

**Inspection under Section 28 of the  
Education Act 2005**

**A Report on the Quality of Education in**

**Maerdy Junior School,  
Graigwen,  
Maerdy,  
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff.  
CF43 4TW**

**School Number: 6742152**

**Date of Inspection: 06/10/08**

**by**

**Luned Eleri Betts  
17717**

**Date of Publication: 08/12/08**

**Under Estyn contract number: 1106808**

**© Queens Printer and Controller of HMSO 2008: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.**

Copies of this report are available from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

Maerdy Junior School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Maerdy Junior School took place between 06/10/08 and 08/10/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Luned Eleri Betts undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

**Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.**

This school received a **standard** inspection.

## 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 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 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 National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Context</b>	1
<b>Summary</b>	2
<b>Recommendations</b>	8
<b>Standards</b>	8
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	8
<b>The quality of education and training</b>	12
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	12
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	14
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	18
<b>Leadership and management</b>	20
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	20
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	22
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	24
<b>Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning</b>	25
English	25
Mathematics	27
Science	28
Art and design	29
Music	30
Physical education	32
<b>School's response to the inspection</b>	33
<b>Appendices</b>	34
1 Basic information about the school	34
2 School data and indicators	34
3 National Curriculum assessments results	35
4 Evidence base of the inspection	36
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	37

## **Context**

### **The nature of the provider**

1. Maerdy Junior School is situated in an elevated position in a small former mining community at the upper end of the Rhondda Fach. It caters for pupils aged seven to eleven years of age; the majority enter school from Maerdy Infant School and transfer at eleven years of age to Ferndale Community Secondary School.
2. The school's catchment area is a Communities First area and is amongst the most deprived in Wales. The locality is predominantly residential; a high proportion of the housing is rented accommodation. There is some light industry but unemployment is high.
3. At the time of the inspection there were 140 pupils on roll, most of whom live in the immediate vicinity. Numbers of pupils have remained consistent over recent years; within the spacious two storey building they are taught in six classes. Four of these are single age classes; the two other classes are a mixed age class and a Complex Needs class which draws pupils with complex learning difficulties from a wider local area. The school employs six full-time teachers.
4. Approximately 58 per cent of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, a figure well above the average of Wales and the local education authority (LEA), Rhondda Cynon Taff. Five pupils are looked after by the authority. All pupils use English as their first language; there are no natural Welsh speakers and none from ethnic minority groups. Assessments identify that approximately 55 per cent have special educational needs (SEN); two pupils have a statement of SEN. No pupil is disapplied from the national curriculum (NC).
5. The school was last inspected in October 2002. It achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the second time in January 2008 and achieved phase three of the Healthy Schools Award a few weeks before the inspection.

### **The school's priorities and targets**

6. The school motto is 'Working Together Towards Success'. The vision statement recognises the school's desire to develop pupils who have high esteem and are good citizens, who can recognise their strengths and use them to become lifelong learners.
7. The school's main aims are to:  
provide an environment:
  - which is lively, stimulating and challenging;
  - where pupils feel safe and valued;
  - where good discipline is built on mutual respect;
  - where all individuals hold each other in high regard; and

- where successes are rewarded;

and to provide a curriculum:

- which is broad and balanced and suitable for the new millennium;
- which recognises the importance of developing key skills;
- which allows pupils to participate in a wide range of academic, aesthetic and physical activities; and
- which enables each pupil to reach his/her potential.

8. The school's priorities for this year are to:

- raise standards in English, mathematics, geography and history;
- continue to develop thinking skills and bilingualism;
- improve learning for pupils needing emotional support;
- review the impact of the skills based curriculum;
- implement strategies for pupils to exercise responsibilities in aspects of physical and playground activities;
- establish strategies to ensure Healthy Schools and Eco-schools' accreditation; and
- continue anti-bullying measures

## Summary

9. Maerdy Junior School is a good school with outstanding features. A committed team of teachers and support staff provide pupils with exciting and enriching experiences. The excellent quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils promotes their independence, self-confidence and self-esteem. All pupils are encouraged to celebrate what they can achieve and be proud of the community in which they live.

### Table of grades awarded

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	Grade 2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	Grade 1
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	Grade 1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	Grade 1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	Grade 1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	Grade 2

7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	Grade 1
---	--	---------

10. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report in three key questions. In the other four questions the team awarded the school a higher grade as they felt that the school had underestimated its excellence in these areas.

### Standards

11. Grades for standards in lessons observed during the inspection were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
13%	80%	7%	-	-

12. These figures compare well with the national averages as published in Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors' (HMCI) annual report for 2006-7, where overall standards in primary schools in Wales are reported to be a Grade 2 in 80% of lessons and Grade 1 in 10%. They show a significant improvement since the last inspection.

13. Grades for standards in subjects inspected

English	Grade 2
Mathematics	Grade 2
Science	Grade 2
Art and design	Grade 1
Music	Grade 2
Physical Education	Grade 1

14. It is very difficult to provide a clear picture of the school's performance at the end of Key Stage (KS)2 national assessments as the profile of cohorts varied significantly from year to year. Therefore, data from results has to be treated with caution.
15. In English, results in 2006 and 2007 were significantly below local and national averages. In 2008, however, they have improved as the number of pupils who achieved a level 4 (the level expected of pupils who are eleven years of age) was higher. However, they remain slightly below both local and national figures. Attainment at the higher level 5 is slightly higher than in previous years and compares favourably with the local averages
16. In mathematics results in 2008 show an improvement on the figures in 2006 and 2007, but are still slightly below the local and national percentages. In 2008, however, the performance of boys was above the local and national percentages, whilst the attainment of girls was below. The number of pupils achieving the higher level 5 was below the local and national averages.



17. In science end of KS2 assessments indicate that figures have generally been slightly below national and local performance. However, in 2008 percentages show that standards of both boys and girls have improved with boys slightly outperforming girls. The number of pupils who attained a level 5 was more than 20 per cent higher than that of the local and national figures.
18. The core subject indicator (CSI) percentages for 2008, which is the number of pupils who attain a level 4 in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science are still below the local and national figures, but indicates a steady increase from previous years.
19. When compared to similar schools with the same number of pupils eligible for free school meals, results vary from year to year. In 2006, performance in all core subjects and the CSI were in the lower quarter and in 2007 it was just below the middle. In 2008 however, it was above the middle in mathematics and science, but just below in English.
20. Results in the last few years indicate that overall girls outperform boys and, even though in 2008 the performance of boys showed improvement, the school recognises that ensuring that boys consistently achieve the same standards as girls is a priority.
21. Pupils are set realistic and challenging targets and most pupils achieve these and a few are successful in exceeding them. The outstanding progress made by pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) ensures that most achieve their realistic targets.
22. Pupils make good progress overall in key skills. Listening is outstanding in all classes and in speaking standards are good. In reading pupils make good progress although the majority enter the school in Y3 with very limited reading skills. In writing standards are good overall but are limited at the younger end of the school because of a low ability in reading skills.
23. In numeracy standards overall are good with pupils showing an increasing ability in applying number and handling data in their work across subjects. In information and communication technology (ICT) they are good at the younger end of the school and are often outstanding at the older end. Standards in pupils' bilingual skills are beginning to developing well.
24. Pupils make outstanding progress in the development of their personal, social and learning skills. Their understanding of what they are doing, how well they are progressing and how they can improve is also outstanding and a consistent feature of all classes.
25. Pupils' behaviour and the respect they show to adults and each other is outstanding. The school sets high standards and pupils know what is expected of them. Their understanding of equal opportunities is very good and they are well prepared for living in a diverse society.

26. At 92.41 per cent the average rate of attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection is in line with the LEA average. It is above the average for similar schools but below the national average.
27. Pupils, including those with ALN are exceptionally well prepared for effective participation in the workplace.

## The quality of education and training

### Grades for teaching

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
34%	63%	3%	-	-

28. These figures are well above the national averages as published in HMCI's annual report for 2006-7 where overall quality of teaching in primary schools in Wales is reported to be a Grade 2 or better in 80% of lessons and a Grade 1 in 14%. They show a significant improvement since the last inspection.
29. Outstanding features seen in teaching include very good subject knowledge, high expectations, the sharing of learning objectives and success criteria with pupils, setting tasks to suit all abilities and promoting pupils' independence. Good features include positive working relationships, sensitive intervention, effective questioning, detailed planning, giving time limits for completing tasks and using a range of resources. In a very few lessons tasks were insufficiently challenging and organisation was less effective.
30. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are outstanding. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements and assessment outcomes are used very effectively to inform teaching and learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly and effectively and, whenever possible, verbal feedback is given. Reports to parents are of a high quality.
31. Pupils are an integral part of the assessment process with self and peer assessment being an important part of the system.
32. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. It is broad and balanced. Activities are flexible and suitably matched for the age and wide range of abilities. Schemes of work are effective documents and meet the current needs of the school and ensure continuity and progression. Provision for key skills is outstanding, but has not fully impacted on standards. For promoting literacy skills, especially listening and speaking, it is exemplary.
33. The school has a detailed plan for providing personal and social education (PSE) which has been updated to include recent initiatives and ensures effective provision during circle time. Provision for bilingualism is outstanding.
34. Pupils' spiritual and moral skills are extensively promoted by daily collective worship which conforms to statutory requirements. The 'Trier of the Month' assembly is highly successful in promoting self-belief, establishing the joy of seeing others succeed, understanding that respect is an important quality of life

and providing pupils with time to reflect. Provision for pupils' social development is exceptional.

35. The promoting of pupils' cultural development has a very high profile. Strategies to ensure that pupils are proud to be Welsh through the provision of the cwricwlwm Cymreig, while ensuring they understand the importance of respecting other cultures and the diversity of the world are exemplary. Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
36. Opportunities to provide pupils' with awareness and understanding of global citizenship and sustainable development are very well developed. Provision for healthy eating and living is effective.
37. Partnerships with parents and the community are outstanding. The school has a genuine open door policy and is at the heart of the community; good use is made of the industry that is available in the community.
38. Pupils are cared for, guided and supported in an outstanding way, and care arrangements are very well planned and managed. All pupils are valued, and a caring and supportive ethos permeates the school. The promotion of pupils' well-being is of the highest quality and the day-to-day care of pupils' welfare is a strength. A range of policies ensure that procedures have been established to promote the well-being of learners.
39. Pupils are involved effectively in decision making through the school council. They can discuss problems during circle time or can make their feelings known to members of the school council, which meets regularly.
40. Participation in an LEA healthy schools scheme enables pupils to take responsibility for promoting various aspects of healthy development.
41. The quality of provision for pupils with ALN is outstanding, and complies with statutory requirements. Those with SEN benefit greatly from the high quality guidance given to them.
42. The school actively promotes gender equality, multicultural understanding and racial tolerance and equality. Policies clearly identify actions to be taken to tackle discrimination. The school is very much aware of the need to ensure that pupils with a disability are treated equally.
43. There are effective measures to combat bullying and other oppressive behaviour. Policies to monitor pupils' behaviour and performance are also very effective. Procedures for pupils to help resolve conflicts are outstanding.
44. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are extremely carefully monitored. Appropriate account is taken of NAW Circular 47/06.

## **Leadership and management**

45. The aims and values of the school are shared effectively with all involved in the school and within the community of Maerdy. It is an orderly community; the day proceeds in a very organised manner and at a brisk pace. All statutory requirements are met.
46. The acting headteacher and her deputy make an outstanding team. Their shared vision is successfully communicated to all involved in the school. They lead by example and value everyone equally. As a result, the commitment of all who work for the school is exceptional. Subject leaders are all developing excellent managerial skills.
47. Performance management is well established. All staff evaluate their own performance, which is monitored successfully by the head teacher. The management and organisation of Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time provided for teachers is outstanding.
48. The school development plan (SDP) is an effective document for moving the school forward. The exceptional attention given to national priorities and local initiatives is an outstanding feature.
49. The governing body (GB) fulfils statutory requirements. Members have curricular responsibilities and committees. They are very supportive and are knowledgeable about current developments and ensure good financial and resource management.
50. Progress since the last inspection has been good overall. Issues identified in the last report have been addressed extremely successfully.
51. A robust self-evaluation process prioritising the raising of standards has recently been established and is reflected in a detailed self-evaluation report. A classroom monitoring schedule has been drawn up during the last two academic years which includes monitoring by management and staff. However, as the cycle was only recently developed, it has not been possible to evaluate the process fully. Governors are effectively involved in the self-evaluation process, but members understand the advantages of developing their role further.
52. Staffing levels within the school are appropriate; all teachers are well qualified and experienced to ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively. Excellent effects of continuing professional development are evident in several subject areas. The management of PPA time is outstanding and has been very effective in raising standards. Support staff work very effectively with teachers to plan, teach and record pupils' progress. The caretaker gives invaluable service to the school.
53. The school has an abundance of learning resources for every subject, and the purchase of resources is based on the requirements of the SDP. The quality of resources is very good.

54. Exceptional use is made of the accommodation to provide a stimulating setting for teaching and learning. Excellent interactive displays throughout the school celebrate pupils' successes and aspirations. Financial planning and spending are closely linked to priorities identified by staff and the GB. The school gives very good value for money.

## Recommendations

In order to move the school forward staff and GB need to:

- R1 continue to maintain the good and outstanding standards;
- R2 continue to ensure that boys consistently achieve their full potential;
- R3 continue to raise standards in pupils' key skills and bilingual skills across the school; and
- R4 continue to develop and review the role of staff and GB in the school's self-evaluation strategies

All recommendations feature in the school's current SDP and self-evaluation report.

The GB is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

## Standards

### Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

55. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
56. Grades for standards in subjects inspected during the inspection were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
13%	80%	7%	-	-

57. These figures compare well with the national averages as published in HMCI's annual report for 2006-7, where overall standards in primary schools in Wales are reported to be a Grade 2 in 80% of lessons and a Grade 1 in 10%. They show a significant improvement since the last inspection.

58. Grades for the subjects inspected were as follows:

English	Grade 2
Mathematics	Grade 2
Science	Grade 2
Art and design	Grade 1
Music	Grade 2
Physical Education	Grade 1

59. It is very difficult to provide a clear picture of the school's performance at the end of KS2 national assessments. The profile of cohorts varied significantly from year to year and results include pupils from the Complex Needs class. The number of Y6 pupils in this class and the number with statements of SEN varies annually. Therefore, data from results has to be treated with caution.
60. Most pupils achieve very well regardless of their social or linguistic ability. Almost all make outstanding progress towards fulfilling their potential as a result of their excellent response to the school's focus on promoting self - belief. Results in the last few years indicate that overall girls outperform boys. In 2008 however, the performance of boys in the national assessment tests showed improvement.
61. The school recognises that ensuring that boys consistently achieve the same standards as girls is a priority.
62. In English, results in 2006 and 2007 were significantly below the local and national averages. In 2008, however, they improved as the number of pupils who achieved a level 4 was higher. However, they remain slightly below both local and national figures. Attainment at the higher level 5 is slightly higher than in previous years and compares favourably with the local average.
63. In mathematics, results in 2008 show an improvement on the figures in 2006 and 2007, but are still slightly below the local and national percentages. In 2008, however, the performance of boys was above the local and national percentages, whilst the attainment of girls was below. The number of pupils achieving the higher level 5 was below local and national averages.
64. In science end of KS2 assessments indicate that figures have generally been slightly below national and local performance. However, in 2008 percentages show that standards of both boys and girls improved with boys slightly outperforming girls. The number of pupils who attained a level 5 was more than 20 per cent higher than that of the local and national figures.
65. The CSI percentages for 2008, which is the number of pupils who attain a level 4 in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science remain below the local and national figures, but indicates a steady increase from previous years.
66. When compared to similar schools with the same number of pupils eligible for free school meals, results vary from year to year. In 2006 performance in all

core subjects and the CSI was in the lower quarter and in 2007 it was just below the middle. In 2008, however, it was above the middle in mathematics and science but just below in English.

67. Pupils are set realistic and challenging targets and most achieve these; a few are successful in exceeding them. The outstanding progress made by pupils with ALN ensures that most achieve their targets.
68. Pupils make good progress generally in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT and overall achieve good standards. In listening, skills are outstanding in all classes. Pupils understand the importance of listening to teachers' presentations and instructions so that they can accomplish their tasks. They know that listening to their peers in class discussions is an important part of respect for others.
69. Standards in speaking are good across the school. Pupils make good use of the outstanding opportunities provided for them during the school day to improve their fluency. Most present aspects of their work and share ideas and opinions confidently. Older ones are extremely confident when making presentations and in informal dialogues with adults.
70. In reading pupils make good progress although the majority enter the school in Y3 with very limited reading skills. However their reading skills develop well as they progress through the school; pupils respond well of the prominence given to reading a variety of texts in subjects. Most older pupils express texts well to an audience and show a full understanding of what they are reading.
71. Standards in writing are good overall. They are limited at the lower end of the school because of a general low ability in reading skills. Older pupils however, communicate effectively in writing for a number of purposes and to a range of audiences.
72. In numeracy standards overall are good. Pupils show an increasing ability in applying number and handling data in their work across subjects. Many older pupils use numbers confidently when undertaking tasks as part of their responsibilities on school committees; this enables them to solve problems successfully.
73. Standards in ICT are good at the younger end of the school and are often outstanding at the older end. Across the age range pupils are confident users of ICT and older ones use computers independently in many subjects. They research and use programs successfully.
74. Standards in pupils' bilingual skills develop well. Their attitude towards using Welsh is consistently good; they respond well to strategies put in place recently to extend their use and understanding of the language. Their use of Welsh language patterns in classes linked to current subject activities and also outside the classroom in contexts such as the bilingual fruit shop, is particularly effective.

75. Pupils' understanding of what they are doing, how well they are progressing and how they can improve is outstanding. This is a consistent feature of all classes. Pupils assess and evaluate their own learning and the efforts of others very effectively. As a result, they are highly successful in increasing their knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school; the majority try out new ideas very confidently.
76. Almost without exception pupils develop into mature individuals who make outstanding progress towards fulfilling their potential; they are very well prepared for moving on to the next stage in their learning.
77. Pupils make outstanding progress in the development of their personal, social and learning skills. They have exceptionally good attitudes to learning. They work hard in lessons and are interested and very enthusiastic about their work. They co-operate and support each other very well when learning in groups and pairs. Nearly all sustain very good levels of concentration and even the least able persevere very well with their tasks.
78. Pupils' behaviour and the respect they show to adults and each other is outstanding. Relationships are exemplary and an atmosphere of mutual respect is evident throughout all school activities. Older pupils are very good role models. Parents and governors agree in their responses that pupils behave very well. Their behaviour on school visits is often praised highly. There have been no exclusions for many years.
79. The school sets high standards of behaviour and pupils know what is expected of them; they are friendly, polite and considerate. They relate very well to adults and willingly help their teachers throughout the day; they help ancillary staff very effectively, for example at breakfast club. Older pupils in particular demonstrate high levels of maturity and independence. They readily assume responsibilities during lessons; for example they take on roles of observers during group activities making careful notes and providing sensitive feedback to their peers.
80. Throughout the day pupils move sensibly in and around the school. Behaviour in the hall during whole school collective worship is exemplary. Pupils enter and leave the hall quietly and take up their places quickly. They listen attentively and make sensible, considered contributions.
81. Pupils' understanding of equal opportunities is very good throughout the school because this is firmly embedded in the school's work. Boys and girls work and play together very well and relationships with each other are very good. Older pupils are sensitive to the needs of their peers and younger ones. Trained peer mediators, prefects and 'buddies' provide excellent support. Their progress in social, moral and wider development is outstanding.
82. In discussions pupils say they generally get on well. They state that bullying is not a problem but that they are aware of what to do should it occur. They feel they can rely on their teachers.



83. At 92.41 per cent the average rate of attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection is in line with the LEA average. It is above the average for similar schools but below the national average. Absences are caused mainly by illness but the overall rate is adversely affected by family holidays during term time.
84. Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time at the start of the school day. The breakfast club is extremely popular and as result punctuality for many pupils has improved.
85. Pupils, including those with ALN are exceptionally well prepared for effective participation in the workplace. They respond very well to the responsibilities given to them and to opportunities provided to become independent learners. All understand the importance of working together as a team and many learn valuable managerial and leadership skills during daily routines and tasks such as helping with school secretarial tasks. They are well prepared for the diversity of society.
86. Pupils develop a very good understanding of corporate responsibilities through their roles on the well-established school council and eco committee. Elected councillors make presentations to parents and governors confidently.
87. Pupils have an extremely strong sense of belonging to the community as a result of their exemplary involvement in a vast range of projects and events as well as visits to appropriate places. Pupils work very effectively with members of the community in the school's garden project and other intergenerational projects. They develop very good entrepreneurial skills by selling vegetables grown in the school garden.

## The quality of education and training

### Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

#### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

88. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
89. The quality of teaching in sessions observed during the inspection was as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
34%	63%	3%	-	-

90. These figures are well above the national averages as published in HMCI's annual report for 2006-7 where overall the quality of teaching in primary schools in Wales is reported to be a Grade 2 or better in 80% of lessons and a Grade 1 in 14%. They show a significant improvement since the last inspection.

91. Teaching meets pupils' needs and curricular course requirements in an outstanding way. Teaching in the LEA's Complex Needs class is consistently outstanding, as is the teaching by the PPA cover.
92. Outstanding features seen in teaching include:
- very good subject knowledge;
  - high expectations in standards of work and behaviour that motivate and challenge pupils;
  - clear learning objectives and success criteria that are shared with pupils;
  - setting tasks which ensure that appropriate work is understood by pupils of varying abilities; and
  - fostering independence, so that pupils take an active role in their learning.
93. In addition, there are many good features that include:
- constructive working relationships between staff and pupils;
  - sensitive intervention to support and encourage pupils;
  - effective questioning;
  - detailed planning;
  - clear time limits for the completion of tasks; and
  - using a range of resources well to enrich learning.
94. The very few shortcomings include:
- insufficiently challenging tasks; and
  - less effective organisation.
95. Teachers use a good range of high quality resources, including ICT, effectively and imaginatively to stimulate the interest of pupils. They are fully committed to equal opportunities for pupils of all backgrounds, age and ability. An awareness of how pupils learn best helps teachers when presenting new experiences effectively.
96. Members of support staff make an extremely valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. They work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils progress well.
97. All teachers promote pupils' bilingualism in an active way, for example, through the use of incidental Welsh throughout the day. In the best examples Welsh is used very well in the teaching of various subjects of the curriculum.
98. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are outstanding. The school has developed a comprehensive, rigorous but manageable system of assessment that is used effectively to match activities to individual pupils' needs. The key purpose of assessment within the school is to provide a framework within which educational objectives may be set and each child's progress monitored. Information is gathered from a wide range of resources, which include standardised tests and teacher assessments. Appropriate

assessment opportunities are successfully incorporated into schemes of work by subject leaders. Assessment outcomes are used very effectively to inform teaching and learning.

99. Excellent use is made of data to set targets for the end of the key stage, and to track the progress of individuals and year group cohorts of pupils over time. Assessments in the core and foundation subjects are well supported by portfolios of pupils' work levelled against NC attainment targets and which are the result of internal moderation meetings. These portfolios, together with school cluster moderation, ensure that standards are consistent within the school and between schools.
100. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements for recording learners' achievements. Pupils are an integral part of the assessment process, with self and peer assessment being an important part of the system. Pupils know what needs to be done to achieve the learning objectives. Their work is marked regularly and effectively, and whenever possible verbal feedback is given. Pupils evaluate their own work and that of their peers effectively against personal targets. This results in their gaining an outstanding understanding of the purpose of assessment and an awareness of some of their strengths and areas for development. The 'Listening to Learners' strategy and the plenary sessions in lessons, are two of the several effective ways in which pupils review the way in which they learn.
101. Reports to parents are of high quality, and provide useful information about pupils' progress in all subjects. Also, they include helpful general comments about attitudes to learning and behaviour and details of how children can improve. They enable parents to see clearly what progress has been made and what can be done to assist progress in the future. Parents appreciate opportunities to discuss their children's progress with teachers and are formally welcomed to the school at appropriate times during the year. They are pleased to be given an opportunity to respond to the annual reports.
102. Relevant information is transferred to the receiving secondary school, to the LEA and to various outside agencies, in order to secure continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

**Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

103. The findings of the inspection team do not match the Grade 2 given by the school in its self-evaluation report. The team awarded a higher grade as it felt that there were many outstanding features to the curriculum provision and that pupils had access to exciting and enriching experiences.
104. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. It is broad and covers all subjects. It is balanced as it gives appropriate time and attention to curriculum

areas and enables them to be studied in depth. Activities are flexible and suitably matched for the age and wide range of abilities, including pupils in the Complex Needs Class, more able and a few talented pupils. Equality of opportunity is central to the provision; there are no instances of stereotyping. Provision is presented through tasks centred on individual work, paired and group activities. The provision for homework enriches learning for all pupils.

105. Schemes of work are effective documents in determining long term planning. They have been suitably adapted to meet the current needs of the school and ensure continuity and progression in what pupils learn. Schemes are regularly updated to take account of the school's many initiatives. The school is well prepared through its schemes for the changes introduced by the new skills based curriculum. Effective skills and curricular maps provide a clear overview of what pupils learn.
106. Daily planning of lessons and activities is consistent between classes and identifies the learning objectives and success criteria to be shared with pupils. It also identifies the excellent provision for thinking skills in each lesson, indicates the focus for key skills and records the steps involved in presenting the new curriculum skills framework.
107. Provision for key skills is outstanding but has not fully impacted on standards. Provision for promoting literacy skills, especially listening and speaking, are exemplary. Opportunities are consistently initiated for the development of skills that are matched to the needs of individuals and groups.
108. The school has also a detailed plan for providing PSE, which has been updated to include recent initiatives and to ensure effective provision in circle time.
109. Provision for bilingualism is outstanding. Incidental Welsh is used well in classrooms and in some instances this is outstanding; lessons are extremely effective in consolidating language patterns. An impressive collection of Welsh reading books is used to promote reading skills. These features are beginning to impact positively on standards achieved.
110. Pupils' spiritual and moral skills are extensively promoted by daily collective worship which conforms to statutory requirements. These occasions are highly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual development; they are central to the whole of school life. The 'Trier of the Month' assembly is highly successful in promoting self-belief, establishing the joy of seeing others succeed, understanding that respect is an important quality of life and providing pupils with time to reflect. Pupils develop an understanding of moral obligations to the community, each other and as citizens of the world during these occasions. They are encouraged successfully to know the difference between right and wrong.
111. Provision for pupils' social development is exceptional. The school places an importance on good relationships and on giving equal opportunities to all. It successfully conveys to pupils that being part of a team is as important as having leadership responsibility through the school council, mediators in the

playground and leading the school's eco activities. Many pupils gain accreditation through certificates and training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities well.

112. The promoting of pupils' cultural development has a very high profile in the school. Strategies to ensure that pupils are proud to be Welsh, while understanding the importance of respecting other cultures and the diversity of the world are exemplary. Excellent use is made of a key worker from Malawi who works with pupils on a regular basis. Through this provision pupils have a direct insight into how children are educated and how conditions can vary from one country to another. Artefacts and lessons about other cultures consistently reinforce pupils' understanding of diversity.
113. The school has a curriculum map which identifies the school's outstanding provision for the cwricwlwm Cymreig. This uses the community of the Rhondda very effectively as its starting point especially in the study of World War Two and the history of mining. Texts studied include stories by Welsh authors or with Welsh settings. Pupils appreciate the work of Welsh artists like Sir Kyffin Williams and Catrin Webster and know that there have been a number of famous composers in Wales, such as Grace Williams, and are introduced to Welsh folksongs.
114. Opportunities to provide pupils' with awareness and understanding of global citizenship and sustainable development are very well developed. Pupils understand that local issues are also global ones.
115. Pupils, led ably by the eco committee understand what is meant by global warming and talk about the need for cutting down on the use of cars, ensuring that there are plenty of trees and plants and developing the school grounds to grow vegetables. They also understand that they enjoy a better quality of life than other people in various parts of the world but that they are helping these people through their fund-raising activities. They are provided with opportunities to monitor the use of water and energy and take part in a range of sustainable development such as recycling paper, bulbs and food waste. They are aware through the Rhys project of local recycling initiatives and understand the problems linked to landfill sites.
116. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. Pupils develop a range of skills and talents in after school activities. They take part in a range of sporting activities and are coached by experts. They receive extra-curricular provision in music and drama. An outstanding feature of provision is the involvement of pupils with their community. They work in intergenerational projects where they learn from senior citizens about aspects of art and design and history. They also perform in the community as well as visit special places in the Rhondda and South Wales.
117. Visitors from the community and experts from a variety of subjects visit the school and enrich the provision. Older pupils go to London and the Urdd camp in Glanllyn for residential visits to promote social skills and to establish an awareness of contrasting areas.

118. Provision for providing effective work-related skills is outstanding. Pupils know what jobs are available in the area and what skills are needed to take on responsibilities. They develop excellent entrepreneurial skills when selling vegetables as well as when ordering, selling and dealing with the accounts of the school tuck-shop.
119. Partnerships with parents and the community are outstanding. Organisations such as Communities First, Sporting Marvels, the police and community nurse support the PSE programme extremely well. Pupils are successful in community competitions and events such as the Treorchy Male Choir musician of the year and Celebration of Dance. Members of the community undertake painting, decorating and maintenance and gardening projects willingly in school.
120. A very generous bequest from a former resident enables the school to provide many activities. The school is at the heart of the community and provides pupils with many opportunities for life-long learning. The way adults from the village are developed when they become involved with the school is outstanding. In its partnership with industry the school makes good use of what is available in the community.
121. The quality of information for parents and guardians is excellent and includes regular newsletters and a website. The school has a genuine open door policy and there is very good daily informal contact between parents, guardians and teachers. Curriculum meetings on the new curriculum and raising the profile of reading as well as workshops on maths, storytelling and science are very well attended.
122. Courses laid on for parents in the computer room and the provision of projects between home and school, such as on the life of John Lennon and the castles of Wales, introduce parents successfully to lifelong learning opportunities. A small number of dedicated parents, grandparents and community members provide valuable support in class and with practical activities; their contributions are highly valued by the school and have very positive effects on pupils' learning.
123. Links with surrounding schools and a college of further education are excellent. The transition plans to the secondary school ensure equality and consistency between cluster schools. The school also provides very valuable training and work experience for secondary school and childcare students as well as trainee painters and decorators.
124. Former pupils willingly return to school in roles such as story tellers as well as for drama sessions and social occasions. The school endeavours to raise pupils' aspirations through its links, for example Y6 pupils benefit from story telling sessions at the neighbouring university. The school is also in partnership with an initial teacher training university.

#### **Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?**

##### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

125. The inspection team's findings do not match the Grade 2 given by the school in its self-evaluation report for this question. The team awarded a higher grade as it felt that the school underestimated how effective it cares for, guides and supports pupils.
126. Pupils are cared for, guided and supported in an outstanding way, and care arrangements are very well planned and managed. All pupils are valued, and a caring and supportive ethos permeates the school. The promotion of pupils' well-being is of the highest quality; the school liaises closely with the LEA on this aspect, and extremely efficient use is made of specialist support for pupils with specific needs.
127. The school's partnership with parents has several outstanding features, one of which is the flourishing parent and child 'Catch Up' computer club. The positive response to the pre-inspection questionnaires is clear evidence that parents are very happy with the guidance given to their children. They state that they are consulted regularly about the care and support needed for their children. Pupils' views about the guidance they receive are also considered; for example, pupils are involved effectively in decision making through the school council.
128. Arrangements to help children settle into school are extremely well organised. Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in the process and a great deal of information is provided for them. Pupils meet with younger pupils in the infant school on various occasions during the year and the 'buddy system' ensures that new pupils are made welcome. Transition procedures to KS3 are particularly good, with outstanding features such as the emphasis on continuing sustained and effective curricular links, with a consistent approach to pedagogy, ensuring a smooth transfer to the secondary school.
129. The day-to-day care and personal guidance for pupils' welfare is of a very high quality and is one of the strengths of the school. All adults know the pupils well and, as a consequence, are able to meet pupils' needs very well indeed. In discussion, pupils confirm that they feel safe and well cared for and that they can turn to any adult for help should they need it. The school is highly successful in creating a happy, caring community where each child is valued. Breakfast and after school clubs enrich provision for pupils.
130. The school fosters aspects of PSE, such as the development of thinking skills, problem solving, improving learners' own performance and working with others, particularly well. The development of lifelong learning skills, including the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, underpins the guidance and support provided for all pupils. Provision for healthy eating is effective. Pupils understand the need for looking after their bodies by eating healthily and exercising.

131. A wide range of specialist services is used most effectively to ensure high quality support for pupils with particular needs. Pupils are greatly appreciative of the care that teachers show towards them; they know that teachers will listen to them. They can also discuss problems during circle time or by making their feelings known to members of the school council, which meets regularly.
132. Visits by community members, such as the police and the school nurse, contribute effectively to the healthy development and well-being of pupils. Participation in an LEA healthy schools scheme enables pupils to take responsibility for promoting various aspects of healthy development, such as the fruit tuck shop and peer mediation. Risk assessments are undertaken for all school activities, including educational visits. There are clear, well-documented procedures that contribute to pupils' well-being, and arrangements to promote day-to-day guidance are highly effective.
133. Child protection procedures are well documented and are known to all who work in the school. Staff training is undertaken regularly. A range of policies ensure that procedures have been established to promote the well-being of learners.
134. The quality of provision for pupils with ALN is outstanding, and complies with statutory requirements.
135. Learning needs are diagnosed effectively at an early stage and good support is given. Individual educational plans (IEPs) and personal targets are used effectively by teachers and support staff to ensure that provision fully addresses pupils' individual needs. IEPs are regularly reviewed and updated and good use is made of them to inform teaching. The member of the GB with responsibility for SEN is most supportive.
136. Pupils with SEN benefit greatly from the high quality guidance given to them by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the teacher of the LEA complex needs class, classroom teachers and support staff. Links with outside agencies are particularly good. The quality of support provided by the teacher and support staff in the LEA Complex Needs class is outstanding. Also, two recently formed groups provide excellent support for children who fail to learn because of emotional difficulties.
137. Throughout the school there is equal access for all pupils to every part of the curriculum and they are treated fairly and consistently. The school actively promotes multicultural understanding and tolerance through cross-curricular links and is an inclusive community.
138. Learning activities promote gender equality most effectively, and teaching challenges stereotypes in pupils' choices and expectations.
139. The school promotes good race relations in its life and work and the policy clearly identifies actions to be taken to tackle discrimination. Although there are no pupils from ethnic minorities, the school realises that it has an important role in promoting racial tolerance and valuing diversity.



140. The school takes effective measures to combat bullying and other oppressive behaviour. Positive steps are taken to ensure that pupils and staff are free from any form of harassment. The school recognises and records incidents of bullying that occur, and deals with such behaviour effectively, ensuring that steps are taken to prevent repetition.
141. There are very effective policies to monitor pupils' attendance, punctuality, behaviour and performance. Procedures for pupils to help resolve conflicts are outstanding.
142. The level of support for those whose behaviour impedes their progress or that of others is excellent, and the school works closely with parents to ensure that appropriate support is provided for pupils with behavioural difficulties. The school's policies and procedures to promote good behaviour emphasise a positive approach.
143. Teachers apply policies for behaviour management consistently and all adults in the school are very good role models. Clear guidelines for positive behaviour policy is given to mid-day supervisors.
144. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are extremely carefully monitored. Appropriate account is taken of NAW Circular 47/06. The school operates a first day response system for the small number of families that give concern. The school sets targets for attendance. It works very closely with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and other agencies in terms of attendance and family welfare. Pupils are keen to be the best class for attendance and behaviour weekly. Their achievements are displayed prominently in the main reception area. Pupils with full attendance are rewarded termly and at the end of the year. About thirty pupils achieve full attendance each term.
145. The school is very much aware of the need to ensure that pupils with a disability are treated equally, and that they are not disadvantaged whilst in school. There is a suitable access plan under the Disability Discrimination Act, which ensures that equality continues to be actively promoted. Pupils with disabilities in the school have excellent support. The building has appropriate security measures.
146. Pupils' understanding of diversity is very effectively introduced into several curricular areas. Pupils show respect for the culture, lifestyle, religions and traditions of other people. The close links with the Cwm Rhondda School in Kenya educate pupils to recognise and respect diversity.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

147. The findings of the inspection team do not match the Grade 2 given by the school in its self-evaluation report. The team awarded a higher grade as it felt that leadership and management has outstanding features.
148. Although standards in key question 1 were judged to be a Grade 2, the team decided that many initiatives had been introduced to raise standards which have improved significantly since the last inspection. The team were of the opinion that pupils' outstanding progress which ensures that most achieve their full potential was the result of their good leadership and well managed procedures.
149. The aims and values of the school are shared effectively with teaching staff, support and auxiliary staff, adults who occasionally work at the school, governors, parents, pupils and the community of Maerdy. These are communicated successfully to all through class and corridor displays and in daily communication. Aims reflect the school's clear vision and direction.
150. Regular staff meetings are held to enable staff to have a clear picture of initiatives and developments and share information, views and opinions. All statutory requirements are met.
151. The school is an orderly community; the day proceeds in a very organised manner and at a brisk pace.
152. The acting headteacher and her deputy make an outstanding team. Their shared vision is successfully communicated to all involved in the school. They lead by example and value everyone equally. As a result, the commitment of all who work for the school is exceptional.
153. The school's management makes very effective use of the LEA, through link advisers to ensure a focus on raising standards and setting up a robust self-evaluation process.
154. All staff have appropriate job descriptions. Responsibilities are well distributed amongst them; subject leaders are all developing excellent managerial skills.
155. An outstanding feature of leadership and management is the training opportunities provided for staff and the very effective networking with other schools. Teachers have many opportunities to attend courses which are relevant to their needs, interests and expertise. This has successfully focused on the impact of the Foundation Phase for younger children on teaching styles and provision in classes in KS2.
156. An outstanding feature is the school's belief in fully developing its effective support staff. Learning and teaching assistants (LTAs) are encouraged to gain qualifications and are given opportunities to attend courses. This is very effective in the whole school attempt to improve the school's provision for bilingualism. The school, in turn, is used for training LTAs; this enhances the professional development of staff further.

157. Performance management is well established. All staff evaluate their own performance, which is monitored successfully by the head teacher. Targets are set and evaluated effectively to identify areas for personal improvement. The school's arrangements for new responsibilities linked to remodelling in the workplace are excellent.
158. The management and organisation of PPA time provided for teachers is outstanding. Staff use their time in the best possible way and strategies used for classroom teaching during this time are exemplary. The Higher Learning Teaching Assistant (HLTA) makes an excellent contribution to the school by teaching music and Welsh during PPA time for teachers.
159. The SDP is an effective document for moving the school forward. It shows clarity in relation to responsibilities, deadlines for completion and resource implications. The document identifies many targets, some of which are short term but some that are to be achieved over three years in order to allow continuous review of progress. Targets set for pupils and whole school issues in the SDP are very appropriate. The link between the SDP and the self-evaluation report clearly indicates how the school is moving forward.
160. Exceptional attention is given to national priorities and local initiatives. This is an outstanding feature. The school is working very successfully at becoming a community focused school, is a pilot school for an English university for a project on thinking skills and in gaining accreditation from the British Educational Communications Technology Agency (BECTA).
161. The GB fulfils statutory requirements. Members have curricular responsibilities and committees. They are very supportive and are knowledgeable about current developments and ensure good financial and resource management. Regular detailed headteacher reports ensure that they are well informed. They impart the necessary information to parents through an annual report and school prospectus.

**Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?**

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

162. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
163. The findings of the inspection team match the school's grade in three key questions. In the other four questions the team awarded the school a higher grade as they felt that the school had underestimated its excellence in these areas. However, the team felt that the school knows itself well.
164. The school produced an effective action plan in response to the last inspection report. Progress since the last inspection has therefore been good overall. Since the appointment of the present acting headteacher and deputy progress has been outstanding.

165. The school has successfully raised standards in subjects identified as satisfactory or good in the last inspection report. The school however, still identifies the need to raise standards in core subjects further.
166. In order to improve standards in key skills, which was identified as a need in the last report, excellent strategies have recently been put in place. These have included the training of staff and the purchase of resources. Provision for key skills is now exemplary but this has not fully impacted on standards achieved. Continuing to raise standards further in key skills is a recommendation in this report.
167. Teaching issues identified in the last report have been addressed extremely successfully. The quality of teaching is currently often outstanding.
168. Issues identified in the last inspection report in relation to the Complex Needs class have been fully addressed. Provision and teaching in this class is now exceptional; procedures fully conform with the SEN Code of Practice (CoP).
169. SDPs since the last inspection have been very effective in continuing the strategies identified in the action plan following the last inspection. They have focused successfully on curriculum provision and assessment.
170. A robust self-evaluation process prioritising the raising of standards has recently been established and is reflected in a detailed self-evaluation report. The close working relationship with the LEA over the last two years has resulted in an effective cycle of school development planning.
171. A classroom monitoring schedule has been drawn up during the last two academic years which ensures that headteacher, deputy and subject leaders observe lessons, scrutinise pupils' work, compile portfolios of work and analyse results. Headteacher monitoring reports focus on agreed aspects of standards and teaching; outcomes are discussed and inform future provision and strategies. Subject leader reports are disseminated to staff and feed appropriately into the current SDP. However, as the cycle was only recently developed, it has not been possible to evaluate the process fully.
172. The school analyses its data in detail. End of KS2 assessments are used very effectively to improve standards and inform the school what areas are to be developed further in core subjects. This enables the school to set realistic targets for current and future cohorts of pupils.
173. Parents play a worthwhile part in the school's self-evaluation systems. They are always welcome to visit and give their opinions. Their views are sought through questionnaires. Their responses to questionnaires provided for parents by the inspection team indicated that they had a full awareness of the school's current initiatives. They are provided with opportunities to make comments in writing, for example as they leave occasions such as the 'Trler of the Month' collective worship. They say that the school responds to their comments and informs them of changes.

174. Pupils play a very valuable part in the self-evaluation process. This very successfully provides them with a sense of ownership of their school. 'Listening to Learners' has a high profile and pupils are involved in their own learning. A variety of strategies are used to ensure that pupils' views are known and acted upon. The school council, eco committee and Maerdy Mediators all have opportunities to take part in decision-making. Although suggestions are made to the whole school about which good causes they should target in their fund raising events, pupils are successfully made to feel that the final decision is ultimately theirs.
175. Governors are effectively involved in the self-evaluation process. Members are frequent visitors to school and are invited to assemblies and open days. A few have met with subject leaders and help and monitor their allocated subject areas in classrooms. Subject leaders have made presentations on current initiatives to the GB. Members were involved in the decisions on gradings in the self-evaluation report provided for the inspection team. They work closely with the staff to ensure an adequate allocation of resources to ensure improvements in areas where the school feels it needs to prioritise. Members understand the advantages of developing their role further.

#### **Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?**

##### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

176. The inspection team's findings do not match the Grade 2 given by the school in its self-evaluation report. The team awarded a higher grade as it felt that the school used resources very efficiently and that there were many outstanding features in this question. They were of the opinion that, although standards overall were a Grade 2, they felt that the imaginative use of the building was a factor in the excellent provision in some subjects
177. The staffing level within the school is appropriate and all teachers are well qualified and experienced to ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively. Effective use is made of PPA cover and outside expertise in some subject teaching sessions, for example, in the teaching of music. Also, specialist agencies support school clubs, such as dance and basketball, most effectively.
178. Excellent effects of continuing professional development are evident in several subject areas. The delivery of initiatives, such as 'Catch Up' and 'Spotlight' by support staff also contributes significantly towards pupils' learning. Visiting teachers, such as peripatetic instrumental tutors, the athrawes fro and the language support teacher make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
179. Support staff work very effectively with teachers to plan, teach and record pupils' progress. They show particularly sensitive appreciation of the needs of pupils, particularly those with SEN and with disabilities.
180. The school makes effective use of competent administrative staff, students and volunteers and the school buildings and grounds are very well maintained by the caretaker and cleaning staff. The caretaker gives invaluable service to the

school and he, as well as canteen staff and lunchtime helpers, contribute very effectively to pupils' well-being.

181. The school has an abundance of learning resources for every subject, and the purchase of resources is based on the requirements of the SDP. The quality of resources is very good, with sufficient equipment for creative and practical activities, as well as ICT equipment, which enable pupils to develop a wide range of skills. These are used purposefully across the curriculum.
182. Innovative use is made of spare rooms for a variety of purposes, such as music lessons, instrumental lessons and language support, and corridors are used effectively for the teaching of small groups. The ICT suite is well resourced and all classrooms have interactive whiteboards, which are used effectively by staff and pupils.
183. The hall and its stage is well used for assemblies and physical education lessons and clubs; it is of a very good size for the number of pupils on roll. The canteen is also used well for lunch and breakfast club.
184. The school has a rolling programme of maintenance and redecoration. Modifications such as handrails and painting steps have been made to accommodate pupils with disabilities such as sight impairments. Despite the fact that there is some water penetration from a leaking roof and some traces of damp in the toilets the school building is very well maintained.
185. Excellent interactive displays throughout the school celebrate pupils' successes and aspirations.
186. The outdoor area which consists of playgrounds and grassed areas, with an activity trail, is used most effectively. The large, hard surface is marked for games and the vegetable garden is well placed and supports work in sustainable development. The caretaker is very vigilant and ensures that water from the mountain does not become a potential hazard.
187. Financial planning and spending are closely linked to priorities identified by staff and the GB. The GB finance committee meets regularly and ensures effective management of the budget. The school applies for grants to support the updating of resources, and makes excellent use of a trust fund to finance educational visits. The school gives very good value for money.

## **Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

### **English**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

##### **Good features**

188. Pupils across the key stage display very well developed listening skills. They settle down eagerly to hear stories and poems. They listen with respect when

teachers read information texts and quickly make good progress in their understanding of a variety of written texts.

189. Pupils develop good speaking skills. Those who are naturally less confident than others make sound progress. All respond well to the many opportunities provided to engage in class discussions. They eagerly discuss the books they read and observe good language conventions when speaking to adults. Many older ones speak very confidently and present their arguments lucidly. Across the key stage they are eager to formulate and convey opinions and put great emphasis on being clearly understood by others.
190. Pupils across the key stage develop good reading skills. Younger ones in Y4 demonstrate eagerly the progress they have made since they started the school. They are eager to read regularly and are pleased to show their understanding of texts. Older ones understand the need to use expression in their reading in order to convey a clear message or entertain the audience.
191. Pupils achieve valuable independence in their reading in group sessions. They respond well to the opportunity to take responsibility for their reading. They improve significantly in word and sound recognition in Y4 and proceed to build on this as they proceed through Y5 and Y6. Older ones interpret direct speech and dialogue well in stories, can read information texts meaningfully and scan texts successfully for information. They also use the terminology of books such as illustrator and author correctly.
192. Pupils across the key stage are aware of the different forms of writing. They are aware that characters and settings are important when writing stories and that stories often reflect the present and that myths reflect the past. In writing their stories they understand the importance of the beginning, middle and end. As they proceed through the key stage they understand that language tasks make different demands on their sentence patterns and vocabulary.
193. In Y3 pupils understand how to write poems and they start to experiment with similar sounds and words. In Y4 they realise that when they write a report, the information given must be a response to a range of questions. In Y5 they understand that the characters they create are central to the enjoyment of the reader. In Y6 pupils understand the need for reliable sources of information for use in biographical writing and can identify what is needed when writing biographies and autobiographies.
194. Across the school pupils develop appropriate handwriting skills which enhance the presentation of their work. They also progress well and achieve good standards by the end of the key stage in spelling. A few older ones display commendable spelling skills and use a range a range of difficult patterns confidently.
195. Pupils' understanding of knowledge of language is good. In Y3 pupils begin to understand how dictionaries can help them in their work. In Y4 can they can identify verbs in a text and in Y5 they can identify alliteration and use it effectively. In Y6 they show an understanding of direct and indirect speech and develop a knowledge of regular and irregular verbs.

## Shortcomings

196. There are no major shortcomings but although pupils make good progress in reading as they progress through the school, the reading skills of pupils who enter the school are low and for a short period inhibit their progress in a range of language skills.

## Mathematics

### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

#### Good features

197. Pupils have a good understanding of mathematical concepts and apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding effectively in a wide range of contexts.
198. In Y3 pupils work confidently, quickly and correctly when completing mental arithmetic tasks. They use various appropriate strategies for solving problems; for example in Y3 they add two two-digit numbers quickly and correctly and have a good understanding of the place value of each digit.
199. Pupils in Y4 develop a range of useful strategies for solving number problems, and explain these with understanding, using appropriate mathematical language. They understand the relationship between addition and multiplication and between subtraction and division.
200. Most pupils in Y3 and Y4 tell the time correctly and record their work accurately through digital and conventional means. They make sensible estimates when measuring and work accurately using standard units. They have a good knowledge of the names and properties of a range of two and three dimensional shapes. Their understanding of money is good. They create and interpret tally charts and frequency tables correctly, for example, when recording numbers of wild animals.
201. Pupils in Y5 and Y6 use a range of strategies in their number work flexibly and effectively. They see connections between mathematical topics and choose suitable mathematical techniques to solve problems. For example, they apply multiplication skills to solve problems in real life situations.
202. In Y6 their knowledge of place value is secure and they recall key mathematical facts quickly. Through practical application they show effective use of numeracy skills to solve problems; for example, they use negative numbers in the context of temperature, and decimals when dealing with money and measures. Many pupils are able to justify and prove results, using mathematical reasoning well.
203. Pupils in Y5 and Y6 identify a wide range of three-dimensional shapes, describing their geometric properties effectively and use this information correctly to classify them. Most pupils measure and calculate the surface and



perimeter of shapes accurately, and read and plot co-ordinates of quadrants knowledgeably.

204. In Y5 and Y6 pupils collect mathematical information and present data using a variety of tables, graphs and diagrams, often using ICT to record their findings and to communicate them to others. The interpretive skills of the most able pupils in Y6 are very good.

### **Shortcomings**

205. There are no important shortcomings

## **Science**

### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

206. Pupils have a detailed scientific knowledge of the areas studied. They use a broad scientific vocabulary correctly and confidently when discussing their work.
207. Younger pupils know that heating and cooling processes can change materials, and they can identify objects that require electricity to work. They investigate rocks effectively to discover which ones are porous, and have a sound knowledge about aspects of the natural world.
208. Pupils in Y4 develop good knowledge and understanding about friction and forces, and realise that air resistance can slow down the movement of objects. They understand that different light sources produce different degrees of light and that light travels in straight lines. They discuss concepts of transparency, translucency and opaqueness knowledgeably.
209. In Y5 pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge about life cycles and habitats of living things and know a great deal about magnets. They have a good understanding of factors affecting pitch through exploring a range of musical instruments.
210. Pupils in Y6 classify materials accurately and have a good understanding of the processes of evaporation and condensation. Their knowledge of the sun, moon and earth and their relative positions to one another is good, as is their knowledge about recycling.
211. Pupils throughout the school plan their enquiries systematically, and carry out investigations purposefully in pairs or in groups. They understand the need for a fair test, taking account of the variables involved. For example, in Y4, they make realistic suggestions as to which elements of a practical experiment with paper spinners need to be kept constant and which need to be adjusted.

212. Pupils make effective use of concept cartoons at the start of their investigations. For example, younger ones make good use of a concept cartoon to put their ideas about air resistance onto paper, and refer to the cartoon to monitor their own learning as their ideas about forces develop.
213. Younger and older pupils make systematic, accurate observations and measurements in their enquiry work. They form fair conclusions on the basis of their findings. In Y6 they understand the purpose of repeating experiments to ensure that results are reliable and dependable.
214. Across the school pupils record their findings effectively, showing a good understanding of various scientific concepts in a variety of ways; for example, they use text, graphs, tables, charts and diagrams appropriately. In Y5 they make effective use of ICT to present information and one group can record their findings about factors affecting the pitch of sound through clear illustrations. In Y4 pupils use Venn diagrams sensibly when investigating forces and in Y3 they can record their results about pulling and pushing in table form. In Y6 they make reasonable comparisons and identify and describe trends and patterns in data and information; they use prior knowledge effectively to explain links between cause and effect.
215. All pupils succeed in evaluating outcomes against success criteria in many ways, which include strategies such as discussion or reflection triangles to review what they learn and the way in which they learn.

### **Shortcomings**

216. There are no important shortcomings

<b>Art and design</b>
-----------------------

### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

#### **Outstanding features**

217. Pupils across the key stage have an outstanding understanding of terminology linked to their work in art and design. They apply pertinent vocabulary consistently well when describing the work of a range of artists and evaluating their own work and that of their peers.
218. Pupils' awareness of the variety of techniques seen in drawing and painting and the variety of media is outstanding. They can relate this knowledge to the work of famous artists such as Renoir and a number of artists who live and work in Wales.
219. Pupils' use of computer programs and the use of the digital camera to complement and promote their understanding of detail in landscape paintings is excellent.

220. Ceramics produced by older pupils and textile work by younger and older pupils are of excellent quality.

### **Good features**

221. Pupils in Y3 show a good awareness of how straight and swirling lines are used in paintings and drawings to indicate movement. They appreciate how this technique has enhanced the work of Van Gogh and how the work of the illusionist Escher is based on the concept of lines.

222. Pupils in Y3 also have a clear understanding of tone. They observe closely the variety of greens in photographs they take of the surrounding area and in the work of Graham Sutherland. They produce charts showing a variety of shades and hues to further their understanding of colour.

223. In Y4 pupils develop good weaving techniques when creating hangings in various shades of blue as a result of their observation of water in natural surroundings. They develop a good understanding of pattern. They look closely at a picture by the artist Andre Derain of Charing Cross Bridge and show a worthwhile understanding of how primary colours can create a vibrant effect. They also appreciate how artists use a variety of brush strokes for different effects in their pictures.

224. Pupils in Y5 have an appropriate awareness of pattern when working in cross-stitch following set patterns. They establish an understanding of colour and line.

225. Pupils at the older end of the key stage work well in textiles using ideas and patterns from a variety of cultures. They understand that these can express mood, tone, line and colour.

226. In their study of the works of Sir Kyffin Williams older pupils understand how he uses the landscape near his home to inspire his paintings. They enhance their understanding when observing their own landscape in detail. They understand that he works in oils applied from a palette and as a result they appreciate the textured effect produced by his technique. They understand how he is able to convey distance and perspective in his work and use this understanding when emulating his work.

### **Shortcomings**

227. There are no important shortcomings.

<b>Music</b>
--------------

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **Good features**

228. Pupils listen to a range of music and can identify a number of musical styles. They can identify a performance by Dafydd Iwan and the features of African music.
229. Pupils across the key stage sing tunefully in whole school sessions, in class groups and individually. Many perform confidently in front of peers. They sing a variety of songs and consistently give appropriate attention to diction and dynamics in popular, traditional and Welsh songs.
230. Pupils in all year groups know the names of a range of tuned and untuned instruments. They show an understanding of how many of them are played and the sort of sounds they make. They can choose appropriate instruments to convey the mood of music. Many can place a tuned instrument within its right group in the orchestra.
231. Many pupils across the school learn to play the recorder. Most succeed in producing a clear sound. Those proficient in instruments are called upon to play in front of the whole school; they do so confidently.
232. Younger pupils display a good understanding of notation. They use musical terminology such as dotted notes and chords and identify an ostinato correctly. They concentrate well on composing an accompaniment to a Welsh folk song on their choice of instruments. They evaluate the compositions of others and can offer suggestions and indicate their preferences. Younger pupils also demonstrate a sound knowledge of beats using body actions to demonstrate their understanding.
233. Pupils in Y5 show progression in their composing skills when creating a composition to accompany a narrative about animals. They choose appropriate instruments and the majority perform confidently in front of their peers. Many provide constructive comments when evaluating compositions.
234. In Y6 pupils have a good understanding of advanced musical terminology such as improvisation. They can talk about various styles of compositions. They can repeat the rhythm in a range of them correctly and identify and understand duration and note values. They also appreciate the role of the conductor and how three and four beat compositions are conducted. They can identify repeating patterns in music and understand that compositions have a structure involving a beginning, middle and end. Pupils in Y6 respond positively to improvisations to a number of popular songs.
235. Older pupils have an appropriate knowledge of the lives and works of a number of Welsh composers including Grace Williams, Karl Jenkins, Alun Hoddinott and William Mathias.

### **Shortcomings**

236. There are no major shortcomings.

## Physical education

### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features.

#### Outstanding features

237. In Y6 pupils' ball handling skills are outstanding. They work enthusiastically when throwing and bouncing balls, displaying excellent passing and receiving skills. They show very good control and effective use of tactics when playing competitive games.
238. In dance, pupils at the older end of the school respond sensitively to music and display an excellent sense of rhythm. They use a wide variety of dance steps and gestures and demonstrate exceedingly good flow and quality in their movements.
239. When performing gymnastic sequences Y6 pupils move energetically in a disciplined way, showing a very good awareness of the whole body and specific body parts. They display appropriate tension and move with fluidity, using changes of level, direction and speed particularly well.
240. Pupils' skills in orienteering, problem solving and adventure activities are outstanding. In Y3 and Y4 they show great competence and confidence in a wide range of skills, such as leadership and orienteering, through day visits to the Dare Valley Centre. In Y5 they develop very good skills in various activities, such as canoeing and climbing, on a residential course in Glanllyn. Pupils in Y6 display outstanding orienteering and problem solving skills when participating in a course organised by the Sporting Marvels Initiative as part of the transition arrangements to the secondary school.

#### Good features

241. Pupils in all classes know about the beneficial effects of exercise on health and have a good awareness of safety in physical education lessons, for example, when following activity trails in the school grounds. They warm up appropriately at the start of sessions, and relax at the end. In all classes observed pupils use space sensibly.
242. Pupils work together well in physical education lessons. They co-operate effectively with partners and in groups to plan, perform and evaluate their own performance and that of others. They work hard to achieve the tasks that are set.
243. In gymnastics lessons, pupils in Y3 show increasing control of their bodies as they develop sequences. They display clarity of body shape and effective changes of direction in their movements.
244. Pupils extend their physical skills most effectively through many extra-curricular activities in sports and dance clubs, and also competitive games against other schools and participation in area sports tournaments. They benefit from

coaching by professionals in various physical activities in the school and in the community. For example, their participation in a 'Celebration of Dance' through the Physical Education and School Sports (PESS) initiative impacts well on standards.

### **Shortcomings**

245. There are no important shortcomings.

### **School's response to the inspection**

246. The GB, staff and pupils of Maerdy Junior School welcome the inspection team's findings with a shared sense of pride. The inspection team recognised that the school's success and achievements are the result of the combined efforts of every member of the school community, including parents and partners.

247. This report brings confirmation that the direction in which the school is developing is having desired outcomes. It has given the school confidence to achieve even more success by giving us the opportunity to reflect on where we are now and to develop the way forward.

248. Of the many outstanding features identified in the report, the school is delighted that the team recognised the efforts all staff put into making the school a warm and secure place where successes are celebrated, however big or small. It recognises that members of staff make every effort to make learning fun and exciting and foster, in our children, a sense of belonging and love of learning. We are especially pleased that the inspection team believe that our provision for the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills is outstanding as these are the foundation from which all other learning develops. The report also recognises our ability to meet the needs of all learners including those with ALN as an outstanding feature.

249. The GB, staff and pupils would like to thank the inspection team sincerely for the positive manner in which they conducted the inspection. Although rigorous, the process was a productive one from which the school can build.

250. Our mission statement 'working together towards success' can now read as 'working together to celebrate success'.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Maerdy Junior School
School type	Junior
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Address of school	Graigwen, Maerdy, Rhondda Cynon Taff.
Postcode	CF43 4TW
Telephone number	01443755227

Headteacher	Mrs Sue Belcher (Acting)
Date of appointment	September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2006
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Bryn Jones
Registered inspector	Mrs Eleri Betts
Dates of inspection	October 6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> 2008

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	NA	NA	NA	NA	29	37	44	30	140

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	6	0	6

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	23:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	NA
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	5.1:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	23
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of school
Autumn 2007	NA	NA	91.6%
Spring 2008	NA	NA	92.5%
Summer 2008	NA	NA	94.1%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	58%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

## Appendix 3

### National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2008							Number of pupils in Y6		40			
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	2.5	5.0	27.5	37.5	27.5	
		National	0	0	0	0	1	4.6	15.6	51.3	28.5	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	2.5	2.5	20.0	50.0	25.0	
		National	0	0	0	0	1	3.9	14.7	51.4	30.0	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	2.5	2.5	15.0	30.0	50.0	
		National	0	0	0	0	0	3	11.4	53.9	31.7	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	65%	In the school	NA
In Wales	74.1%	In Wales	NA

- D Pupils who are excepted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum  
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence  
F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence  
W Pupils who are working towards level 1



## Appendix 4

### Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors spent the equivalent of seven inspector days in the school. The school's nominee and a peer assessor were also part of the team. All members met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- thirty eight lessons or part lessons, thirty in the six subjects inspected and eight in the other subjects;
- registrations, and acts of collective worship; and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- teachers, support and administrative staff;
- groups of pupils representing each year group; and
- the school council and representatives of organisations associated with the school.

The team also considered;

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- fifty seven responses to a parents' questionnaire- ninety nine per cent were positive;
- documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; a wide range of pupils' past and current work; and
- samples of pupils' reports.

After the inspection the team held meetings with staff and governors.

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mrs Eleri Betts Registered Inspector	Summary Report Recommendations Key Questions 1/3/5/6 English, art, music
Mrs Caterina Lewis Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1/3/4/7
Mrs Zohrah Evans Team Inspector	Key Questions 2/4/7 mathematics. science, physical education
Mrs Sue Prosser Peer Assessor	Attending meetings and observing in lessons.
Mrs Sue Belcher Acting Headteacher Nominee	Attending meetings and supplying information.

#### **Acknowledgement:**

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, the headteacher, staff, pupils and students for their co-operation and courtesy during the inspection.

#### **Contractor:**

E.L.L.I.S. (Cymru) Ltd.  
Jasmine Enterprise Centre, Unit 1  
Treseder Way  
Cardiff  
CF5 5BQ