

A report on

**Penrhys Community Primary
Penrhys
Tylorstown
Ferndale
CF43 3PL**

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by

Mr P Mathias

Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn

for

**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

Penrhys Primary School is situated in the Rhondda Fach in an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The area is part of a Communities First initiative and is the third most deprived area in Rhondda Cynon Taf which is the local authority (LA). The area has high unemployment and 77% of families within the school are from homes where no adult works.

There are 133 pupils on roll which includes 26 children who attend the nursery and 33 children who attend one of four learning support classes. Most of the latter come from a wider area. Seventy-six percent of pupils receive free school meals which is significantly above the local and national averages. The school was last inspected in the spring term 2005.

On entry, levels of basic skills are well below expected for children of this age. English is the home language of all pupils. No pupil has Welsh as a first language. Fifty-seven percent of pupils are considered to have some degree of additional learning needs (ALN). Four pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). Overall, these figures are very high and well above local and national averages. Seven pupils were excluded in the previous school year. Four children are looked after by the LA.

The school holds the Eco-schools Green Flag Award (bronze and silver), the Healthy Schools Award (four leaves) and the Quality Mark (two).

The 2010/2011 individual school budget per pupil for Penrhys Primary School is £6,933 which compares with a maximum of £9,064 and a minimum of £2,553 for primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school has the second highest budget per pupil out of the 116 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Summary

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

Current performance

Although the school has some significant strengths which are:

- an inclusive and caring ethos;
- good provision for pupils' wellbeing;
- good support for pupils with additional learning needs;
- consistently good teaching; and
- good provision in the Foundation Phase.

Performance is adequate because:

- standards in national curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) are well below local, national, similar schools and family of schools benchmarks.
- there is insufficient use of Welsh across the school;
- the more able are under challenged;
- there are shortcomings in the key skills of speaking and writing;
- leadership and management is not sufficiently focused on raising standards; and
- the governing body's role as a critical friend of the school is under developed;

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are adequate because:

Although the school has made good progress in addressing the key issues of the last inspection –

- the governing body is not sufficiently involved in monitoring standards and in setting the strategic direction of the school;
- the priorities in the school improvement plan are not sufficiently focused on judging the impact on standards and outcomes for pupils;
- the more able and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged; and
- the school does not use the information from assessment to raise standards further and to review pupils' progress systematically.

Recommendations

In order to improve further Penrhys Primary School needs to:

- R1 raise the standards of pupils' speaking and writing skills and their use of both languages across the curriculum;
- R2 raise standards in the national teacher assessments for seven and eleven year olds and particularly those achieved by the more able pupils;
- R3 further develop pupils' involvement in their own targets for learning and in evaluating their own progress;
- R4 use the information which the school assembles to identify clearly what the school needs to do to raise standards further and to review systematically the progress being made; and
- R5 continue to extend the role of the governing body in setting the strategic direction of the school, in judging the standards being achieved and in acting as a critical, yet supportive friend.

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

The majority of children enter the school with very limited basic skills. Nearly all make good progress in the Foundation Phase and achieve the levels it would be reasonable to expect of them by its end.

Over the last three years pupils' performance at the end of KS1 and KS2 in the national teacher assessments for seven year olds in English, mathematics and science has been well below local and national averages.

Over this period the performance of eleven year olds in these assessments has been similar. Trends in KS1 and KS2 results show some improvement but this is not significant.

In 2010, pupils' results at seven years of age, when compared to schools in similar circumstances, (33% and over) were low in English, mathematics and science and also when these results were combined. In KS2 results for eleven year olds in 2010 were well below similar schools in all three subjects and when the results were combined.

Care should be taken when considering this information because in this school there is a very high proportion of pupils with ALN who attend the learning support classes or have significant learning difficulties in other classes.

Comparisons with similar schools is also unreliable because of the very high proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (76%). The school is compared to schools who have 33% of pupils entitled to free school meals. When the scores of those who attend the learning support classes are not included, results are still well below local and national averages.

The relatively low targets which were agreed with the LA were exceeded in English in KS1 and met in mathematics and science. In KS2 the targets in English were exceeded but not met in mathematics and science. However, from the evidence found in pupils' books standards are significantly above those indicated in the national teacher assessments.

At both key stages in the national teacher assessments girls out performed boys. This is in part a reflection of the number of boys who attend the learning support classes. Those with free school meals generally out perform the small proportion of pupils who are considered ineligible for this. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is well below local, national and family averages.

When compared to the family of schools across Wales to which this school belongs, the school performed below nearly all of these schools in all areas.

In the Foundation Phase and Y2, many make good progress in the acquisition of skills in relation to their starting point. The reading skills of younger pupils in KS2 are good. However, a minority of older pupils do not read confidently, fluently or with expression. At the end of KS2, many pupils' writing skills are adequate and only a few write independently and at length. Listening skills are good throughout the school.

Across the school, pupils' numeracy skills and oracy skills are adequate. The information and communications technology (ICT) skills of the majority of pupils are good and they use these skills well to improve their learning in subjects across the curriculum.

The Welsh language and bilingual skills of the majority of pupils are developing appropriately. However, their ability to use Welsh outside the classroom is limited. Pupils' attitudes to Wales and learning Welsh are very positive.

The majority of pupils make good progress in developing their social and life skills. They work well with others and their ability to solve problems is good. Many pupils willingly undertake a range of responsibilities .

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel very safe within the school and are highly appreciative of how they are supported. They also have a clear understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle.

Nearly all pupils behave well. They say that they like school and have positive attitudes to it. Relationships with staff are good.

Attendance is below that of similar schools but has increased steadily over the last four years and is on course to meet this year's target of 90%. Nearly all arrive punctually in the mornings.

The school council is very effective in ensuring pupils' views are heard. Pupils have good links with the local community and the world of work, which successfully encourages them to play a full part in local life and to be prepared for later life.

Pupils' understanding of how well they are doing is adequate but not all understand what they need to do to improve their work.

While the youngest children are involved in choosing how and what they learn, generally across the school, pupils' independent learning skills are adequate.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Good

Learning experiences: Adequate

The school provides a wide range of good learning experiences which generally meet the needs of the majority of pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced and in the main flexible. Practitioners in the Foundation Phase plan collaboratively and provide a good range of stimulating experiences for the children. However, there is a lack of cohesion in planning across the whole school. The needs of pupils with SEN and ALN are well met but the more able and talented pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

The school provides many varied opportunities to enable its pupils to experience environmental sustainability and the grounds are well used for this. However, in discussion most pupils did not understand why sustainability is so important. Much is being done to make pupils aware of their roles in their society and how these roles differ in other parts of the world.

Planning for pupils to build systematically on what they already know and can do is inconsistent. Opportunities to develop pupils' oracy, reading, and numeracy skills are appropriately planned. However, opportunities to develop their independent writing skills are only adequate. Provision for ICT skills is good.

The provision for Welsh language development within the classroom is good but Welsh is not encouraged sufficiently in other situations. The school successfully promotes pupils' Welsh identity and their knowledge of their locality.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good and includes a small amount of excellent practice. The consistency of good teaching is a strength, particularly in the Foundation Phase and in the learning support classes. Across the school teachers provide experiences for all pupils which are rich and well-organised. In the Foundation Phase all practitioners have a thorough understanding of how to plan and teach children of this age.

Teachers in KS1 and KS2 very successfully ensure that lessons hold pupils' attention and interest well. Relationships between all adults and pupils are very positive and constructive. All pupils know that their individual efforts are recognised and highly valued.

In many of the lessons teachers show good subject knowledge and ability to make the topics being taught come to life. They often use visual resources very well to do this.

In the best lessons teachers question very effectively to encourage all pupils to think things out for themselves. They carefully extend pupils' skills to become successful, independent learners.

In a small number of lessons teachers do not have high enough expectations of the more able pupils and do not extend them further. They do not always take the opportunities available to encourage pupils to use Welsh in their responses.

All teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide helpful oral feedback on their achievements. In a minority of cases, written targets are not specific enough and guidance on how to improve is not always clear. However, many pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets. The majority of pupils have limited opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Across the school pupils are beginning to use cameras and recording equipment to assess each other's work.

Comprehensive records are kept to track individual progress in the areas of learning in the Foundation Phase. Across the school a good range of assessment data is used to record pupil progress and to identify individual needs. However, the way that data is used to inform curricular planning and set challenging targets for more able pupils is under developed.

Pupils' work is moderated and assessment levels are validated effectively through collaboration with other schools in the area.

The school's annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements. They are of a good quality and are sufficiently detailed and informative.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is very active in promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle amongst its pupils. It also utilises a good range of strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Provision for personal development, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and effectively promoted through well planned learning experiences. All pupils are well cared for in a very supportive community. A warm, caring ethos of mutual respect is evident and learners are confident to approach staff for guidance when required. The school liaises with a range of agencies to support individual pupils.

Good use is made of specialist services and this professional network effectively contributes to building pupils' self awareness and esteem. The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

There are good procedures to identify pupils with ALN. Effective use is made of learning support staff to deliver good quality programmes of work. Their input impacts positively on pupils' ability to access the curriculum. Across the school teachers plan carefully so that the work for pupils with ALN is generally well matched to their needs. However, more able pupils are often under challenged.

Learning environment: Good

The school and its grounds are well-maintained and the attractive interior is further enhanced by the high standard of wall displays which reflect the value staff place on pupils' efforts. There is a good range and quality of books, computers and other learning resources.

The school's learning environment is good. It has appropriate policies and practices in place which ensures equal access for all pupils and promotes social equality and diversity well.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Adequate

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a very committed team and give the school a sensitive and caring lead. Staff morale is high and all adults work together cohesively as a well-organised team with a clear commitment to provide a secure and supportive environment.

There are some good arrangements for the senior management team to review standards and to plan for improvements. These are carefully related to performance management issues. However, leadership does not sufficiently emphasis what the school needs to do to raise standards further and to have higher expectations of what can be achieved. It does not use the information it gathers to do this.

The new chair of governors is very committed to the school and governors are actively engaged in working with teachers. They judge the success of spending decisions carefully. However, they do not hold the professional leadership sufficiently to account and are not fully involved in judging standards and the progress pupils make.

The school gives careful attention to local and national priorities.

The Foundation Phase has been very successfully introduced and provides well for these children. Good progress has been made in building links with other schools. The school gives a good emphasis to sustainability and global citizenship.

Improving quality: Adequate

Procedures for self-evaluation are adequate. An increasing range of evidence is now beginning to be used as part of the process. The school has correctly identified a number of areas for improvement but these are not sufficiently prioritised.

There are established informal networks to share good practice. Several members of staff have been involved in local initiatives which are having a positive impact on learning and teaching. Within the school, the staff are increasingly working together to share expertise.

Partnership working: Adequate

Strategic partnerships are adequate. There are structures and processes which contribute positively to joint working practices and support the aims of the school.

There are beneficial links with other schools including the secondary school to which most pupils transfer, for example to agree standards. There are effective transition plans which prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

The school has good links with parents and the local community including the Communities First initiative.

Resource management: Adequate

The school is appropriately staffed by well qualified teaching and learning support assistants who are all appropriately deployed. They work closely and effectively together.

Teachers' professional development needs are closely linked to those of the school. The school meets the requirements of the national agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload' and the use of planning, preparation and assessment time.

Spending decisions are closely linked to the school's educational needs and are thoroughly discussed. Careful use is made of the funds available. However, the outcomes for pupils' learning and their progress are barely satisfactory. The school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

A minority of parents completed the questionnaire. Nearly all who did respond expressed positive views of the school. All were satisfied with the school, felt their children liked the school and settled in well when they began school.

They all felt that teaching was good and the teachers had high expectations of their children. They all agreed that the homework set was helpful.

Those who responded thought that their children were well treated and were safe in school. They felt well informed about their children's progress and were comfortable about visiting the school. They knew what to do if they had a complaint.

All parents felt the school helped their children to mature and to take on responsibilities. They believed that the school provided a good range of activities and visits and that the school is well led. Of those who responded, very few expressed any negative comments. These related to pupils' behaviour, provision of healthy living, additional support for learning and preparation for moving on to the next school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Fifty-three pupils completed the questionnaire. Nearly all had positive views. All felt safe and thought that the school dealt with bullying well. They knew who to talk to if they were worried or upset. All thought the school taught them to be healthy and to take regular exercise.

All who responded believed that they were doing well at school. They all felt that the school helped them to learn and to make progress. They knew what to do if they found the work hard and had enough books, equipment and computers.

A very few had any negative views. These related to the effectiveness of homework and the behaviour of other pupils in and out of classes.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mr Peter Mathias	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Carolyn Thomas	Team Inspector
Mr Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Ms Helen Lester	Peer Inspector
Mrs Chris Aplin	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 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	R	Y1	Y2	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:

Key stage 1	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