



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

**Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen
Gellideg Estate
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1LG**

Date of inspection: May 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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Publication date: 26/07/2012

Context

Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen is in the Gellideg area of Merthyr Tydfil. The school was formed in January 2003 from the previous Gelli Deg infant and Gellideg Junior schools. The majority of pupils are from the surrounding locality, which is economically and socially disadvantaged.

There are currently 166 pupils on roll aged between three and 11 years of age. Since the school's last inspection in August 2006, the number on roll has risen significantly, particularly in the Foundation Phase. Around 33% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. About 36% of the pupils have additional learning needs and none have statements of special educational need. There is a learning resource base for pupils with speech and language in the Foundation Phase.

English is the home language of nearly all pupils and no pupil is fluent in Welsh. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none speak English as an additional language. There were two fixed-term exclusions in the past academic year.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £4,062 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil is £7,735 and the minimum is £328. Ysgol Gynradd Coed y Dderwen is second out of the 24 primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil 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 school's current performance is good because:

- outcomes for pupils are good and they make rapid progress in almost all lessons and over time;
- standards have improved over the last few years and are now generally above those of the family of broadly similar schools to which the school belongs;
- nearly all pupils are polite, work together effectively and behave well;
- the quality of teaching is almost always good and pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning;
- there is a highly effective team of support staff who make a very positive contribution to the provision for all pupils, especially those with additional learning needs;
- the school council and eco committee make a very good contribution to pupils' involvement in the school's decision-making process; and
- there are excellent links with parents, who are very positive about the school and say that it has improved significantly over the past few years.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher and senior managers have a clear vision for the future development of the school that everyone shares;
- the quality of teamwork is good, based on an open leadership style and the effective distribution of leadership roles;
- the self-evaluation process is based on wide-ranging consultation and the close monitoring of the quality of provision, teaching and learning by senior managers, governors and the school council;
- the school's development plan is comprehensive, with clear and relevant targets for improvement;
- the school takes good account of local and national priorities; and
- professional learning communities are helping to improve standards effectively.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' speaking skills further and increase the number of pupils attaining the higher-than-expected level (level 3) in writing at the end of the Foundation Phase;
- R2 develop pupils' skills in mental mathematics and their ability to apply all their mathematical skills across the curriculum; and
- R3 make summaries of performance and information on the impact of initiatives more accessible, so that trends can be more easily identified and reviewed.

What happens next?

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

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Compared with their low starting points on entry to the school, pupils' achievement in learning is good and all pupils make at least the expected progress based on their ability, while many make better progress than expected. Many pupils make better than expected progress. There is little significant difference in the performance of boys and girls year on year. Pupils with additional learning needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those entitled to free school meals make good progress as a result of effective support. Pupils in the learning resource base also make good progress.

Almost all pupils work together well and respond enthusiastically to the tasks they are given. They have a good recall of what they have learned before and use this well to acquire new knowledge and skills. Most pupils use their communication and thinking skills effectively at key stage 2. In the Foundation Phase, pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well, although many children come into the school with very poorly developed communication skills and they are still relatively underdeveloped by the end of Year 2. Pupils listen well in lessons and levels of concentration are high in almost all classes. Older pupils use a growing vocabulary in both English and Welsh. For example, when talking about the effect of exercise on the heart, pupils talk confidently and use the correct scientific vocabulary.

Most pupils are enthusiastic readers and their skills develop well through the Foundation Phase. Younger pupils have a good grasp of letters and the sounds they make. At key stage 2, most pupils read an increasing range of texts confidently and with enjoyment. More able pupils read with expression and predict accurately what will happen next. Many pupils have clear opinions about authors and refer to specific sections of text to support their views. They use their reading skills effectively, for example when researching the internet for articles about the Olympic games.

The majority of pupils' writing skills develop well from the Foundation Phase onwards, although few attain the higher-than-expected level (level 3). They have an increasingly interesting and imaginative vocabulary and, by the end of Year 6, their ability to express themselves in writing is well developed. More able pupils write in a wide range of styles and genres, including play scripts for their version of Macbeth. Most pupils use their writing skills effectively in other areas of the curriculum, including neatly-presented, word-processed documents.

The majority pupils have well-developed numeracy skills, which they occasionally use effectively in other subjects, such as science when recording and analysing their heart rates at rest and after exercise. However, a minority of pupils do not have well-developed mental mathematical skills and find it difficult to apply these in situations other than in mathematics lessons.

All pupils use Welsh enthusiastically and respond well to incidental and instructional Welsh. Many read and speak well using clear and accurate pronunciation. Their writing skills are progressing sufficiently and they are beginning to transfer these skills to other areas of the curriculum.

The small year groups, together with the high numbers of pupils with additional learning needs, means that the data on pupils' relative performance varies greatly from year to year. In 2011, the school's performance when compared to that of its family (a group of schools in similar circumstances) was above the expected level at the end of the Foundation Phase. This was an improvement from 2010. At the end of key stage 2, the school performed above the expected level in English, mathematics and science when compared with the family of schools. Standards were lower than the very high level of 2010, but above those in 2009. Current standards are generally at the expected level at the end of Year 6, although they are stronger in science than they are in English and mathematics.

Wellbeing: Good

All pupils enjoy school and feel safe and well supported. Almost all have developed a very positive attitude to healthy living and are keen to take part in physical activities. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and respectful towards staff and each other. They work well collaboratively, showing consideration for each other. Most pupils have very positive attitudes to school life and feel valued by staff. They are motivated and attentive learners and can concentrate on tasks for extended periods. They are able to make choices about what and how they learn. Pupils' life and social skills develop well as they move through the school.

The school council has developed into an excellent forum for improving school life. Their role as the voice of their peers is highly developed. Pupils demonstrate maturity by evaluating standards and improve their learning. Pupils' monitoring of standards is innovative and they feel that their opinions are highly valued. Pupils' ability to evaluate their learning is highly effective and has helped raise standards.

The school has a wide range of links with the community that are beneficial to pupils. Attendance rates have steadily improved in recent years and, although the school was below the average for similar schools last year, attendance for the last two terms has improved significantly. Most pupils are punctual and the level of unauthorised absence is low.

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

All staff work together effectively to plan and provide a good range of learning experiences, which engage most pupils well. They ensure that pupils' key skills develop progressively and systematically, according to their needs and stage of development. Nearly all pupils become increasingly independent learners as they progress through the school

Provision for Welsh and the Welsh dimension is good. Most teachers encourage pupils to use Welsh regularly in lessons and about the school. This is particularly

strong in the Foundation Phase. The school regularly uses visits to the local and wider community to develop pupils' awareness of their culture and heritage.

The school provides good opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global awareness. Nearly all pupils are aware of the need to recycle and understand issues such as pollution. Attractive and informative displays reflect work that pupils have done to raise their awareness of global issues. There are active links with schools in both Zanzibar and Amsterdam.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. There are strong working relationships between pupils, teachers and other adults. This results in a positive environment for learning and pupils clearly enjoy their time in school. Teachers and other staff work very well as a team, which ensures that all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress. Teachers make learning interesting by planning lessons that are imaginative and that develop pupils ability to work independently. In nearly all lessons, the levels of engagement are high because teachers use a wide range of teaching methods and use techniques that match the ways pupils learn effectively. Most work is sufficiently challenging and tasks match pupils' needs well. In many lessons, teachers make effective use of technology to engage pupils and demonstrate key points. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and implement the system of rewards and sanctions consistently across the school. Teaching in the learning resource base is highly effective and rapidly engages pupils, most of whom have quite severe learning difficulties.

Teachers assess pupils' work and track their progress effectively. Most of them use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' understanding, although very occasionally they do not extend pupils' higher thinking skills enough. Teachers and other adults give clear and helpful feedback and most pupils assess their own learning well. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is constructive and clearly identifies what pupils need to do to improve, using 'two stars and a wish' as a framework. Good links with other schools for moderation ensure that assessments are accurate. Annual reports to parents are informative and provide a clear indication of the next steps their children need to take in their learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provision for pupils' wellbeing is a strength of the school. Pupils gain confidence through the effective support programmes in place. As a result, the school is a caring and supportive community where pupils feel respected and valued. The school provides particularly well for pupils' social and emotional needs. The exploration of values, such as respect and mutual understanding, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development successfully. The school promotes the advantages of healthy living effectively. The importance of regular attendance is promoted appropriately and monitoring shows that attendance figures are improving. There are effective working partnerships with support agencies, including a behaviour support teacher. The school has procedures and has an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Effective use of data and strong links with the community and pre-school settings ensure that the school identifies pupils with additional learning needs at the earliest opportunity. Pupils have comprehensive individual education plans in child-friendly language and these ensure that all staff and pupils fully understand what they need to do to improve. Support staff play a key role in engaging pupils and ensuring good progress. Pupils in the learning resource base benefit from good and often innovative teaching practice, which enables them to make good progress. Subsequently, most children re-integrate appropriately into mainstream educational settings. The special needs co-ordinator works very effectively with a wide range of support services and works closely with colleagues in the school to ensure that all children make good progress.

Learning environment: Good

The school treats all pupils as individuals and supports them effectively to meet their needs. Staff and pupils respect and recognise in positive ways the diversity of pupils in the school in accordance with the school's aims and values. The school also organises special projects, such as 'show racism the red card', in order to reinforce its values. Learning resources are plentiful and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. The building is well maintained and good use is made of the outdoors. Pupils benefit from a large field area, well-developed play areas and a sensory garden. The school has developed many interesting outdoor areas and uses them creatively to enhance teaching and learning. Displays throughout the school are informative and reflect pupils' work and the wider activities of the school.

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

The school has a clear sense of direction and a culture that strives for improvement. The headteacher and senior management team provide effective leadership and have high expectations. Staff meetings and well-planned whole-school training sessions focus successfully on the school's priorities for development. These activities help staff to develop a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the school's strategies and plans. There is an appropriate system for performance management in place that meets the needs of the school and the professional development needs of staff well.

Members of the governing body undertake their roles conscientiously and ensure that the school meets legal requirements. They have formed effective partnerships with staff. Governors are regularly involved in all aspects of school life and in strategic planning. Their knowledge of the school's performance is developing appropriately and they fully support the school in setting challenging and realistic targets.

The school meets national and local priorities well. It has established the provision for the Foundation Phase well and adapted the outdoor environment successfully. A number of the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework, such as developing professional learning communities and the focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, are important aspects promoted in the school.

Improving quality: Good

The school has well-established self-evaluation procedures that focus successfully on pupils' standards. These procedures include thorough analysis of performance data, first-hand monitoring of the school's provision and reviewing all aspects of the school's work. All members of staff contribute to these arrangements. The school council also contributes the views of pupils to the self-evaluation process very effectively. The school takes the views of pupils and parents into account and it assesses its strengths and weaknesses accurately. However, although the school has extensive records covering every aspect of its work, they do not have any executive summaries or other ways to access quickly the information they contain.

The school improvement plan indicates clearly who is responsible for monitoring priorities that are linked to the school's self-evaluation. Priorities for development clearly set out projected costs, success criteria and timescales. School priorities stem from curriculum reviews undertaken by co-ordinators and all staff discuss the findings. This thorough approach is leading to improvement in resources, provision, assessment and standards.

The school is working well to develop a network of professional practice within the school and with other local primary schools, for example in relation to the provision for pupils with statement of special educational needs and in the use of information and communication technology within lessons. Staff work well together and often reflect on and evaluate their own practice.

Partnership working: Good

The school has an extensive range of partnerships with its local family of schools, parents, and especially the local community. The school provides support for families, including literacy and cookery sessions. Parents and carers are especially appreciative of the school's efforts in both educational and care support for their children. The parents' and teachers' association also works with the school and the community to provide services the school could not otherwise afford. Transition arrangements between the pre-school provision on site and the high school are good. Staff have good working relationship with other primary schools and have provided support and training for the information technology learning platform used in several schools.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its budget well and links spending decisions closely to the priorities identified in the school's development plan. There is a very good range of relevant learning resources. The deployment of staff is good and very effective use is made of the support staff. Time for planning, preparation and assessment is used effectively. The environment for learning is organised well and attractive. In view of the good progress in pupils' attainment and achievement and the high quality of the care and experiences available, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2011, standards at key stage 1 in English were above the family (a group of schools that face similar levels of challenge) but below local authority and national averages. In mathematics and science, the school was below in all three comparators. These figures include pupils in the area resource base within the school. Compared with those of schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards were in the lower 50% for English and in the lowest 25% for mathematics and science. In English, mathematics and science combined (the core subject indicator), performance was in the lower 50% compared to that of similar schools. Standards have improved since 2008 and the overall trend is upward.

At key stage 2, standards in English, mathematics and science were above the family average, but below the local authority and national averages. Compared to those of similar schools, standards were in the lower 50% for English, science and the core subject indicator; and they were in the lowest 25% for mathematics. The overall trend has been very variable over the last five years, but has risen overall.

Girls generally outperform boys at key stage 2, but at key stage 1 there is little difference. At key stage 1, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher than expected level (level 3) was generally below the national average in English, mathematics and science. In English at key stage 2, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher than expected level (level 5) was above the family average, but below the local authority and national averages. In mathematics and science, performance was above in all three indicators. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals perform above the family average, but below the local authority and national averages in the core subject indicator.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to the questionnaire for pupils

There were 53 responses from key stage 2 pupils to the questionnaire and they unanimously state that:

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

Almost all pupils state that:

- they understand how well they were doing in school.

The responses from pupils were generally more positive compared with national benchmarks.

Response to the questionnaire for parents

There were 67 responses from parents and they unanimously state that:

- they are satisfied with the school;
- their child likes school;
- teaching is good;
- staff expect their child to work hard and do their best;
- the homework given builds well on what their child learns in school;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- their child is safe in school;
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility;
- there is a good range of activities, including trips or visits; and
- the school is well led.

Almost all parents state that:

- their child was helped to settle in well when he or she started school;
- pupils behave well in school;

- staff treat children fairly and respect;
- their child received additional support in relation to any particular individual need;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress;
- they understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints; and
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school.

The responses from parents were generally more positive compared with national benchmarks.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Stephen Dennett	Reporting Inspector
Eleri Hurley	Team Inspector
Deirdre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Marilyn Balkwill	Peer Inspector
Janet Evans (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. 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

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.