



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Melin Junior School  
Mile End Row  
Melin  
Neath  
SA11 2ED**

**Date of inspection: December 2010**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR  
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

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

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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## Context

Melin Junior School is situated in the Melincryddan district of Neath. The school caters for 115 pupils from the ages of seven to 11 years. There are 25 fewer pupils than when the school was last inspected in 2004. Most of the pupils live in Melincryddan.

Melincryddan is a designated 'Community First' area and is recognised as being both socially and economically disadvantaged. Forty-five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above local and national averages. Thirty-four per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs (SEN).

English is the predominant home language of pupils. The school has no pupils who come from Welsh-speaking homes. Ten per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The individual school budget per pupil for Melin Junior School is £3,657, which compares with a maximum of £7,911 and a minimum of £2,834 for primary schools in Neath Port Talbot. The school has the 35<sup>th</sup> highest budget per pupil out of the 71 primary schools in Neath Port Talbot.

The current headteacher has been in post since March 1994.

## Summary

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

### Current performance

The overall judgement for current performance is good because:

- many children make good progress in speaking, listening, reading, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills by the end of key stage 2;
- the school ethos impacts positively on pupils' social and emotional skills and wellbeing;
- teaching is good overall and there are effective relationships between teachers and support staff; and
- the school is a warm and welcoming environment in which all pupils feel safe and secure.

### Prospects for improvement

The overall judgement for the schools' prospects for improvement is good because:

- senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's areas for development and have put in place appropriate systems;
- the headteacher, governors and all staff work well as a team and are committed to the school's vision for improvement;
- the school promotes partnership working effectively and pays appropriate attention to local and national priorities; and
- community involvement is a strong feature and impacts positively on provision for pupils.

## Recommendations

In order to improve further Melin Junior School needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' standards in writing and independent learning skills across the curriculum;
- R2 ensure that all targets for improvement contain success criteria against which improvement can be accurately measured;
- R3 ensure that joint curriculum planning in all classes, particularly those with mixed age groups, takes place in order to promote progression and continuity; and
- R4 differentiate activities appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils, in particular those with SEN.

### **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

In 2010, the performance of pupils at the end of key stage 2 improved to reverse a three year downward trend in English and mathematics. Pupil performance in 2010 places the school below half of the schools with similar levels of free school meals. However, the school is very close to the average. In science, performance has worsened over the past four years. The school's recently introduced strategies to counteract the downward trend in science are impacting positively on pupils' standards.

The proportion of pupils achieving level 4, the expected level at 11 years of age, is in line with the average for the family of schools in English and mathematics but below in science. Nearly all more able pupils achieve well and make good progress. The school is the second highest performer in its family in all three subjects at level 5.

At level 4, in three out of the past four years, boys have performed better than girls in reading and writing. A greater percentage of boys achieve the higher levels in mathematics and science. This pattern is not consistent with the national trend where girls perform better than boys in all three core subjects. However, these results are in line with the school's target setting which is based on effective pupil tracking and performance analysis.

Many pupils make appropriate progress during their time in the school. All pupils in receipt of free school meals achieved their end of key stage targets and a minority achieved the higher level in English, mathematics and science. A majority of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make progress appropriate to their ability. However, pupils with SEN are not always sufficiently challenged and, therefore, a minority do not realise their full potential.

Many pupils make good progress in speaking, listening and reading skills. Standards in reading across the school are high. Most pupils have a growing sight vocabulary, use a range of phonetic cues and read with fluency and expression. Handwriting and presentation skills are good but many pupils' ability to write independently, at length and for a range of purposes, is limited. Many pupils use their numeracy and information and communications technology skills well in a range of contexts.

Most pupils make good progress in gaining Welsh language skills. Many pupils have good pronunciation. They understand and respond to a range of texts, questions and instructions well by the end of Year 6. Many pupils confidently use and respond to incidental Welsh through the school day.

#### Wellbeing: Good

Pupils' standards of wellbeing are a strength of the school. In particular, nearly all pupils who attend nurture provision make very good progress.

All pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. They show great pride and confidence in their school and are well behaved. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example to act as prefects and librarians. They show positive attitudes to healthy living, feel safe in school and are keen to engage in a wide range of activities. The school is a very active member of the local community. For example, many pupils enthusiastically take part in the local festivals, sing at the Melin Christmas Lights Ceremony and perform with local adult choirs as part of community events.

The school council represents well the views of pupils and has influenced decisions on the purchase of playground equipment. However, opportunities for pupils to make decisions independently of adults are limited.

Most pupils are able to work effectively as part of a group. They are developing the skills necessary to improve their own learning. In Year 6, many pupils make appropriate choices about how to plan and present their work. In other classes, pupils' independent learning and thinking skills are not as well established.

The school has an attendance rate of 92%. This is just below the national average but is above the average for similar schools. Most pupils arrive punctually.

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

The curriculum meets the needs of many pupils well. There is effective support for pupils with basic skills' needs through catch-up programmes in numeracy and literacy. However, work is not always adapted well enough to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN).

In a minority of classes, teachers do not collaborate regularly to plan learning experiences that build on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. The curriculum does not always provide continuity and progression in all classes, particularly those with mixed age groups.

There is good provision for developing speaking and listening, ICT and reading skills. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write independently, at length and for a range of purposes. Planning for independent learning and problem solving are at an early stage of development in most classes.

There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including sports, clubs, visits and extensive links with the local community.

Provision for Welsh language is good and pupils are given many opportunities to communicate in Welsh throughout the school day. Pupils celebrate the geography, culture and heritage of Wales through a wide range of well-planned visits and activities.

Through appropriate opportunities, pupils have a secure knowledge about sustainability, energy conservation and recycling. They are developing an understanding of their role as global citizens.

### **Teaching: Good**

Teachers and other adults establish excellent working relationships that engage and motivate pupils. All teachers promote the use of incidental Welsh well. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and use a wide range of resources within lessons. A majority of lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and provide challenge to all pupils. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to recall previous learning and develop their thinking skills, and are given opportunities to record in a variety of ways. However, in a minority of lessons teachers do not promote independent learning skills enough or give pupils sufficient opportunities to record their work. The school uses learning support staff effectively to provide focused support, both in class and in withdrawal groups.

Teachers use a range of assessment information, including analysis of performance data, to track pupils' progress and provide effective additional support where it is needed. Marking is up-to-date and supportive, and enables pupils to know how well they are doing. The school uses effective assessment strategies, including peer and self-assessment. These strategies help pupils to improve their work. End of year reports provide parents with detailed information on pupils' progress and development.

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

Pupils and parents value the school's safe and caring environment. Pupils are effectively supported by staff. Learning experiences are successful in advancing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

There are clear, well-ordered procedures and pupils have a good awareness of the high standards of behaviour expected of them.

Effective arrangements exist to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are involved in assessing their own wellbeing. The school promotes the benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle well. Most pupils act upon this information, for example by choosing a healthy snack from the school tuck shop. Pupils are keen to engage in exercise such as the 'Bike It' scheme which has recently been introduced.

The school provides good support for improving pupils' basic skills. It also effectively identifies pupils who have additional learning needs. Pupils and parents are involved in the setting of their learning objectives in Individual Education Plans. However, the targets are not always specific enough to help pupils improve. A wide range of specialist services and agencies provide good support for vulnerable pupils. The nurture programme is a strength of the school. It has resulted in an improvement in confidence, communication, attitudes and behaviour in targeted pupils.



The school has an appropriate policy and clear procedures for safeguarding. All staff have received appropriate training and have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school is a close and caring community that provides equal opportunities for all. Policies and procedures are in place to prevent oppressive behaviour such as bullying and racism, and issues are dealt with appropriately by members of staff.

The school's 'Worry Boxes' (where pupils can confidentially post any concerns they have) are used successfully within the classes to help alleviate any concerns that pupils may have. During registration, good arrangements are in place to assess pupils' readiness to learn.

The building and grounds are welcoming, clean and well maintained. Attractive and interesting displays celebrate pupils' work effectively, particularly their artistic talents. Classrooms are spacious and well resourced.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that all members of staff have a clear understanding of the school's strategic objectives. The headteacher and staff work closely together to create a very positive whole school ethos.

Performance management systems are in place for teaching staff, but senior leaders are not always clear about the impact that these have on pupils' standards. There are beneficial arrangements to review the work of support staff and to identify their training needs. However, job descriptions are not yet customised for individuals and do not reflect current roles and responsibilities.

All staff meet regularly to analyse data on performance and identify areas for improvement. For example, the whole school initiative to improve pupils' story writing skills was a result of teachers analysing pupils' end of year performance. There are good informal systems in place for senior leaders to raise staff awareness of whole school areas for development, such as the need to plan more closely with partner classes.

Weekly staff meetings and training days provide good opportunities for staff to acquire new skills and share good practice.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations effectively. Governors support the school conscientiously and annually review data on pupil achievement to assess progress. They are aware of school priorities and targets through regular, informative reports provided by the headteacher. However, governors are not involved in the self-evaluation process, and their role as a 'critical friend' to the school is at an early stage of development.

The school addresses local and national priorities well. Nurture provision has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing. Assessment for learning strategies are becoming embedded across the school.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school has well-established strategies in place to evaluate its own performance through the use of a good range of first hand evidence. This includes analysis of performance data, listening to learners and the views of parents and governors.

The school development plan contains focussed whole school priorities to move the school forward based on information collected through the self-evaluation process. Identified actions within the targets are specific, but do not always contain success criteria against which improvement can be accurately measured.

Networks of professional practice are developing well through collaboration to share best practice in staff meetings and whole school training days. Close working with Melin Infants and the local comprehensive school also helps to build on levels of staff expertise.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Partnership work is a strong feature of the school. Close parental links are well established and parents are very supportive of the school's work. They receive very good quality information through regular newsletters and the attractive and informative web-site.

Good links exist with a range of support services. The school benefits greatly from working closely with its partners in both health and education services. The recently established multi-agency Children's Services Team enables the school to access swift and effective support, when needed, for children and their families.

Links with the community are well developed through close, regular contact with agencies such as the police and the local church. The school participates in many community activities such as the Mayday in Melincryddan celebrations where pupils dance and sing.

A good partnership with Melin Infants School ensures continuity of learning for pupils through, for example, the use of common schemes of work to build on pupils' progress in reading. Good arrangements are in place to ensure smooth transition for Year 6 pupils to the comprehensive school.

### **Resource management: Good**

There are sufficient suitably qualified teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum. The school has coped well with the reduction in staffing levels due to falling pupil numbers.

Spending decisions are well linked to self-evaluation processes and priorities in the school development plan and benefit all pupils. Taking into account good pupil attainment by the end of key stage 2, the school achieves good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

All pupils agree that the school deals with any incidents of bullying, that there are lots of opportunities for exercise, that adults help them to learn and make progress and that they know what to do if they are finding work difficult.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. Nearly all pupils believe that homework helps them to improve and that they have enough resources to help them learn.

Many pupils think that other pupils behave well in class, although a few think that other children's behaviour stops them from getting on with their work.

Forty-eight parents completed the parent questionnaire. Most of these parents are satisfied and believe that the school is well run. Most think that their child is making progress and that teaching is good. Parents state that their children like school and feel safe.

Many parents believe that pupils behave well and that all pupils are treated fairly and with respect.

A few parents do not understand the school's complaints procedures

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Liz Miles HMI	Reporting Inspector
Rhona Edwards HMI	Team Inspector
Jackie Gapper HMI	Team Inspector
Deirdre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Andrew Williams	Peer Inspector
Julie Whitehouse	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

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## Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

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

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11