



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

**Oak Field Primary School
Amroth Court
Caldy Close
Barry
CF62 9DU**

Date of inspection: June 2011

by

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



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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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Context

Oak Field Primary School is in the Gibbonsdown area of Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan. It provides education for pupils between three and eleven years of age. There are currently 156 pupils on roll including 33 in nursery provision. The number of pupils at the school has fallen by about 22% over the last three years.

The headteacher of the school was on sick leave prior to and during the inspection. Seven weeks before the inspection, the local authority seconded a local authority primary adviser to run the school on a temporary basis. In effect, the local authority primary adviser was the acting headteacher during the period of the inspection.

The school has eight classes and there are no classes with a mix of year groups. Children usually enter the nursery class the week after their third birthday. Forty-seven pupils (32%) have special educational needs. Three-quarters of these are at the level of school action for moderate and specific learning difficulties. All pupils speak English at home and no pupils speak Welsh as a first language.

The ethnic background of nearly all pupils is white British. Many pupils come from socially and economically disadvantaged homes and about 64% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above the all-Wales average of around 20%.

There are about 14 pupils to every teacher in the school and the average class size is about 18 pupils. These figures are low when compared with the average for Wales.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Oak Field Primary is £4,189, which compares with a maximum of £4,491 and a minimum of £2,756 for primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The school has the 5th highest budget per pupil out of the 46 primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is unsatisfactory because:

- the attainment of pupils is too low in English in both key stages, and in mathematics and science in key stage 2;
- the attainment of pupils is well below benchmarks in relation to all primary schools, primary schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and the family of similar schools;
- pupils do not apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills well enough across the curriculum;
- the curriculum is not planned coherently enough to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in a systematic way;
- resources have been managed inefficiently and the school provides unsatisfactory value for money; and
- there has been a lack of strategic purpose and direction in the school for a long time.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement at the school are unsatisfactory because:

- many aspects of leadership and management are weak;
- processes to identify the school's strengths and areas for development are not embedded in the life and work of the school;
- school improvement planning is ineffective and there has been limited progress in implementing the recommendations from the previous inspection report;
- the school is isolated from recent developments in teaching and learning; and
- the governing body has been ineffective in challenging the school's performance over a long period and has not held the school to account regarding the efficient use of public funds.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school and the governing body need to:

- R1 raise standards in literacy across the curriculum;
- R2 plan the curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills more coherently and systematically and make sure it meets statutory requirements;
- R3 provide effective and consistent leadership at all levels;
- R4 provide training for all staff so they can develop their professional skills and experience excellent teaching and learning in other schools and settings;
- R5 manage resources more efficiently and effectively to ensure value for money;
- R6 improve the governing body's understanding of benchmarked performance data to increase the level of scrutiny and challenge it provides;
- R7 establish rigorous systems to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses;
and
- R8 align self-evaluation and school improvement planning in order to improve standards and the effective use of resources.

What happens next?

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

Overall, pupils do not achieve as well as they could and their level of attainment is often too low, especially in key stage 2.

In key stage 1, pupils' performance in National Curriculum assessments is well below the national average in English and in the achievement of the core subject indicator (the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science). Pupils' performance in mathematics in these assessments is better, and they perform at a level close to pupils in the family of similar schools. In science, pupils perform better than the average for the family of similar schools and slightly above the average for primary schools in Wales. Very few learners attain above the level expected at the end of key stage 1. In 2010, no pupil achieved above the level expected in oracy, writing, English or mathematics.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance in National Curriculum assessments is well below average in English, mathematics and science and in the achievement of the core subject indicator when compared with the average for the family of similar schools and for all primary schools in Wales. Very few learners attain above the level expected at the end of key stage 2.

Compared with schools in Wales with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's outcomes place it in the bottom 25% for English in key stage 1 and for English, mathematics and science in key stage 2.

Pupils generally make appropriate progress in their speaking and listening skills, but, in a few classes, pupils do not listen well enough to each other or to the teacher or support staff. Pupils' reading skills develop well in the reception class. However, too many pupils in Year 1 do not have a secure knowledge of initial letter sounds and common blends. In key stage 2, pupils develop appropriate reading skills and by Year 6 can tackle new words using appropriate strategies and many enjoy a suitable range of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Pupils' skills in writing are often weak across the school. Many pupils are responding well to the opportunities provided by the 'Big Write' initiative. However, this is a relatively recent initiative and the strengths in this writing are not reflected in pupils' writing across the curriculum as a whole. Too many pupils struggle to write fluently or with a suitably wide vocabulary or range of sentence types.

Many of the pupils who receive additional support for reading and writing in catch-up classes for literacy and mathematics make good progress in relation to their starting points. However, a majority of more able pupils do not reach their full potential in their reading and writing or in mathematical work.

Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are limited throughout the school and pupils rarely apply ICT skills to real-life problems and situations.

Many pupils in the Foundation Phase make good progress in gaining Welsh language skills. They use their Welsh vocabulary well within Welsh activities, including role-play. However, the development of pupils' skills in oral Welsh varies greatly between classes. Pupils' written skills in Welsh are developing reasonably well in Year 6, but less so elsewhere. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 rarely use their Welsh language skills beyond their Welsh lessons.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating and older pupils recognise the contribution that physical activity makes to good health.

Generally, pupils of all ages feel safe in school and they relate well to each other and to adults in school. Overall, standards of behaviour are good in most classes, but some poor behaviour in a few classes and around the school unsettles a few children. Pupils and adults acknowledge the low-level bullying that takes place, and which is not always restricted to the school premises. This awareness helps teachers to reduce the impact of any bullying. When problems arise, pupils know where to find help from adults and playground buddies. Pupils often show consideration at lunchtimes by offering to collect drinks for others and young children hold open doors for each other and for visitors.

The overall level of attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. The whole-school attendance rate for the previous two terms was 89.8% and authorised and unauthorised absence has been below the all-Wales average for the last three years. Compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, there has been a worsening trend in rates of attendance over the last three years. Last year, it was close to the bottom 25% of all schools in this group. Full class attendance appears to be restricted to special occasions, such as for school trips. The temporary acting head teacher has recently reviewed and revised the attendance policy and this sets out clearly the school's expectations and routines. There are appropriate rewards for 100% attendance, but none for improved attendance rates.

The number of fixed-term exclusions over the last year is relatively high. However, there have been no exclusions since the acting head teacher has been in post.

Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting and social activities which take place before, during and after school. A significant number of pupils take advantage of the breakfast club before school and the after-school 'Chill Club' and the games club where activities help to promote their social development.

The pupils on the school council are enthusiastic about their work and feed back information to the school about their work during assemblies. They have influenced school provision, for example by improving the décor in the toilets. They have undertaken a survey on bullying and analysed and published the findings on their

noticeboard. However, the school's council's ideas tend to be ad hoc and do not benefit enough from initial adult guidance and direction.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Unsatisfactory

Learning experiences: Unsatisfactory

There is good planning of additional learning programmes in literacy and numeracy for pupils in need of further support. These meet learners' needs well and pupils generally make good progress when following these programmes. However, in many mainstream classes, teachers do not plan learning experiences that build effectively on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Children are not sufficiently challenged by relevant activities and there is not enough continuity and progression in their learning. The quality of planning for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum is limited. As a result, many pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The Foundation Phase is not well embedded in the school and the range of learning experiences in key stage 2 overall does not meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.

The school council and eco committee provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about sustainable development and global citizenship. However, these aspects are not well embedded in curriculum planning across the school.

Opportunities to learn Welsh are inconsistent and there is not enough focus on planning for progression in the development of pupils' Welsh language skills. The use of incidental Welsh is very limited around the school.

Children develop a reasonable awareness of the culture and historical characteristics of Wales through art, literature and a wide range of educational visits. The school's enrichment programme provides children with an effective range of stimulating experiences, for example the extra-curricular activities in cricket, arts and craft, music and gardening.

Teaching: Unsatisfactory

There are good relationship between teachers, support staff and pupils. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well on most occasions. They provide a variety of activities for children and pupils that engage their interest and attention during lessons. There is also an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching and pupils working individually and in pairs and groups.

However, most teaching does not ensure that all pupils make suitable progress in their learning. There is often an inadequate understanding of how to meet children's learning needs. Most teachers do not have a high enough expectation of what the children can achieve. Many do not adapt the lesson activities enough to enable children to make good progress in relation to their ability. Teachers do not share learning objectives enough with the pupils. The deployment of support staff is not always effective, especially in the Foundation Phase.

Teachers do not regularly use data on pupil performance to monitor children's progress. They do not use the information to identify and to plan suitable activities to move forward the learning of individuals and groups.

Teachers often provide supportive comments on pupils' work, but the marking of written work does not occur regularly enough in many classes and does not identify enough what pupils need to do to improve. However, teachers are identifying constructive targets for children in relation to the school's new 'Big Write' initiative.

Teachers attend cluster meetings to moderate pupils' work in relation to National Curriculum assessment, but there are no procedures in place to standardise pupils' work in school. For example, there are no portfolios of pupils' work in any subjects to exemplify different levels of attainment.

Pupils with additional learning needs have regular and consistent opportunities to set and review learning targets every term. In a few classes, pupils have opportunities to set their own targets for improvement in literacy, but this is not consistent across subjects or between classes. In the Foundation Phase, teachers do not use observational assessments of children's learning consistently in order to inform their planning.

Parents/carers receive adequate information about their child's achievements, wellbeing and development in many respects. However, annual reports to parents do not meet statutory requirements.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The school promotes pupils' health and wellbeing appropriately. There are appropriate procedures for promoting healthy living and good behaviour. Many parents and pupils value the school's safe and caring environment.

The school is active in working with a range of support agencies. Teachers identify when pupils might require additional support from reception onwards. The school, working with other agencies, puts in place adequate provision to meet pupils' needs.

Those pupils who receive additional, targeted support for literacy and numeracy often make reasonable progress in improving their skills. However, the regular withdrawal of pupils for additional support, especially during English or mathematics lessons, limits their access to an appropriate curriculum and causes considerable disruption to classroom teaching.

All pupils who are on the additional learning needs (ALN) register have appropriate individual education plans. The ALN co-ordinator and teaching staff set and review these plans regularly but they are not always shared effectively with all parents and pupils.

The school promotes pupils' moral, social and cultural development adequately. However, there are limited opportunities for spiritual development and reflection, especially during acts of collective worship.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Adequate

Most pupils receive equal access to all areas of the school's provision and there is an appropriate emphasis on recognising and respecting diversity. An effective 'buddy' system helps to promote good behaviour and to eliminate oppressive behaviour.

The accommodation is of good quality and is well maintained. Displays of pupils' work create a stimulating learning environment in many classes and communal areas within the school. The outdoor environment for the Foundation Phase is underdeveloped compared to the indoor environment. Overall, the school is not making the best use possible of its reasonably extensive grounds. There are not enough good quality resources to match pupils' learning needs, especially in ICT.

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

The very recent secondment of a local authority primary adviser to the post of temporary head teacher is having a significant impact on establishing consistent policies and procedures in the school. The seconded headteacher has been successful in focusing the school's work on improving pupils' standards. However, as she has only been in post for a very short period, the new focus has not had enough time to improve pupils' achievements or the quality of provision overall.

Over the past five years, the school's leadership has experienced long episodes of instability. As a result, staff have not been given clear direction and leadership for a long period and the focus on making and sustaining improvement has been weak.

Before receiving leadership support from the local authority about a year ago, meetings of the senior leadership team (the substantive headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers) focused mainly on the day-to-day running of the school. In autumn 2010, the local authority reviewed the school and put in place supportive action plans to help to move the school forward. These included a significant amount of professional support for the headteacher and other staff from the local authority. The action plans have begun to have an impact, but senior leaders have not been involved enough in developing the school's strategic plan, monitoring standards and provision, evaluating progress against priorities or establishing a clear, sustained vision for the school.

Performance management systems are not well established. This has meant that leaders have not correctly identified individual or whole-school development needs or addressed issues of underperformance robustly over recent years.

The governing body is supportive of the school, but it does not have an accurate enough understanding of the school's strengths and area for development. It has not received enough information to help guide the strategic direction of the school or to challenge the leadership rigorously. There was no governors' annual report to parents issued last year. Therefore, the governing body does not fulfil all of its statutory obligations.

The school has begun to address the local authority's priority of improving writing by taking part in the 'Big Write' project. All pupils now have greater opportunities to write at length. However, it is too early for the project to have improved pupils' standards in writing overall. Practitioners have attended Foundation Phase training run by the local authority. The principles of the Foundation Phase are developing well in one class, but less well elsewhere in the school.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The seconded headteacher has prepared an honest and mostly accurate evaluation of the school's current performance. This report has been shared with all staff and provides a useful starting point for establishing future priorities for the school.

Self-evaluation is a new concept for staff within the school. Senior leaders have not routinely gathered evidence from direct classroom observations, scrutinised pupils' work, analysed data or gathered the opinions of other staff or pupils.

Due to the lack of self-evaluation, the school development plan does not always focus on the most important areas for improvement. Priorities within the school development plan are usually linked to local and national priorities and, in the main, timescales are realistic and funds allocated appropriately. However, the school development plan is not shared well enough with staff or governors. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating progress against the targets are often unclear.

The school has made limited progress in addressing the recommendations made in the last inspection report.

The school has worked in relative isolation for a number of years and staff have not been well supported in their professional development. As a result, not all teachers are aware of recent and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers are not involved in sharing good practice within a professional learning community either within their own establishment or with other schools.

Partnership working: Unsatisfactory

The seconded headteacher has recently established a partnership with the Flying Start Agency. Although only a few meetings have been held, parents are already becoming more involved in the working life of the school.

The school has appropriate links with a few local religious organisations. Partnerships with other organisations are not fully developed. The school does not use its partnerships well enough to improve pupils' standards or enhance their learning experiences.

The local authority has tried hard over a number of years to develop effective partnerships with the school. Over the last twelve months, the leaders and managers of the school have started to accept this support. The school has benefitted from local authority advisers providing mentoring for the substantive headteacher, extended support for the development of the Foundation Phase and demonstrations of good practice in both mathematics and English teaching. As a result, teachers are beginning to improve provision in a few classes.

Transition arrangements for pupils moving on to the secondary school are appropriate. The school works well with the local authority's transition officer in relation to vulnerable pupils and those at risk of disaffection when they transfer to the secondary school.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The school employs nine full-time equivalent class teachers, including the headteacher. However, the funding the school receives in relation to the number of pupils on roll over the past two years has allowed for six teachers. The leadership structure of the school is also top heavy with a headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers for a relatively small school. The school has run a deficit budget for two out of the last three years. Leaders and managers have not managed the school's budget well enough.

The school does not always monitor resources efficiently or prioritise its spending in order to raise pupils' standards of achievement. The lack of up-to-date ICT equipment has led to the underdevelopment of pupils' ICT skills. The school has also missed opportunities to access funding, for example through its location within a Communities First area.

Support staff are usually deployed well in key stage 2. In the Foundation Phase, the time, expertise and experience of support staff are not used well enough to support pupils' learning.

The internal space within the school is developed appropriately. Outdoor spaces are underdeveloped. Foundation Phase practitioners do not utilise the available outdoor space fully to improve pupils' learning.

In view of the unsatisfactory progress made by many pupils and the poor management of the budget, the school overall provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty-two parents or carers completed the questionnaire. Overall, they expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school overall. All agree that their children enjoy school and nearly all feel that their children were helped to settle when they joined the school. Most parents who responded state that their children are making good progress and they are satisfied with the behaviour of children at the school. The questionnaires show that parents generally feel the quality of teaching, the teachers' expectations of their children and the support they receive are good. Many believe that homework builds well on the work their children do at school.

The majority of those who responded to the questionnaire believe that the school is well run but about 30% do not. Most feel that their child is safe at school. About a third of parents who responded feel that they did not feel comfortable approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems, and about a quarter did not understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints. Just over a third of parents who responded feel that the range of activities including trips or visits is not good enough.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Thirty-nine pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Most responses were positive. Nearly all pupils say they feel safe in school and that the school deals with any bullying well. Many know whom to talk to when they feel worried or upset. Nearly all agree that the school helps pupils to keep healthy and they get a lot of chances to be physically active. All but a very few feel that they are doing well at school and know what to do when they find work hard, and nearly all feel that teachers and support staff help them to make progress. A few pupils feel that they do not have enough equipment, books and computers to do their work. About 30% of pupils feel that the behaviour of other children interferes with their work too much, but nearly all feel that the other children behave well at playtime and lunchtime.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Barry Norris	Reporting Inspector
Liz Miles	Team Inspector
Bernard Harrington	Lay Inspector
Julie Jones	Peer Inspector
Mrs Plummer (Acting headteacher)	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