills.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who attain the expected level or above in English, mathematics and science when combined (the core subject indicator) is significantly above that of the family of similar schools. There is generally an upward trend over the last four years. The proportion of pupils who achieve above the expected level is below the average for the family of schools.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school is in the upper 25% for mathematics, science and the achievement of the core subject indicator. It is in the upper 50% for English.

In the 2012 assessments, girls performed significantly better than boys at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. However, over the previous four years, there has been no significant pattern of difference between the achievements of boys and girls as a whole.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at break-times is good. Most pupils show a good level of engagement in lessons and are enthusiastic about their learning.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and are confident that staff will deal with any concerns they may have. The majority understand the importance of keeping healthy and take part in the regular exercise opportunities provided by the school. Many pupils take part in school clubs and teams which also contributes to their confidence and wellbeing.

Pupils' attendance is improving and is slightly below 93%. This is about the same as the average for other similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils eligible to receive free school meals, but below the average for Wales. Pupils' punctuality is generally good.

Most pupils have good social and life skills. Older pupils have specific responsibilities in their classes and around the school which they carry out with maturity. They accept responsibility for their work and actions and show respect and care towards their peers and staff. They take part in a wide range of community activities, and support local and national charities well.

The school council and eco council are both effective committees and make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Pupils feel that they have a voice and that members of staff listen to their opinions and take their ideas forward where appropriate in order to make improvements to the school.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>
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<b>Good</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Good**

The school plans learning experiences effectively and collaboratively to stimulate pupils' interest and to build successfully on their prior learning. Teachers plan for the Foundation Phase very well. Plans contain a clear focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Opportunities for child-led learning are strong. Teachers plan an effective mix of adult-led and independent learning activities effectively. This

encourages pupils to take an active part in lessons. In key stage 2, most teachers plan a wide range of activities to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. A series of well-planned challenges extends the learning of more able pupils.

There are many relevant opportunities for pupils to use the full range of skills across the curriculum. The school maps the coverage of skills comprehensively. This systematic and thorough approach is a strong feature of the school.

The provision for Welsh language development and the Welsh dimension is good. Most members of staff make a valuable contribution to the everyday use of Welsh and integrate the language successfully into a range of learning activities. The school enhances pupils' understanding of the history and culture of Wales effectively through carefully planned project work, visits and special events.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship well. A range of after-school activities has a positive impact on pupils' learning experiences by developing decision-making skills, teamwork and collaboration. The school creates valuable opportunities for the pupils on its 'Committee of Planet Savers' to encourage recycling and energy conservation.

### **Teaching: Good**

Most teachers have high expectations and a very good understanding of pupils' needs and abilities. In most lessons, teachers use an appropriate range of teaching strategies well, and challenge and support learners to succeed. Teachers plan activities well to ensure that nearly all pupils enjoy learning, are fully involved and make good progress. In a few lessons, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not set tasks which match pupils' needs appropriately. This results in those pupils making slower progress.

Most teachers apply their subject knowledge well and ask questions effectively in order to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers plan in detail and identify learning objectives and skills clearly, which they consistently share with pupils.

The school has clear and robust assessment and tracking procedures which enable staff to identify any pupils who are underperforming and to plan the next steps for them. Teachers provide pupils with regular oral and written feedback, which identifies what they have achieved and how they can make further progress. In most classes, teachers ensure that pupils have appropriate opportunities to respond to this feedback and to evaluate their own work and the work of others. Target setting procedures are clear and enable all pupils in key stage 2 to set and review their own targets together with the teacher. Pupils in the Foundation Phase have class targets. These procedures are starting to have a positive impact on standards. A robust system of moderation involving all teachers ensures that assessments are accurate. The school provides parents with informative written reports and regular opportunities to discuss pupils' achievements and progress.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Staff care well for pupils in a very supportive community. There is an ethos of mutual respect where pupils are confident to approach staff for guidance when required.

The school promotes positive behaviour consistently. Teachers encourage good attendance and punctuality well. There is effective liaison with the education welfare officer.

Arrangements for promoting healthy eating and physical exercise are good and have a positive impact on the lifestyle choices of the pupils.

The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff and pupils celebrate and value children's achievements both in and out of school. Pupils show care and respect for each other, and older pupils are supportive of younger ones. The school has ensured a strong pupil voice through the work of the school council and by pupils giving presentations at governing body meetings.

The provision for pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream classes and in the learning support class is consistently good. Staff identify pupils' needs effectively through detailed assessment procedures. The school makes good use of specialist services to provide effectively for pupils' specific needs. Members of support staff skilfully deliver a range of intervention programmes that have a positive effect on pupil outcomes. The school monitors pupil progress against individual targets diligently and informs parents regularly about their child's progress.

The school has appropriate policies for all aspects of health and safety. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school has a calm, caring and inclusive ethos. A positive Home School Agreement with parents summarises the school's vision as well as outlining the culture of care that exists. All pupils have access to the full range of the school's provision.

The school buildings and outside areas are mostly well planned and maintained to a good standard. The classrooms provide a stimulating learning environment which encourages pupils to participate actively in lessons. Resources are of good quality and match pupils' needs well. Displays in classrooms, corridors and the hall showcase the achievements of the school well and provide good support for pupils' learning.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Leadership: Good**

Senior leaders communicate a strong sense of purpose and direction for the school. There is a shared vision which involves all members of staff in striving for improvement and raising standards. The headteacher, deputy head and senior management team provide very effective leadership and have high expectations of all pupils and staff. The school has been highly imaginative in establishing curriculum teams that provide strategic direction to the work of the school. These teams involve teaching and support staff from all departments and focus well on raising standards of teaching and learning.



Leaders analyse data well, make good use of information from lesson observations and ensure effective continuity and progression throughout the school. Well-planned staff meetings focus on the school's priorities for development and sound performance management systems ensure that the school makes consistently good progress in meeting its aims and aspirations. Members of staff have clear roles and responsibilities and there is very good communication throughout the school.

The governors support the school well. The headteacher informs them regularly about the school's work and how pupils' performance compares with that in other similar schools. They are aware of the strengths of the school and the areas it needs to develop further. Governors visit the school frequently. They are regularly involved in lesson observations and learning walks. However, they do not provide the school with sufficient challenge with regard to pupil outcomes or have enough impact on setting the strategic direction of the school.

School leaders ensure that there is a sustained focus on national and local priorities, for example improving literacy skills and developing effective standardisation and moderation procedures with the Blaengwawr cluster of schools.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school has very good processes for identifying its strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders and members of innovative curriculum teams gather a wide range of first-hand evidence. They use this evidence, which includes findings from data analysis, book scrutiny and lesson observations, to evaluate the work of the school accurately. However, the self-evaluation process does not always include sufficient analyses of the impact of specific initiatives on outcomes for groups of pupils. Self-evaluation procedures take good account of the views of pupils and parents.

The school uses information from self-evaluation well to develop and prioritise improvement plans with a clear focus on improving standards of teaching and learning. The plans include relevant actions needed to bring about desired improvements and they identify members of staff with responsibility for their delivery. Plans also include realistic success criteria and timescales for completion. As a result, the school is developing a good capacity to secure improvements.

The school is developing well as a learning community. There is a highly effective culture of extensive collaboration between staff, notably in the curriculum teams. The impact of professional development activities on the performance of staff is evaluated thoroughly, but evaluation of their impact on outcomes for pupils is not as rigorous. There are a number of strong professional learning communities in place that focus well on raising standards within and beyond the school. For example, the Welsh second language cluster work has resulted in many pupils achieving the expected level 4 or above in 2012. This compares very favourably with the average for the family of schools and Wales.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school works successfully with a range of partners to enrich pupils' learning and wellbeing. There are strong links with parents. They appreciate the effective induction procedures that help pupils to settle well into school life and the way the school keeps them fully informed about its events.

The school also works effectively with the local authority, particularly in terms of raising standards and joint funding initiatives linked to developing pupils' literacy and wellbeing.

The school plays a prominent role within the local community through events such as the successful intergenerational project and links with the local church. Pupils also raise money for local and national charities.

The school undertakes a number of mutually beneficial activities with the Blaengwawr cluster of schools. These activities include standardising and moderating assessments and developing a shared approach to improving teaching. The school has effective arrangements for pupils' transition to the local comprehensive school. The transition plan contains good pastoral arrangements and focuses appropriately on raising standards, for example in Welsh and numeracy.

**Resource management: Good**

The school makes good use of its accommodation and learning resources. Teaching and support staff understand their roles well and have a wide range of skills and expertise that enables them to carry out their duties successfully. The school deploys staff effectively to ensure that they contribute fully and positively to the work of the school.

The school's performance management system is thorough and sets appropriate targets for all members of staff. Targets focus well on improving the performance of individuals and meeting the aspirations of the school's development plan. There are very effective arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers. This has a positive impact on the quality of their work and provides learning opportunities for pupils that lead to improved standards, particularly in oracy.

The school has good arrangements for financial management and monitors spending decisions thoroughly.

Due to its effective use of funds and the good outcomes pupils achieve, the school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

The school is the eighth most challenged in its family of schools. The family is a group of schools that face broadly similar challenges.

In the Foundation Phase in 2012, about 75% of pupils achieved outcome 5 (the expected level) in relation to the development of their language, mathematical and personal skills (the Foundation Phase indicator). This is slightly above the average for the family of similar schools. The proportion of pupils who achieved above the expected level (outcome 6) was broadly in line with the average for the family of schools.

In relation to schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school performs in the lower 50% for the development of pupils' language skills. The school's performs in the lower 25% for the development of pupils' mathematical and personal skills.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who attain level 4 (the expected level) or above in English, mathematics and science when combined (the core subject indicator) is significantly above that of the family of similar schools. There is generally an upward trend over the last four years. The proportion of pupils who achieve above the expected level (level 5) is below the average for the family of schools.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school is in the upper 25% for mathematics, science and the achievement of the core subject indicator. It is in the upper 50% for English.

In comparing the relative performance of boys and girls, girls generally perform significantly better than boys both at the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.

Over four years, there is no significant pattern of difference between the relative performance of pupils entitled to free school meals compared with those pupils who are not entitled.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Learner questionnaires

Ninety pupils in key stage two completed the questionnaire.

All, or almost all, pupils:

- feel safe in school;
- believe that the school deals well with any bullying;
- know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- believe that the school teaches them how to keep healthy;
- believe that there are lots of chances at school for them to get regular exercise;
- believe that they are doing well at school;
- believe that the teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress;
- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- believe that any homework set helps them understand and improve their work in school;
- believe that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work; and
- believe that nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunch time.

Most pupils:

- believe that other children behave well and that they can get on with their work.

Pupils' views are more positive overall than the views of pupils in other schools across Wales.

#### Parent questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10).

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Huw Watkins	Reporting Inspector
Richard Lloyd	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Mary Boardman	Lay Inspector
Helen Kay Lester	Peer Inspector
Caroline Wright	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

### Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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**

### **Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)**

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

### **The core subject indicator (CSI)**

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

### **All-Wales Core Data sets**

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.