



*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**

**Cwmaber Infant School  
Bryngelli Terrace  
Abertridwr  
Caerphilly  
CF83 4FF**

**Date of inspection: September 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:

<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

Cwmaber Infant School is in the village of Abertridwr, which is close to Caerphilly. The area is one of considerable economic deprivation and is designated as a Communities First neighbourhood.

There are 129 pupils on roll, aged between three and seven years, including 37 part-time nursery pupils. This is similar to the last inspection. However, there have been significant fluctuations in pupil numbers over the past six years.

English is the home language of nearly all pupils; 2% of pupils come from Chinese or Polish speaking homes. No pupil speaks Welsh at home.

Approximately 32% of pupils are entitled to free schools meals, which is significantly higher than the all-Wales average of just under 20%. The school has identified 16% of pupils with additional learning needs and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

This year, the school has reduced its staffing by one teacher, one member of support staff and two midday supervisors. The headteacher and all other teachers were in post at the time of the last inspection.

The individual school budget per pupil for Cwmaber Infant School in 2010-2011 is £3,229. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Caerphilly is £6,296 and the minimum is £2,486. Cwmaber Infants School is 21st out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly in terms of the size of its school budget per pupil.

## 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 school's current performance is good because:

- many pupils make good progress by the end of the Foundation Phase;
- relationships between staff and pupils are secure;
- the quality of teaching is generally good;
- leaders and managers work well together; and
- parental and community links are strong.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- all staff share a clear vision;
- self-evaluation processes are well established and effective;
- plans for improvement contain clear targets for improving pupils' standards; and
- senior leaders work well with the local authority, act on advice swiftly and actively seek support where necessary.

## Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 improve pupils' standards of independent writing;
- R2 improve planning for the systematic development of pupils' skills across all areas of learning;
- R3 fully embed the Foundation Phase Year 1 and Year 2;
- R4 improve pupils' attendance; and
- R5 ensure that the results of monitoring are rigorously followed up and that inconsistencies in practice are robustly challenged.

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

## Main findings

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

Good

#### Standards: Good

By the end of the Foundation Phase many pupils make good progress. Over recent years, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science has been consistently good when compared to the performance of pupils in schools with a similar percentage of free school meals. However, the school's performance is generally close to the average for its family of schools. This year, pupils' performance in mathematics was very good when compared to that of others in its family of schools. Girls generally perform better than boys in English, especially in reading and writing.

Many pupils achieve well in formal learning situations and when guided by an adult. Most recall previous learning well and acquire new knowledge and understanding enthusiastically. However, a minority of pupils do not always apply what they have learnt when working independently.

Generally, pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress in relation to their starting point. However, in lessons where they sit and listen for long periods, a few do not make as much progress as they could.

There is no significant difference between the achievements of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and other pupils of a similar age.

Many pupils develop good listening skills. They readily answer questions and offer their opinions in class discussions. Although a significant minority of pupils do not speak well when they start school, many nursery and reception pupils are eager to communicate with adults. Most make themselves understood and soon learn to express themselves clearly and confidently in oral language. Most pupils continue to develop these skills well as they move through the school.

Most pupils develop an enjoyment of books. Nursery and reception pupils handle books as readers and understand that writing conveys meaning. Many pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 recognise a good range of words. They read confidently and discuss books enthusiastically. A few use their phonic knowledge to blend sounds and build unfamiliar words. By the end of the Foundation Phase, the majority of pupils write appropriately within structured sessions. However, pupils' ability to write independently and apply their writing skills across all areas of the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Most pupils use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills competently across the curriculum. They use a range of equipment such as computers, interactive whiteboards and digital voice recorders to enhance their learning. A few pupils do not use their numeracy and thinking skills well enough across the curriculum.

In the Welsh language, most pupils achieve at a level appropriate to their age and ability. In lessons and assemblies, they understand and respond well to a range of questions and instructions.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe in school. They know to approach staff if they are worried. Most pupils show care for one another and for other living things. They treat each other with respect and support their friends sensitively when needed. Pupils are very proud of their school and their personal achievements.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in tasks. Pupils respond well to opportunities to assess how well they have achieved. They consider and celebrate their progress and think about what they need to do to improve. However, a minority of pupils' ability to make choices about how and what they learn is underdeveloped.

Behaviour is good. Pupils know what is expected of them and understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Most understand the importance of personal hygiene, a healthy diet and physical exercise.

Year 2 pupils contribute to school improvement as members of the school and eco council. They have helped to improve the school environment. The writing group have made an important contribution through producing a school magazine that keeps all pupils, parents and community members informed about school-life.

Pupils play an active role in the local community by singing and playing musical instruments at local concerts and by contributing to local arts festivals and events. Pupils feel valued and active members of their village.

Attendance has steadily improved in recent years but is still below the average level for similar schools and the all-Wales average.

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

The school generally provides appropriate learning experiences that meet the needs of many pupils. However, in Year 1 and Year 2, classroom activities are not always exciting or challenging enough for a significant minority of pupils. In these classes, the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase are not established well enough. The nursery makes good use of the outdoors to promote pupils' learning. Teachers and support staff collaborate well and make good use of the community to enhance pupils' learning experiences. After-school clubs make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.

Planning for the development of specific subject skills is good. Most teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop these skills in specific lessons. There is appropriate planning for the development of pupils' ICT skills across all areas of learning, but this is not the case for literacy, numeracy and thinking skills.

As a result, pupils do not develop these skills progressively enough from one class to the next in their work across the curriculum.

The provision for Welsh language development and the Welsh dimension is appropriate to the school's context. Teachers and support staff promote the use of Welsh well during daily classroom routines. They embed the culture and history of Wales well into many areas of the curriculum.

The school effectively promotes the importance of sustainability. It has successfully raised pupils' awareness about the importance of recycling and reducing the use of limited resources. Pupils have developed a suitable awareness of global citizenship by learning about religious festivals and raising funds for charitable causes. Parents and friends of the school have spoken to pupils about their experience of living in other countries.

### **Teaching: Good**

Many teachers and support staff use a good range of approaches and activities to provide appropriate support for pupils. Teachers and support staff work well together and have clear objectives for all sessions. All adults establish good working relationships with pupils that foster learning. They use positive praise well to motivate pupils and manage their behaviour effectively. Teachers generally use an effective range of resources to stimulate pupils' interest. When teaching is less effective, teachers expect pupils to listen for too long and there are too few opportunities for pupils to think and plan for themselves.

Assessment for learning is well established throughout the school. Pupils use a good range of methods to judge their achievements in lessons and to assess their progress against personal learning targets.

Teachers' marking is generally informative and usually provides pupils with suitable advice on how to improve their work.

Nursery and reception staff make good use of observational assessments. These provide helpful information that informs teachers' future planning appropriately.

The school has an effective tracking system. All staff set pupil achievement targets and track pupils' progress carefully. Staff use the mid-year review of pupils' targets well to support those pupils whose progress suggests they may not achieve their end-of-year targets.

Reports to parents and carers provide detailed information about pupils' achievements and wellbeing. Many parents feel well informed about their child's progress and are pleased with the information the school provides.

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

Arrangements to support pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices are successful and well developed. Pupils take part in a good variety of physical activities during and after school. Many also participate in the walking bus to school.



There is effective provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils through thoughtful reflection periods in assemblies and through the well planned personal and social education programmes.

The arrangements for dealing with any forms of harassment are effective. These arrangements help to encourage the positive values of fairness and concern for others. Pupils are very aware of the high standards of behaviour expected of them and are keen to follow school rules.

Suitable rewards are in place to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and there is careful monitoring of pupils with low attendance.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs meets the needs of many pupils appropriately. Pupils with specific learning difficulties are identified early and given effective support. In the past, the school has not always intervened soon enough to support pupils who need to catch up in their reading and writing skills. However, the school has recently implemented early intervention programmes to improve pupils' reading and phonic skills in Year 1. By the end of the Foundation Phase, many pupils with additional learning needs read and write at an appropriate level.

The headteacher agrees pupils' individual education plans with parents. Teachers and support staff generally use these plans well to provide additional support. The school works effectively with a wide range of outside agencies. This enables individuals and families to access any necessary support services quickly.

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

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school is an inclusive, caring and very well ordered community. All pupils receive equal access to all areas of the school's provision. The positive ethos of the school is reflected in the good behaviour of the pupils and the considerate and caring relationships between staff and pupils. Parents value the nurturing and happy setting.

Pupils benefit from roomy and well-resourced classrooms. The recently developed outdoor classroom is of good quality and adds well to the outdoor provision. There are spacious play areas that are well resourced. The buildings and grounds are clean and well maintained.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that is shared by all staff. Relationships at all levels are good and there is strong teamwork among staff. This creates a positive working environment.

There is effective liaison between the headteacher, assistant headteacher and governing body. The roles and responsibilities of all staff are clear. There are

regular staff meetings that usually result in clear action points. Performance management arrangements are sound and usually link well to school development priorities.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations. Governors share the headteacher's sense of direction for the school. They support the school well and have an appropriate understanding of the school's performance data. Governors support the school well although their role in challenging the school is not fully developed.

The school is making good progress in introducing initiatives that meet local and national priorities, such as Assessment for Learning and developing pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. It has addressed the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework, especially in the areas of family and community learning. These initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing. The school has successfully introduced the Foundation Phase in nursery and reception, but has not yet fully embedded its principles in other classes.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

The leadership team has a generally accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It uses a good range of first-hand evidence to identify the main strengths and areas that the school needs to develop. This evidence includes the performance of pupils, classroom observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the views of parents through governor suggestion boxes and recently introduced parental questionnaires. In addition, the school also refers to a number of checks of its work undertaken by the local authority, including joint lesson observations. The assistant headteacher analyses data well and works with class teachers to set appropriate targets for individuals and classes.

Self-evaluation processes inform appropriate priorities for school development. The most recent school development plan has clear success criteria against which the school can evaluate its progress. Implementation of the school development plan is generally having a positive impact on provision and standards.

Although leaders and managers monitor performance and standards, they do not always follow up on the outcomes from monitoring activities, for example to check that staff act on any advice given. This leads to inconsistent implementation of improvement targets among a few staff.

The school has made good progress in addressing most of the recommendations from the previous inspection report. However, attendance has not improved well enough.

Teachers are involved to good effect in a number of networks of professional practice. For instance, the newspaper writing project has helped to improve the standards of more able writers. Staff collaborate well with other schools to improve their professional knowledge. Within the school, staff share ideas and practice informally, but this is not done formally enough. This has resulted in the inconsistent implementation of the Foundation Phase into key stage 1.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has taken a lead role in developing a good range of strategic partnerships with parents, the local authority, local businesses and the community. These have helped to provide a broad range of additional experiences for pupils that impact positively on standards and wellbeing.

Relationships with parents and carers are positive. Initiatives such as the 'Play and Stay' group help raise parents' expectations and self-confidence when playing and working with their children. This and the early start Tweenies group have a significant impact on improving the levels of pupils' basic skills on entry to the nursery. Productive links with large and small local businesses have enabled the school to develop a rich outdoor learning environment. This has improved provision for the Foundation Phase and the development of pupils' skills.

The school has strong links with its partner junior school for transition arrangements and for moderating the assessment of pupils' work. There are good arrangements for the sharing of financial resources to develop teachers' skills across both schools. This enables pupils to transfer confidently and successfully at the age of seven and ensures continuous improvement in pupil outcomes as they move into Year 3.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school has a suitable number of staff and deploys them effectively. It identifies and meets the needs of all staff through appropriate performance management procedures.

The quality of the accommodation is good. The building is well maintained and there is a rolling programme for internal and external improvement. Staff provide a very attractive and well-organised environment for pupils.

Resources are sufficient and generally used appropriately to meet pupils' learning needs.

Teachers make effective use of planning and preparation time. This has helped them to make better use of assessments to inform planning. The provision of leadership time appropriately meets the needs of the school.

The school manages its budget well and now holds a small surplus of funds. Leaders and managers adjust spending efficiently in response to changing circumstances. Spending decisions link well to school development priorities.

In view of the good outcomes achieved by many pupils and the good progress they make from their starting points, the standard of care, support and guidance provided and the efficient management of finances, the school provides good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

Data analysis

#### **Estyn compares schools against two main data sets; their free-school-meal group and their family of schools.**

**Free-school-meal groups** – the results of every school in Wales are compared to those of schools who have similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. There are five bands: (1) up to and including 8%; (2) over 8% and up to and including 16%; (3) over 16% and up to and including 24%; (4) over 24% and up to and including 32%; and (5) above 32%.

Within each of the bands, schools are placed in quartiles in order to judge their performance.

**Family of schools** – a group of between ten and twelve schools across Wales that have similar characteristics and face similar challenges, in terms of the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, socio-economic factors, Welsh deprivation factoring and numbers of pupils with additional learning needs. Each school's performance is ranked against that of others in its family.

Cwmaber Infant School is in the fifth band for the proportion of its pupils entitled to free school meals.

Overall, pupils attain very well at the expected and higher levels when compared to pupils in schools with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In key stage 1, pupils' performance in attaining level 2 in the core subject indicator (the expected level at seven years of age in all three of the individual subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science in combination), and in English, mathematics and science, has been in the top 25% when compared to the relative performance of other schools in the free-school-meal group. Pupils' performance in the individual subjects of English, mathematics and science has been in the upper 50% for the last four years. In the last two years, pupils' performance in English has been in the top 25%. In mathematics, pupils' performance has been in the top 25% for three years and in the top 25% in science for one year.

Pupils' performance at level 3 (above the expected level for pupils at seven years of age) also compares favourably to that of other schools in the free-school-meal group. In the past two years, the school has been in the top 25% in English and mathematics and in the upper 50% or top 25% in science.

Cwmaber Infant School is the third most challenged out of the seven schools in its family.

Pupils' performance in the core subject indicator has generally been around the family average although there was a dip this year when the school was the lowest in its family.

Pupils' performance at level 2 (the expected level) in English has generally been just below the family average over the past five years. In 2010-2011, pupils' performance was the lowest in its family. Pupils' performance at level 3 (higher than expected level) has improved steadily and this year was the third highest in the family.

In data on the family of schools, the outcomes in English are broken down further into oracy, reading and writing. Pupils' performance in oracy is generally around the family average, but has been below the average for reading in four of the past five years and in writing for three years out of five.

Pupils' performance in mathematics has been consistently in line with or above the family average over the past five years. In 2010-2011, pupils' performance in mathematics at level 2 and at level 3 was the highest in the family.

Pupils' performance at level 2 in science has generally been in line with the family average, but in 2010-2011, pupils' performance was the lowest in the family. Pupils' performance at level 3 has varied, but this year the school was the second highest performer in its family.

The percentage of pupils achieving level 2 in the combination of reading, writing and mathematics has been generally around the family average.

Over the past four years, the performance of the group of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school has been below the performance of the group of pupils who are not entitled to free school meals.

In oracy, reading and writing, the performance of girls has been better than the performance of boys in three out of the past four years. In two of these years, the gender difference has been significantly higher than the family average.

The gender difference in mathematics is in line with the family average.

In 2010-2011, 28% of boys did not achieve level 2 (the expected level) in English compared to only 4% in mathematics and 16% in science.

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

Fifty-three parents completed the questionnaire.

Nearly all parents are satisfied with the school and think that teaching is good. They say that their child likes school and that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Nearly all parents think that their child is safe in the school and say that the school encourages their child to be healthy. Parents agree that the school helped their child to settle in well when they started school.

Most parents think that the school is well run. They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions and problems. Most parents think that pupils behave well and that the school helps pupils to become more mature and to take responsibility. Most parents believe that staff expect their child to work hard and to do their best and that the school provides a good range of activities for them. They agree that homework builds well on what their child learns in school.

Many parents believe that their child is making good progress and that pupils receive appropriate support in relation to their individual needs. Many parents feel well informed about their child's progress, understand the school's procedures for dealing with complaints and think their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Liz Miles HMI	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Morgan HMI	Team Inspector
Deidre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Julie Thomson	Peer Inspector
Jayne Price	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

## Year groups and key stages

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

The term 'Reception' (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