



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

**Ynysmaerdy Primary School
Neath Road
Briton Ferry
Neath
SA11 2BQ**

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:

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

Ynysmaerdy Primary school is in Briton Ferry, two miles from the centre of Neath. The school was built in the nineteenth century and is a single storey Victorian building with an annex in an adjoining converted chapel. There is limited outdoor space, but the school uses a nearby local rugby ground for outdoor sports.

The school has 199 full-time pupils from four to 11 years of age. There are seven classes, including two mixed Year 3 and Year 4 classes. In addition, 25 part-time pupils attend the nursery in the mornings only. The majority of pupils come from homes that are neither significantly advantaged nor disadvantaged. The school's catchment area has a mixture of private and local authority housing.

Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and English is the main language spoken at home by virtually all pupils. Just under 32% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. About 26% of pupils have additional learning needs and a very few pupils have statements of special educational need. A very few pupils are looked after by the local authority.

The last inspection was in October 2006. The current headteacher was appointed in 2007. However, the acting headteacher, appointed as deputy headteacher in March 2010, has led the school since September 2010.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ynysmaerdy Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £2,992 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Neath Port Talbot is £21,718 and the minimum is £2,648. Ynysmaerdy Primary School is 61st out of the 71 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Ynysmaerdy Primary School's current performance is good because:

- over the last four years, there has been an upward trend in pupil outcomes in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2;
- many pupils achieve good standards in numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum;
- the learning environment in the early years classes is of a very high quality;
- the overall quality of teaching is good;
- relationships throughout the school are very good; and
- the school is successfully raising pupils' attendance.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the senior leadership team have supported effective team working;
- staff use data very well to identify areas for improvement in pupils' learning;
- self-evaluation procedures pin-point areas for development accurately;
- initiatives introduced over the last two years are successfully raising the quality of most pupils learning, and their life and social skills;
- partnership working promotes good levels of wellbeing for all pupils effectively; and
- the role of the governing body as a critical friend is well developed.

Recommendations

- R1 Continue to raise standards in reading and writing across the school;
- R2 improve pupils' handwriting and presentation skills;
- R3 ensure effective levels of challenge for more able pupils;
- R4 further develop consistent assessment for learning strategies in all classes; and
- R5 refine monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that all recent initiatives are embedded consistently across the school.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Throughout the school, many pupils speak confidently in a wide range of situations to staff, visitors and each other. The ability of many pupils to express their views is developing well. Most pupils listen well and respect the views of others. They are able to sustain their concentration for appropriate lengths of time in lessons.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils are beginning to read in line with their ability. More able older pupils are developing their fluency and they can answer simple questions accurately about the books they read. They can name a favourite author and explain their preference. In key stage 2, many pupils have a positive attitude to reading and this is helping to raise overall standards. More able readers are beginning to develop their higher-order reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, to extract specific information from a text efficiently.

Many pupils write with increasing confidence and independence for a range of purposes and audiences across the curriculum. Their writing is often interesting, and more able pupils in particular use a wide range of vocabulary to illustrate and enliven their work. In the Foundation Phase, many pupils use their knowledge of sounds well to construct and write simple words independently. Many pupils in key stage 2 continue to build on these skills and spell a range of basic and more complex words with developing accuracy. Although many pupils have a sound understanding of a range of appropriate punctuation, their written work across the curriculum often does not reflect this. In addition, the handwriting and presentation skills of most pupils vary too much. Many older pupils are able to plan and redraft their work to improve the outcome. Their independent research skills are developing well but pupils do not always present their findings in their own words enough.

Most pupils develop their numeracy skills well as they move through the school and they often apply these effectively in work across the curriculum. However, most pupils' ability to solve mathematical problems is less well developed. Many pupils have good information and communication technology skills, particularly in the early years. Across the school, pupils use a range of programmes and devices effectively to present and enhance their work.

Pupils with additional learning needs often make good progress in line with their ability. A wide range of support programmes for literacy and numeracy are effective in raising the standards achieved by targeted pupils.

Standards in Welsh language are good throughout the school. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing well and their pronunciation of Welsh terms and vocabulary is good. Pupils show an increasing understanding of Welsh when they read. They write simple sentences accurately and they enjoy singing Welsh songs.

In 2012, the performance of pupils in achieving the expected outcome 5 at the end of the Foundation Phase was well above the average for schools in the same family, in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. When compared with performance levels in similar schools (schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals), performance was in the upper 50% in all three areas of learning. At the higher than expected outcome 6, performance was also well above that of other schools in the same family and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools for the three areas of learning.

In key stage 2, over the last four years, there has been an overall upward trend in the school's performance in English, mathematics and science at the expected level 4. In addition, performance in all three subjects has been above family averages for the last two years. However, in comparison with levels in similar schools, performance has been more variable, fluctuating the school between the top 25% and lower 50% of schools. Performance at the higher than expected level 5 has also varied considerably over a four-year period, with only results in science consistently above the average for other schools in the family.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to stay healthy through eating a sensible diet, drinking water and taking plenty of exercise. All pupils feel safe in school and staff address any concerns pupils raise promptly and effectively.

All pupils behave well. Nearly all are well motivated and they enjoy their learning. They show good levels of respect, care and concern for others, and older pupils demonstrate maturity and common sense. Through a range of effective committees, pupils are able to participate in decision-making to bring about improvements, for example the establishment of class libraries. They take their responsibilities very seriously. Many pupils raise funds to support charities and work well with local groups to improve their environment and to promote community cohesion.

Attendance has recently improved considerably. It is at its highest level for eight years and currently stands at almost 93%. Attendance is now in line with that of other schools in the same family. Punctuality is good and pupils respond well to the system of rewards that encourages improved attendance. There have been no exclusions for the last two years and this compares favourably with local authority and national figures.

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

The school provides a good range of creative and stimulating learning experiences of high quality to meet the needs of all pupils. Many pupils participate in an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs that enrich and extend their learning.

Teachers' detailed, topic-based planning ensures that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to the curriculum. Teachers review their planning regularly

and ensure that it builds progressively on pupils' previous learning. Teachers' planning focuses well on the development of pupils' skills in numeracy and information and communication technology. The curriculum fully meets the requirements of pupils with additional learning needs, but does not always challenge the more able effectively. This is particularly so in relation to levels of challenge with written work across the curriculum.

Provision for Welsh is good. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to read, write, talk and sing in Welsh. Teachers develop pupils' knowledge of Wales well through history topics and studying Welsh artists and sporting personalities. The school welcomes a wide range of visitors who also promote the history and culture of Wales effectively.

The school acts sustainably. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their knowledge of the importance of recycling and conserving fuel and water. Annual global citizenship weeks raise pupils' awareness effectively about the lives of others in different parts of the world.

Teaching: Good

The overall quality of teaching is good. Most lessons have clear learning objectives and interesting tasks, which engage nearly all pupils' attention and develop their independent learning skills well. Open-ended questions effectively extend pupils' understanding and most lessons move along at a good pace. Teaching in the early years' classes is a particular strength, with excellent team working that ensures pupils experience a highly stimulating environment that promotes very effective learning. Working relationships throughout the school are very good and this ensures that pupils are well motivated.

The marking of pupils' written work is good and enables pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve. In most classes a suitable range of assessment for learning strategies are in place but they are not yet implemented consistently in all classes across the school. Pupils' involvement in evaluating their own progress is developing.

Robust tracking systems for assessment are in place, including careful analysis of performance data. All staff use this information well to target pupils who need additional support in literacy and numeracy. Reports to parents are of good quality and meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school promotes healthy living very effectively. All staff know pupils well and offer very good support to ensure that their emotional wellbeing develops appropriately. Pupils have a very strong voice within the school and their views and feelings are taken into account well through a range of effective pupil committees. There are good arrangements to deal with any issues concerning harassment or bullying. Clear whole-school strategies ensure the promotion of good behaviour at all times. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.

There is good support for pupils and their families through a wide range of links with specialist services, for example a counselling service and Network Rail. These raise awareness of relevant issues in pupils' lives and meet the needs of individual pupils well. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The early identification of pupils with additional learning needs is very good. Recently introduced initiatives are ensuring that pupils and parents are closely involved in setting and reviewing targets in individual education plans. Highly trained teaching assistants deliver innovative intervention programmes for pupils with literacy, numeracy and social and emotional development needs. Staff review the support regularly to assess and evaluate progress. These programmes are having an increasingly beneficial effect on raising pupils' self-esteem, confidence and basic skills.

Learning environment: Excellent

The school has a nurturing community ethos where all pupils feel valued. Staff and pupils recognise and celebrate diversity through assemblies and the promotion of equal access to all school activities. Older pupils are aware of their rights through an effective personal and social education programme. Bullying and racism are rare, but incidents are dealt with effectively when they occur.

There is a good range of resources to support teaching and learning and staff deploy these effectively. The accommodation, although old and lacking in space, is used to best advantage. As a result of careful planning and good imagination, all the outside space is very well used. In the nursery and reception classes, in particular, a vibrant and stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment supports all pupils' learning very effectively. This is superbly organised with a wide range of innovative activities linked to the current theme of 'The Three Little Pigs'. The activities really engage and motivate all pupils. The level of independent learning is exceptional. Three and four-year-olds, for example, confidently use i-pads and mobile phones efficiently and effectively to undertake and successfully complete challenging tasks independently of adult support.

All classrooms and communal spaces have colourful, interesting and informative displays, which celebrate pupils' work.

The school makes good use of local links, for example with the local rugby club, to ensure that older pupils have good access to outdoor sporting facilities.

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

The acting headteacher is a positive role model and knows the school well. She has created a good team spirit and has led the school purposefully since taking over her role with very good support from the senior leadership team. Managers and leaders at all levels carry out their roles effectively. Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. All staff are fully aware of the school's current priorities.

The governing body has a good range of experience and plays a supportive and challenging role as a critical friend. Governors are fully aware of the standards pupils achieve and have a good understanding of the school's performance data. They contribute well to the process of monitoring and evaluating the school and developing plans for future improvement.

The school is making good progress in addressing many local and national priorities, such as raising standards in literacy and numeracy and improving pupils' wellbeing and attendance.

Improving quality: Good

The self-evaluation report and the school development plan are comprehensive documents based on a good range of first hand evidence. The processes of self-evaluation are robust and include the views of pupils, parents, staff and governors. The school analyses the responses to questionnaires in detail and uses the results to inform current priorities for improvement with a clear focus on raising standards.

A good team ethos exists with staff supporting each other well. Teaching and support staff take part in joint training events and teachers join staff from other schools to share good practice. A good range of meetings ensures lines of communication are clear and staff contribute effectively to current developments and priorities.

Staff are involved in professional learning communities which target areas such as reading and spelling. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact, for example on standards in reading. The Foundation Phase philosophy is fully embedded in the practices of the school.

Partnership working: Good

The school has an effective partnership with parents. The school website has a good range of up-to-date information for parents, including school policies, regular and informative newsletters and detailed information about current class topics. A range of workshops and open days help to raise parents' awareness of, for example, the Foundation Phase and guided reading.

A close partnership with the local authority has supported the development of effective self-evaluation procedures and the learning environments of very high quality in the Foundation Phase.

Good links with other schools in the same family promote the sharing of best practice and, as a result, the school has successfully raised pupils' attendance.

There are good links with the local playgroup and the local comprehensive school. These ensure that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. In addition, joint working with other cluster schools has led to a common approach to teaching literacy and this helps pupils' smooth transition to secondary education.

Resource management: Good

The school is resourced well. There are enough suitably qualified and trained teachers and teaching assistants. All staff are deployed well to make the best use of expertise. There are very good arrangements for staff development and for providing preparation, planning and assessment time for teachers. All staff have clear, up-to-date and signed job descriptions.

The headteacher and senior leadership team are involved in the performance management of others. All staff have an opportunity to contribute to the process and it identifies and addresses their development needs successfully. The systems are beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards, particularly for pupils in need of additional support and in relation to standards in information and communication technology.

The budget is managed well and appropriate resources are provided to meet the needs and priorities identified in the school development plan. The school has many good features and, by the end of Year 6, many pupils achieve good standards. As a result, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2012, the performance of pupils in achieving the expected outcome 5 (the expected level for seven-year-olds) at the end of the Foundation Phase was well above the average for other schools in the same family in relation to language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. The school's performance in all three areas of learning was also in the upper 50% when compared with that of similar schools (schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals). In addition, outcomes were well above the average for Wales. In language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development, girls do better than boys by more than the family average. However, in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity there is no significant difference in performance between boys and girls.

At the higher than expected outcome 6, performance was also well above that of other schools in the same family and placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools for language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. Girls achieve significantly better than boys at this level in all three areas of learning.

In key stage 2, over the last four years, there has been an overall upward trend in the school's performance. Performance in English and mathematics at the expected level 4 has been above its family of schools averages for the last two years, but below the average for Wales. Performance in science has also been above family averages for the last two years and above the all-Wales average. Performance in all three subjects has fluctuated the school between the top 25% and the lower 50% of similar schools over this period. In 2012, performance in English and mathematics placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools, while performance in science placed it in the upper 50%.

Performance at the higher than expected level 5 has also varied considerably over the last four years, with only results in science consistently above the average for other schools in the family. When compared with results in similar schools, results in English and mathematics have varied between the top 25% and bottom 25% over the period. However, performance in science has placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools for three of the last four years.

Girls perform considerably better than boys, compared with family averages, at the expected level 4 in mathematics and science, but performance in English is in line with family averages. There is no significant difference in performance at the higher than expected level in English and mathematics, but boys perform considerably better than girls at this level in science.

For three of the last four years, pupils not entitled to free school meals have performed significantly better than pupils who are entitled to free meals.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Pupil responses (111 pupils completed the questionnaire)

All pupils think that:

- the school teaches them how to keep healthy;
- they are doing well at school and that staff help them to learn and make progress;
- they know what to do if they find their work hard; and
- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they feel safe in school and that the school deals well with any bullying;
- they know who to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- homework helps them to improve their work; and
- there are lots of opportunities for regular exercise.

The pupils' responses in relation to bullying and homework are more positive than the responses of pupils in other schools across Wales.

Most pupils feel that other pupils behave well in class and that nearly all pupils behave well at break and lunchtimes. These responses are also more positive on average than the responses of pupils across Wales.

Parental responses (44 parents completed the questionnaire)

All parents say that:

- they are satisfied with the school, their child likes school and that the school is well run;
- their child settled in quickly when they joined the school;
- pupils behave well, teaching is good and staff expect pupils to do their best;
- there is appropriate support for pupils with additional needs;
- children are encouraged to be healthy, exercise regularly and are safe; and
- the school helps pupils to mature and to take on responsibility.

All parents also feel that they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems; that there is a good range of activities, including trips and visits; and that their child is well prepared for their next school. These responses compare favourably with the views of other parents in schools across Wales.

Nearly all parents think that:

- their child is making good progress;
- staff treat pupils with respect; and
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress.

The responses regarding information about progress are generally more positive than responses from parents across Wales.

Most parents agree that homework helps pupils to improve and that they understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Rhona Edwards	Reporting Inspector
Terry Williams	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Jayne Woolcock	Peer Inspector
Lesley Hynes	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11