



*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**

**Darran Park Primary  
Brook Street  
Ferndale  
Rhondda Cynon Taff  
CF43 4LE**

**Date of inspection: 8 - 10 February 2011**

**by**

**Dr. P. David Ellis  
Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn**

**for**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<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

Darran Park Primary School was built in the 1940s originally as a grammar school. It acquired its current name and designation in April 1996 following the amalgamation of Ferndale Junior School and Duffryn Infant School. It is situated in Ferndale between the two Community First wards of Tylorstown and Maerdy about four miles north of Porth. It receives pupils from these areas as well Penrhys and Blaenllechau, following the closure of the infant school there in 2006. The school caters for pupils from three to eleven years. It contains 288 pupils taught in 10 mainstream classes, three of which in Key Stage 2 (KS2) are mixed age. There is also a local authority (LA) learning support class for up to eight pupils between the ages of three and seven. The number on roll has increased since the last inspection. Pupils from Ferndale Infant School join the school at KS2.

The area has many traditional terraced homes with a mixture of privately owned, housing association and rented residences. A number of families have disadvantaged circumstances; around 15% of pupils come from the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. Around 22% are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national but below the LA averages. Approximately 31% of pupils are identified as requiring additional learning needs (ALN), which is also above the national average; one has a statement. About 2% come from an ethnic minority background, of whom one receives support in English as an additional language. No pupils come from homes where Welsh is their first language. Five are looked after by the LA.

The school was last inspected in February 2005. From April 2010 the school had an acting deputy headteacher, until a new appointment was made commencing January 2011. A number of staff have taken authorised leave over the last five terms. During the inspection three temporary teachers provided cover for absent staff.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Darran Park Primary School is £3100 which compares with a maximum of £9064 and a minimum of £2553 for primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The school has the 76th highest budget per pupil out of the 116 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## 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 current performance of the provider is good because:

- there is evidence of value added achievement, especially in KS2;
- standards and provision for key skills, including literacy and Welsh language development, are good;
- pupils are very happy in school, behave well, have good attitudes to learning and are well cared for;
- teaching is consistently good throughout the school and work is well matched to pupils' abilities; and
- pupils receive a range of positive learning experiences within a stimulating learning environment.

### Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- there is trend of improvement in standards, particularly in KS2;
- assessment is very comprehensive and informs teaching and learning;
- the school's leadership has a clear vision for the future;
- the revised management structure is beginning to take the school forward;
- the governing body (GB) is proactive and well informed; and
- there is a rigorous self-evaluation process with clear plans for improvement.

## Recommendations

In order to continue its progress, the school needs to:

- R1 raise standards in English and mathematics by building on recent improvements, so that end of key stage results reflect pupils' achievements;
- R2 continue to develop staff areas of expertise, team work and distributed management arrangements; and
- R3 enhance the provision for information communications technology (ICT), so that pupils in all classes have immediate access to computers as an integral part of their learning.

### ***What happens next?***

*Darran Park Primary School will create an action plan which shows how it will address these recommendations.*

## Main findings

<b>Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Standards: Good**

The school's results for 2010 at level 2 or above in KS1, even if the pupils in the learning support class are excluded, were below the LA, Wales and family averages in English, mathematics and the core subject indicator (CSI), although in science they were above all three comparators. In English at the higher level 3 pupils performed slightly better in 2010 than the family and the LA, but a little below Wales. In mathematics and science at level 3 they performed below all three comparators. Although results have remained relatively low over the last four years, there are indications of improvements in specific areas, such as oracy and science, particularly in 2010.

The school's results for 2010 at level 4 or above in KS2 were above the LA, Wales and family averages in English and the CSI and similar to these comparators in mathematics. In science the results were better than the LA and similar to Wales and the family. At the higher level 5 pupils performed better than the family and the LA and similar to Wales in English and science, but similar to the family and below the LA and Wales in mathematics. Overall, there is a trend of sustained improvement over the last four years.

The 2010 results in KS1 place the school in the lowest 25% of schools with a similar free school meals percentage in English, mathematics and the CSI, but in the highest 50% for science. In KS2 the results place the school in the highest 50% for English and the CSI but the lower 50% for mathematics and science. There is evidence that

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most pupils, especially in KS2, including those with ALN and on free school meals, make good value added progress through the school, often from a low baseline.

Performance in relation to gender fluctuates according to cohorts, but girls generally do better in KS1. Otherwise, there is no marked underachievement among any particular group of pupils.

Skills in literacy are good overall in every age group; nearly all pupils listen very well, speak clearly and learn to read fluently and accurately; writing skills are beginning to improve and there are examples of good written work, particularly towards the end of each key stage.

Standards in numeracy, ICT and Welsh language development are good.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They have a good understanding of keeping healthy and take part in healthy living projects and physical activities in and out of school hours.

Nearly all pupils are polite and well behaved; they demonstrate good behaviour during lessons, show concern for others and take on responsibilities willingly. There have been two fixed-term exclusions during the last 12 months.

All pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They focus on their tasks, sustain concentration and show motivation and interest. They are beginning to develop effective thinking and problem solving skills. They work well on their own and with others.

Pupils develop life skills through the school's experiential learning approach. They raise funds for a number of charities and are involved in a range of links and projects with the local community.

Overall attendance at 92.5% is above the average for similar schools and those in the local cluster, but below the latest national percentage of 93.1%. A very few arrive late for morning registration and unauthorised absences are relatively high.

Pupils' views on what and how they learn are sought and treated seriously. The school council is an effective forum for the pupil voice.

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

The school plans and provides interesting and stimulating learning experiences. Most of the curriculum is taught through a thematic approach while other aspects are taught discretely; this provides cohesion and caters for the range of pupils' needs.

Planning and provision to develop literacy and numeracy are good. Teachers identify skills in lesson plans and use skills' ladders to ensure progression. Thinking, problem solving and working together are effectively promoted. Additional support is provided for identified pupils in reading and mathematics.

Provision to promote Welsh language development is good. All teachers allocate sufficient time to teaching Welsh and encourage its use within all school activities. Lesson plans identify opportunities to promote bilingualism, while various initiatives help to raise standards.

Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is evident within thematic topics. Pupils learn about their local community and the history and traditions of Wales resulting in a strong sense of being Welsh.

The school effectively promotes pupils' understanding of the importance of sustainability and how they can make a positive contribution to creating a better society.

**Teaching: Good**

Teaching is consistently good across the school. Teachers have high expectations and good background knowledge and they plan and structure lessons very effectively. Tasks are carefully matched to pupils' ability levels and the more able are suitably challenged.

Teachers are successfully developing independent learning strategies, resulting in pupils being encouraged to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their own learning.

Teachers develop excellent relationships with pupils and establish a very positive learning environment, using praise and encouragement and effective questioning techniques.

Group and paired work is evident in most lessons, which are conducted at a good pace to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Additional adults provide effective support and good quality resources are used well to enhance learning.

Teachers have well established routines, use verbal and non-verbal communication successfully and implement effective class and time management strategies. However, the setting of homework is inconsistent between classes.

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The school has very comprehensive procedures for assessment, recording and reporting that meet statutory requirements and which effectively inform planning and teaching. Results are thoroughly analysed and pupils are set challenging literacy, numeracy and personal targets, which are regularly achieved.

Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and the less and more able are appropriately identified and targeted, although less attention is given to those on the borderline of attaining a higher level.

Assessment for learning strategies are becoming embedded in classroom practice, although self and peer assessment is in the early stages of development.

All work is marked and comments are positive, although they vary somewhat in format between classes. Annual reports to parents are in the process of redevelopment. They contain comments on progress and the way forward for the core subjects and meet statutory requirements.

**Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school actively promotes pupils' personal growth, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an effective personal and social education policy and a successful pastoral care system. The school is working hard to encouraging pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle and there is involvement with local sports organisations to promote exercise.

The school works effectively with other key agencies to provide appropriate support to pupils in its care.

There are thorough guidelines on acceptable standards of behaviour with clear policies on behaviour and anti-bullying; pupils and parents are confident that problems, as they arise, are dealt with appropriately. Information is provided for parents on the school's values and systems of rewards and consequences.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding and fully meets statutory requirements. Guidelines are followed diligently. All staff have received training in child protection.

The school has an ALN and inclusion policy. The inclusion leader liaises with staff, pupils, parents and outside agencies and monitors their support to ensure pupil progress. Child friendly individual education plans (IEP) with clear targets are used by all staff working with those on the ALN register. Reviews of progress are carried out termly with regular consultations with parents.

**Learning environment: Good**

The school has a strong ethos of inclusion and works hard to ensure equal opportunities and to tackle social disadvantage. Account is taken of pupils' needs when organising events, delivering the curriculum and purchasing resources. All pupils have equal access to every aspect of school life. Policies and procedures promote good race relations and the building is accessible for those with any physical



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disability. No pupil is treated unfavourably. The school meets its duties under the Race Relations and Disability Discrimination Acts.

The well maintained accommodation and the high quality of displays create a very attractive learning environment. There is a good range of learning resources, although most pupils do not have immediate access to computers in classrooms as an integral part of their learning. Overall, the accommodation and learning resources are matched well to pupils' needs. Security is very good.

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

The headteacher is a very efficient and well organised leader, who has a clear vision for the school and who leads by example. She is well supported by the recently appointed deputy. Both are committed to ensuring the school's success.

Following a period of instability in staffing, the reconstituted senior management team (SMT) is beginning to have a positive influence on the quality of learning and teaching, although it has yet to have a significant impact on standards. The teaching and learning policy has been revised and more consistency of practice is being developed.

The school has established a more distributed leadership structure, so that all teachers and support staff are becoming more involved in decision-making and the school's strategic direction within an evolving ethos of collaborative team work.

Teacher responsibilities have recently been reorganised; all now have an advisory role with regard to a subject or aspect and they are paired across the key stages in order to support and learn from one another.

Performance management arrangements cover all staff and meet statutory requirements. Targets are linked to the school improvement plan (SIP) and personal and professional needs in order to raise standards.

Most governors are proactive, well informed and attend training. They have designated roles based on a recent skills audit; there is an impressive governors' file which contains job descriptions, a list of allocated responsibilities and a visits protocol. Most come in to the school regularly and observe lessons.

The GB meets twice a term, once with the LA support officer and once to discuss school business. Statutory committees are in place and governors are involved in monitoring the SIP. The school council reports to the GB once a term.

All statutory policies are in place and there is a rolling programme of approval. The school gives good attention to local and national priorities and has introduced a number of initiatives to raise standards and to address specific issues.

### **Improving quality: Good**

The school has developed very effective strategies to evaluate its own provision and performance. All teachers are involved in monitoring and evaluating subjects on a rolling programme basis and the views of parents are sought and considered. The current self-evaluation report is honest and balanced; it effectively identifies strengths and areas to be developed.

The SIP is a well presented document that contains appropriate and realistic targets, which are prioritised. Each target has a separate action plan, which is clearly

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displayed and monitored regularly. Suitable and measurable outcomes are identified, although at times it is not obvious how success will be measured.

The school has established professional networks at a number of levels. The headteacher and staff work closely with colleagues within the cluster to share experiences, observe good practice and exchange strategies to raise standards. More formal external professional learning communities are planned.

**Partnership working: Good**

The school works positively with a number of different organisations to improve pupils' standards and wellbeing.

The school has an 'open door' policy for parents and has run workshops for them on new initiatives. It provides leaflets to help them support their children and sends newsletters home regularly. It is developing a 'wiki' space and a text messaging service to ensure all stakeholders can be contacted quickly and efficiently.

Community partnerships are purposeful and there are beneficial links with a number of businesses and sports organisations.

Partnership with the receiving secondary school provides the school with useful collaborative work on consistency of practice through transition projects, sharing of resources and cluster standardisation and moderation activities.

Valuable links with a range of multi-disciplinary agencies have enabled the school to promote wellbeing and tackle social issues and underachievement successfully.

**Resource management: Good**

The school has a full complement of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and support staff who are effectively deployed.

Planning, preparation and assessment time is covered appropriately by a retired qualified teacher and support staff. Statutory requirements are met for the workload agreement.

Training for teachers and support staff is well planned and takes account of school and professional priorities.

The budget is balanced with around a 3% underspend. The GB finance committee monitors the budget well and manages resources and facilities well.

In light of standards, provision and management overall being good, the school gives good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Stakeholder satisfaction report

#### Responses to parent questionnaires

One hundred and nine parents completed the questionnaire, of whom a minority added written comments, most of which praised the school, although a few raised some issues. Most parents responded positively to every question. Nearly all agree that the teaching is good and that their children are happy and safe in school, settle in successfully and are encouraged to be healthy. Most are satisfied with the school and think that it is well run and that their children make good progress. Most are not hesitant to approach the school with a suggestion or problem and consider their children are well prepared for secondary school, treated fairly and with respect and expected to do their best and to take on responsibilities. A few stated that they were not sure they were kept well informed and expressed concerns about behaviour, bullying, homework, visits, extra-curricular activities and security. A few also were unsure about procedures for dealing with complaints.

#### Responses to learner questionnaires

Ninety-eight KS2 pupils completed the questionnaire. Nearly all are of the opinion that they have enough resources and equipment and confirm that they feel safe in school, learn to be healthy and get regular exercise; they think they do well, know what to do, who to turn to if they are upset and are helped to learn and to make progress. Most think homework helps them to improve their work. A few expressed concerns about bullying and behaviour in the playground and a minority (26%), mainly girls, felt there were issues about behaviour in the classroom.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Dr. P. David Ellis	Reporting Inspector
Mrs. Gill Harrison	Team Inspector
Mr. Ted Tipper	Lay Inspector
Mr. Clive Condon	Peer Inspector
Mrs. Pat O'Malley	School Nominee

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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