



*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**

**Rhigos Primary School  
Heol Y Graig  
Rhigos  
Aberdare  
RCT  
CF44 9YY**

**Date of inspection: November 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:

<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

Rhigos Primary School is in the village of Rhigos in a rural area north of the town of Aberdare in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The school caters for 54 pupils between three and eleven years of age. Pupils can join the nursery when they are three years old and they start in the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday.

Pupils represent the full ability range. There are no pupils currently with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) although the school has identified 13 pupils in need of additional support.

The pupils come from an area that is socially and economically disadvantaged. Eighteen per cent of the pupils receive a free school meal. The predominant language spoken at home is English. English is the day-to-day language of the school.

The current headteacher was appointed in January 2011 after serving as the acting headteacher from autumn 2010. The deputy headteacher has been in post since autumn 2010. The school was last inspected in 2006.

The individual school budget per pupil for Rhigos Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £4,422 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,499 and the minimum is £2,788. Rhigos Primary School is 12th out of the 114 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The current performance of the school is adequate because:

- many pupils make appropriate progress;
- all pupils are happy and feel safe in school;
- the curriculum is well planned to provide good learning experiences;
- it has developed good procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with additional learning needs; and
- it school develops children's understanding of the wider world well.

However:

- performance has regularly been in the bottom 50% when compared with that of similar schools over the last four years;
- teachers' expectations are not always high enough; and
- there is not enough challenge in the work set for pupils in too many lessons.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- leaders have a clear vision for the school's direction, which they share well with staff and parents;
- the headteacher has managed change effectively in a short period of time and has secured the commitment of all staff and parents by taking good account of their views;
- the school has developed effective systems for self-evaluation and planning for improvement; and
- there is clear evidence of significant improvements in curricular provision, wellbeing and in the quality of care, support and guidance as a result of changes over the last two years.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2.
- R2 Ensure that teaching is consistently good.
- R3 Use assessment outcomes more effectively to challenge pupils in lessons.
- R4 Ensure that all staff have enough time to carry out their leadership tasks in order to drive forward school improvement.
- R5 Ensure that all staff and resources are deployed effectively in order to raise standards.

### **What happens next?**

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.

## Main findings

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

**Adequate**

#### Standards: Adequate

Due to the small number of pupils at the end of both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, the results of pupil assessments have to be treated with care because one pupil's results can have a significant impact on the school's performance.

When pupils start school, the majority have basic skills that are below average, especially in language, literacy and communication. Pupils with additional learning needs achieve appropriately in relation to their starting points.

Most pupils recall previous learning well and often learn new concepts effectively. However, in a minority of sessions, pupils make slow progress and do not achieve well enough, mainly due to the lack of challenge they receive in the tasks set for them.

Nearly all pupils speak confidently and answer questions appropriately. In the Foundation Phase, many pupils use appropriate phonic strategies and picture clues to decode unfamiliar words and to make sense of texts. In key stage 2, more able pupils read fluently and with clear expression. They use appropriate strategies to read unfamiliar words and they enjoy reading fiction books appropriate to their age and ability. They are able to find relevant information and answer factual questions readily. In information and communication technology, pupils use the latest technology well to enhance their learning experiences. For example, older pupils use hand-held electronic devices effectively to record and evaluate gymnastic sequences in order to improve their performance.

The majority of pupils write effectively in subjects across the curriculum. For example, older pupils compose sensitive poems about the experience of families during World War 2. A few more able pupils write extended pieces well. However, most pupils do not write at length often enough across the curriculum.

Pupils develop their numeracy skills appropriately in mathematics lessons, but less so across the curriculum.

In 2012, pupils' performance in language, literacy and communication and mathematical development at the age of seven was significantly below that of pupils in other, similar schools. Performance in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was in line with that of similar schools and with the Wales average. When compared with schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school was in the lower half.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level 4 in English and mathematics has fluctuated greatly over the last five years. The proportion of pupils who achieved level 4 in science has been above the average for its family of schools and above the Wales average for three of the last four years. However, this is not reflected in pupils' books. No pupils have achieved the higher level 5 in any subject in the last two years.

All pupils have positive attitudes to learning Welsh. Nearly all pupils hold basic conversations with their peers or adults. Writing in Welsh develops well from Year 1 to Year 6. The older pupils have Welsh reading books and nearly all read them fluently and can explain what they have read. A majority use the language effectively in a range of contexts outside the formal structure of Welsh lessons.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

All pupils feel safe and nearly all know whom to talk to if they feel upset. Many pupils agree that the school deals well with the very occasional incidents of bullying. Nearly all pupils have a secure understanding about how exercise and diet have an impact on a healthy lifestyle.

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude towards school life and learning. They show particular interest in new curriculum topics. Behaviour is good during lessons and at break times. Pupils are courteous and polite to adults and relate well to each other in and around the school.

In comparison with that of similar schools, attendance has been in the bottom quarter over the last two years and before that in the lower 50%. However, the most recent data shows that attendance has improved significantly since 2011.

The school has an active and developing school council, which has been given responsibility to make favourable changes to improve the school. They feel recognised and have a voice in the school community. Their decisions have brought about a reduction in litter and improvements to the school grounds.

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

The curriculum planning is successful in providing interesting and engaging learning experiences for pupils. The curriculum builds successfully on pupils' knowledge and understanding from the Foundation Phase to key stage 2. A wide range of after-school clubs, including rugby, football, hockey and computer club, enhance pupils' learning and help to develop positive links with the community.

Teachers' short-term plans identify regular opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills, although these do not build well enough on what pupils have achieved before. The provision for developing pupils' skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum is developing well. Overall, staff plan learning opportunities for pupils in their lessons well. However, teachers do not always match lesson tasks accurately enough to the needs and abilities of all pupils.

The school's recent implementation of a more rigorous and detailed approach to the teaching of phonics throughout the school has improved standards in reading and writing.

Provision for the Welsh language ensures that all pupils can hold basic conversations in Welsh appropriate to their age and ability. Opportunities for reading and writing

are linked to subjects across the curriculum. Pupils take part in a Welsh assembly every week and this provides good opportunities for them to practise their oral skills. Welsh personalities and heroes are discussed and celebrated in these assemblies.

Provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship is a strength of the school. The work of the eco council ensures that the school acts sustainably and this is enhanced by a successful recycling project in association with Cardiff City Football Club. Pupils develop their understanding of global citizenship well through their work on international week and links with schools in other countries as part of a Comenius project.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for the development of pupils' skills. They engage, motivate and use a suitable range of teaching methods to interest pupils. All staff demonstrate good working relationships with pupils and manage pupils' behaviour well. Learning support staff contribute effectively to the lessons and provide helpful feedback to teachers. All teachers are good role models for pupils and have good subject knowledge. However, a minority of lessons lack pace and challenge. Teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are not always high enough.

Staff provide detailed feedback to pupils, both orally and through marking of written work, and this enables them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils have ownership of their targets and use these as a basis to evaluate their own and others' performance confidently. This is a strength. Staff use day-to-day assessment well to inform their planning. They have also begun to adopt clear and purposeful systems to track and to analyse data on pupil performance. However, they do not use the outcomes of assessment accurately or robustly enough to challenge pupils appropriately. Reports to parents are clear, consistent and informative and set out areas for improvement. All use effective strategies, such as assessment for learning, to support pupil progress.

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

School initiatives have had a substantial impact on improving attendance levels, such as texting and calling parents of absent pupils. There are appropriate policies in place to promote healthy living and wellbeing. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about health and nutrition and maintaining a balanced diet.

The school has established effective links with relevant specialist services and external providers. For example, contributions from educational psychologists provide useful support in meeting the needs of learners. Learning experiences for moral and social development are successful in fostering values, such as honesty and helping pupils to distinguish right from wrong. Opportunities to develop spiritual awareness allow pupils to reflect well on their own beliefs and values and those of other religions. Provision for cultural development is a strength of the school. There are good links with schools in other countries, particularly in Spain.

The school identifies pupils with additional learning needs well to ensure that they receive appropriate support. These pupils have full access to the curriculum through effective use of support groups across the school. As a result, pupils with additional learning needs make good progress. Parents are consulted regularly and have appropriate opportunities to comment on pupil progress.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school is a happy and inclusive community, where all pupils have equal access to all areas of learning. The school takes good account of the values and diversity of its own community and is committed to learning about diversity in other countries. This helps pupils to develop tolerance and understanding well.

The school's accommodation provides a stimulating and well-maintained learning environment. The extensive outdoor facilities are of a high quality and are well suited to the needs of the Foundation Phase. There are sufficient and appropriate resources that are well matched to pupils' needs. In particular, the recent acquisition of the most current electronic devices are being well utilised by the pupils in order to help raise standards.

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

Leaders and staff have agreed a common vision and appropriate aims for the school. These take good account of the opinions of governors, parents and pupils, and the headteacher communicates them effectively to all stakeholders. Leaders have clear roles and responsibilities that they carry out conscientiously. However, current organisation does not enable them to share leadership responsibilities well enough. Recently-established senior leadership team meetings focus well on school improvement priorities. The headteacher has high expectations of herself and her staff. Performance management processes are appropriate and enable teachers and support staff to develop well professionally. Leaders are supportive and they challenge under-performance rigorously.

The headteacher has provided good training to develop governors' understanding of their responsibilities in relation to supporting and challenging the school. They know the school's priorities and are well informed about its performance in relation to that of other, similar schools. However, although governors have the best interests of the pupils at heart, they do not yet challenge the school well enough in relation to standards of achievement.

The school pays appropriate attention to most relevant local and national priorities. For example, the current school improvement plan focuses well on raising standards in literacy. Staff and governors have improved their understanding and use of data to identify weaknesses, and the implementation of a range of effective strategies to improve attendance has proved successful.

### **Improving quality: Good**

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Over the past two years, they have developed appropriate self-evaluation processes. They acquire information from a wide range of first-hand evidence, including data analysis, scrutiny of pupils' work, classroom observations and listening to learners. The self-evaluation report is honest and feeds clearly into the school's three-year outline plan for school improvement and its detailed annual plan.

The current annual school improvement plan identifies a manageable set of targets and clear, measurable success criteria linked closely to pupil outcomes. The plan names the staff responsible for each element of the target and allocates enough funding to ensure that appropriate resources are available. Although many of these systems are relatively new, there is clear evidence that school improvement planning over the past year is having a positive impact in a few key areas of the school's work. For example, standards in Welsh second language have risen considerably, and the introduction of rigorous and detailed phonic teaching enables pupils to decode words more confidently when reading unfamiliar texts. Despite this, it is difficult for leaders to evaluate fully the success of their actions because they do not always receive enough allocated time to carry out this work.

Over the past two years, the school has developed considerably as an effective learning community. Teaching and support staff are involved in networks of professional practice with other small schools and there is evidence that this has enabled staff to improve their professional knowledge.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Partnership activities with parents and the community are developing well. Lines of communication through newsletters, emails and texts are good and the school has worked hard to raise its profile in the locality. Good links exist with the community police officer and the local church and chapel and these enhance pupils' moral, social and spiritual development well. Recently-introduced family learning sessions are successful in improving parents' and pupils' reading skills. As a result of this new initiative, all pupils now have regular access to the library service book bus. This is already having a positive impact on pupils' love of books and literacy.

The school is developing purposeful links with local primary and secondary schools in relation to transition through good involvement with a voluntary organisation. However, work to moderate and quality assure teacher assessment of pupils' work with other schools is in the early stages of development. This means that the school cannot be assured of the accuracy of its internal assessments.

The school collaborates well with other small schools in the local authority. These schools plan research-based improvement projects every year. They pool their financial resources effectively to bring about improvements in specific areas of its provision, such as music, and skills development.

**Resource management: Adequate**

The school manages its finances and resources well to provide an effective learning environment for all pupils. The headteacher and administrator monitor spending well with the support of the local authority support officer. Spending plans relate well to the school's priorities for improvement, although leaders do not always review the impact of new resources on teaching and learning. For example, the extensive outdoor facilities are not always used well enough by all classes.

Teachers and support staff are generally deployed effectively to enhance learning throughout the school. Their support for pupils with additional learning needs is effective. However, the allocation of staff for the teaching of some literacy sessions does not provide all pupils with the most appropriate opportunities to achieve the highest standards.

In view of the standards pupils achieve overall, the school currently provides adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

Due to the small number of pupils at the end of both key stages, the results of pupil assessments have to be treated with care because one pupil's results can have a significant impact on the school's performance.

In 2012, teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase show that pupils' performance in their literacy skills and mathematical development was significantly below that of similar schools and the Wales average for the expected outcome (outcome 5). Performance in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was very close to that of similar schools and schools nationally.

When compared with schools with a broadly similar percentage of free school meals, the school was in the lowest 25% for literacy skills, mathematical development and the Foundation Phase indicator (the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected outcome in literacy skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity in combination). It was in the lower 50% of schools for personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

For pupils who achieve the higher-than-expected outcome (outcome 6), the school compared favourably with similar schools and with schools nationally in literacy skills and mathematical development. However, no pupil achieved outcome 6 in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

At the end of key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level (level 4) in English and mathematics has fluctuated greatly over the last five years. The percentage of pupils who achieved the core subject indicator (level 4 in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science) has also fluctuated greatly over this period. The percentage of pupils who achieved level 4 in science has been above the average for its family of schools and above the Wales average for three of the last four years.

In 2012, the percentage of pupils who achieved level 4 in English and mathematics was below the average for the family and for Wales. However, every pupil achieved level 4 in science, which was significantly higher than the family and national averages.

When compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school was placed in the lowest 25% of schools for performance in English, mathematics and the core subject indicator, but in the highest 25% for science.

No pupil has achieved the higher level 5 in any subject for the last two years.

There is no clear difference in the attainment of boys and girls over time or between the attainment of pupils entitled to free school meals and other pupils.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

There were 34 responses to the learner questionnaire. A majority of responses were very positive and compared favourably with the national average. However, fewer pupils in Rhigos Primary expressed positive views about bullying and behaviour at playtime and lunch time than in other schools in Wales.

All pupils feel:

- safe in school;
- that teachers and other adults in the school help them make progress; and
- that they know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard.

Nearly all pupils:

- know whom to turn to if they are worried;
- feel that the school teaches them how to keep healthy; and
- feel that there are lots of chances at school to get regular exercise.

Many pupils:

- feel that the school deals well with bullying;
- feel that they are doing well at school;
- feel that the homework helps them understand and improve their work in school;
- feel that they have enough equipment to do their work; and
- believe that other children behave well in class.

A majority of pupils believe that nearly all children behave well on the yard.

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

The 11 responses from parents or carers were nearly all positive.

All parents and carers that expressed an opinion either agreed or agreed strongly that:

- their child likes the school;
- their child was helped to settle well when they started;
- staff expect pupils to work hard and do their best;
- children are encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints; and
- there is a good range of activities, including trips or visits.

Nearly all agreed or agreed strongly that:

- overall, they were satisfied with the school;
- their child is making good progress;
- pupils behave well in school;
- teaching is good;
- homework builds well on what the pupils learn in school;
- staff treat all children fairly and with respect;
- their child was safe in school;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs;
- they were kept well informed about their child's progress;
- they felt comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility; and
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next stage in their education.

Many parents agree or agree strongly that the school is well run.

### Appendix 3

#### The inspection team

Mike Hayes	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Morgan	Team Inspector
Ivor Petherick	Lay Inspector
Debbie Woodward	Peer Inspector
Mrs Curran	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))

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